

Factors affecting the stability of social networks during early recovery in ex-offenders

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Abstract

Background: Few studies have considered the retention of the individuals (alters) comprising the social networks of people in recovery. **Objective:** The purpose of this study was to describe factors predicting whether alters were retained 6 months after participants completed treatment. **Method:** The Important Person Inventory was given to 270 ex-offenders (224 men, 46 women) transitioning from treatment to Oxford House residences, Safe Haven therapeutic communities, or to usual aftercare. A 6-month follow-up was completed by 176 participants (137 men, 39 women). **Results:** We found that alters who were related to the participant, did not use drugs, were embedded in smaller networks, and had more frequent contact with the participant were significantly more likely to be retained as important people over 6 months. The alters' drinking and criminal history were not significantly predictive of retention in the network. **Conclusions:** Certain characteristics of important people are related to their retention in a social network. Understanding these relationships and the extent to which the network change that occurs is aligned with abstinence-supporting networks is essential for creating effective social interventions for persons in recovery.