

Investing in Young People and the Future

Hazelden Betty Ford applauds Oregon investment in recovery high schools

NEWBERG, OREGON, UNITED STATES, July 6, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Amid a growing behavioral health crisis, Oregon lawmakers have decided to make a historic investment in high school students affected by substance use disorders, a move applauded by advocates in the state and beyond, including the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, the nation's largest nonprofit provider of substance use treatment, mental health care and related family, research, education, and prevention services.



Hazelden Betty Ford's national system of care includes a substance use and mental health care center for teens and young adults in Minnesota, which serves young people and families from across the country.

In late June, the Oregon Senate passed House Bill 2767, which will make Oregon one of the first states to establish a fully funded, statewide public recovery high school program. The legislation includes \$2.6 million for programming over the next biennium. It passed the House earlier, following a tear-filled and moving public hearing that included stories from students and family members with personal experience at a recovery high school—many of whom said that having a recovery-focused education gave them a second chance at life. The bill is now headed to the governor's desk to be signed into law.

"By providing a supportive educational setting for students who share a unique healing bond, recovery schools empower young people to stay on a positive trajectory that can pay societal dividends for decades to come," said Hazelden Betty Ford President and CEO Joseph Lee, MD. "We have seen firsthand the powerful impact of recovery high schools on our former patients and on families and communities in Oregon and across the U.S., and we believe this is a wise investment in young people and the future."

Hazelden Betty Ford's national system of care includes a [substance use and mental health care center for teens and young adults](#) in Minnesota, which serves young people and families from across the country. The nonprofit also has been a care provider in Oregon for more than two decades, with sites in Newberg and Beaverton as well as telehealth services statewide.

In supporting the recovery schools legislation, Hazelden Betty Ford joined many other health

care, recovery and education experts from across Oregon who provided written and verbal testimony, op-eds, letters to the editor, and other advocacy.

“Every student in Oregon deserves access to free and appropriate public education, and this bill guarantees that more students in recovery will be able to get the appropriate education they need with access to counseling and all-important peer support along the way,” said Molalla River School District Superintendent and [Oregon Recovery High School Initiative](#) Co-founder Tony Mann and Portland attorney Ann Highet, a Hazelden Betty Ford trustee and chair of the Oregon Recovery High School Initiative, in a joint statement.

“We’re excited about the new Oregon model and would like to see it spread to other states,” added Michael Durchslag, director of P.E.A.S.E. Academy, a recovery high school in Minneapolis, and national chair of the [Association of Recovery Schools](#), which supports and advocates for recovery high schools across the country. “Creating funding streams to promote the establishment and sustainability of recovery schools is an important way that states can address the addiction crisis and positively impact families and the future of their communities.”

Oregon’s bipartisan legislation was championed by Rep. Jules Walters and sponsored by more than 20 other state legislators from both parties, including retired educator Rep. Boomer Wright and Oregon’s Senate President Rob Wagner. Key advocacy efforts for the legislation were led by the Oregon Recovery High School Initiative, whose mission is to provide a safe, sober and supportive gold-standard education for youth in recovery from substance use disorder — helping them develop the skills and strengths needed for personal, academic, vocational and community success.

Under the legislation, the Oregon Department of Education, in collaboration with other state agencies, will govern and fund eligible recovery schools through dollars made available by Oregon’s historic 2019 Student Success Act. That framework is designed to ensure that recovery schools operate in accordance with national best practices and receive the financial and technical support needed to best serve their students, who have unique needs that intersect with both the education and health care systems.

Some research has found that accredited recovery high schools are almost twice as effective as traditional high schools in helping adolescents stay sober. Harmony Academy, Oregon’s first and only accredited recovery high school, is located in the Portland metro region and was founded by the Oregon Recovery High School Initiative in 2019.

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About the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation

The Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation is a force of healing and hope for individuals, families and communities affected by addiction to alcohol and other drugs. As the nation’s leading nonprofit

provider of comprehensive inpatient and outpatient addiction and mental health care for adults and youth, the Foundation has treatment centers and telehealth services nationwide as well as a network of collaborators throughout health care. Through charitable support and a commitment to innovation, the Foundation is able to continually enhance care, research, programs and services, and help more people. With a legacy that began in 1949 and includes the 1982 founding of the Betty Ford Center, the Foundation today is committed to diversity, equity and inclusion in its services and throughout the organization, which also encompasses a graduate school of addiction studies, a publishing division, an addiction research center, recovery advocacy and thought leadership, professional and medical education programs, school-based prevention resources and a specialized program for children who grow up in families with addiction. Learn more at HazeldenBettyFord.org and on Twitter.

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