

When faced with addiction, recovery is the only compassionate solution

By Bruce Holstead, [Calgary Herald](#)

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Too often, I find myself answering calls from parents, partners and employers who have reached their breaking point. Their voices tremble with exhaustion and their words are heavy with desperation.

They've endured countless sleepless nights worrying about their child, who can't or won't seek the help they need.

These families have witnessed their loved ones deteriorate before their eyes, leave school, succumb to unemployment, and find themselves homeless and frequently in jail. They have had to witness addiction exert control over the lives of their loved ones. They reach out and seek help from numerous sources.

They've been told: "There's nothing more we can do; they need to ask for help themselves."

Addiction doesn't merely take over a person's life; it devastates families, workplaces and communities. It forces parents to mourn children who are still alive, leaves siblings feeling powerless and places employers in a dilemma between compassion and survival.

Relationships deteriorate, trust dissolves and the burden of uncertainty becomes overwhelming.

The harshest truth? Many caught in addiction can't help themselves. Their brains have been hijacked and rewired, distorting rational thought, numbing self-preservation and making long-term change feel impossible.

Those trapped in addiction often haven't chosen to stay stuck; they are unable to choose otherwise. The substances have taken control, rendering even the idea of seeking help seem distant, if not impossible.

Many of these individuals require genuine, structured support, including assistance for families and friends who are fighting tirelessly to save their child or best friend. Simply advising them to set boundaries and walk away is unacceptable; they need guidance, education and a community that comprehends their struggle.

Families should not have to face this alone, feeling as though their only options are detachment or desperation. They need tools to support their loved ones in a way that fosters healing, not further harm.

At Fresh Start, we've witnessed the transformation that occurs when people are given the time and space to heal. Families repair. Lives are rebuilt. Hope returns.

We have seen individuals recover their purpose, reconnect with loved ones and become contributing members of the community. We have often experienced individuals whose families reached out for their loved ones who could not or would not do so for themselves.

Addiction is not a choice; it is a disease that requires various levels of intervention. Compassionate Intervention offers a pathway to support not only those suffering but also the people who refuse to give up on them. The need is overwhelming, but the solution is clear: we must provide increased opportunities for recovery and sustainable support.

Alberta's transition to a recovery-oriented system of care represents a significant advancement in tackling addiction. This model brings crisis-driven interventions into focus, offering guidance and making treatment accessible for individuals who have lost the ability to make decisions for themselves, including those who might not traditionally seek help on their own.

Compassionate intervention is specifically tailored for people who are unwilling or unable to pursue help voluntarily due to the complexities associated with their addiction.

Fresh Start Recovery commends the provincial government's commitment to increasing investments in detox, treatment and post-treatment services, and the continuum of care. This ensures effective interventions and fosters a shift toward compassionate strategies as alternative pathways to recovery. These pathways mean families no longer have to watch helplessly as their loved ones descend further into addiction.

Instead, they now benefit from structured, supported and accessible routes to recovery.

Experts in the field commonly agree that comprehensive support promotes sustainable recovery, reduces relapse rates, rebuilds families and strengthens communities. The government's commitment ensures that more individuals and families seeking a pathway to recovery will have greater options available, affirming our shared belief that recovery is achievable when the right assistance is provided.

Compassionate intervention is a critical pathway for many.

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