



Hope. Heal. Recover.

IBH ADDICTION RECOVERY NEWSLETTER FALL 2025 /WINTER 2026

KEEPING US RUNNING STRONG

Inside Our Maintenance Team's Dedication

Every day, the IBH Addiction Recovery campus tells a story of hope and healing, as well as care, craftsmanship, and commitment. Behind the scenes, a small but mighty team of five ensures that our 85-acre property and nine buildings, including the Firestone Park facility, operate smoothly and look their best.

With buildings that date back decades, each structure carries a piece of IBH Addiction Recovery's history. Balancing the daily upkeep of aging facilities with the demands of seasonal work, from snow removal and leaf cleanup to mowing and preventative system checks, is no small task. The maintenance team coordinates efforts through an agency-wide work order system, ensuring timely responses to requests and maintaining the safe, welcoming environment that defines our campus.

In recent years, the team has taken on numerous improvement projects that directly enhance the experience for staff and clients alike. From repainting and re-carpeting our main group rooms to updating offices, common areas, and residential spaces, their efforts have refreshed the look and feel of the campus — aligning it with our renewed branding and deepening the sense of comfort and pride that fills our halls.

Their work also reflects something more profound: stewardship as a part of recovery. Three members of the maintenance team are in recovery themselves, two of whom once received treatment through IBH Addiction Recovery. "It's rewarding to show our clients there is positivity and usefulness when living a life of recovery," one of them shared.

Through their quiet dedication, the maintenance team embodies the IBH Addiction Recovery mission: caring for people by caring for the place that helped them heal.



From L-R: Doug, Zach, Stephen, Sandy, and Marko



A Message from

Jess Rist

IBH Addiction Recovery
CEO

Policy, Progress, and Purpose: Supporting Our Mission Ahead

I want to begin by expressing my deep gratitude for the abundance of support I have received in my first few months as the new Chief Executive Officer of IBH Addiction Recovery. The kindness, support, and friendship I have experienced from our clients, staff, and community has been overwhelming in the best way possible. Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for welcoming me with open arms to lead this incredible organization.

My transition into the role was interesting, to say the least. On day 1, before I had time to unpack and move into my new office, the state operating budget bill was signed into law which contained trigger language that threatened Medicaid eligibility for many of our clients, contingent upon policies of the federal government. On day 3, the federal budget reconciliation bill was passed. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act was the talk of the country, stimulating conversation around various policy issues, with a major focus on Medicaid.

This isn't a complaint by any means. It is simply the nature of this field. The entire system has been repeatedly tested and reshaped, from the societal shift of deinstitutionalization to behavioral health redesign and Medicaid expansion. There is always something new to navigate. For those of us working to provide care, we learn to adapt and foster the same resilience we see from our clients.

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REACHING FORWARD

How the REACH Program Empowers Recovery and Strengthens Community



For many who complete treatment at IBH Addiction Recovery, the question becomes: What's next? The IBH REACH Alumni Support Program provides that answer. By blending structure, mentorship, and meaningful volunteerism, REACH helps alumni maintain their sobriety while rediscovering their place in the community through service, teamwork, and hope.

"The REACH program offers more than aftercare; it provides a framework for life," said Bill Barber, Director of IBH REACH Alumni Support Program. Participants engage in volunteer work across Summit County, from helping distribute food with Good Neighbors, to caring for animals at Rubber City Rescue, to assisting with community events like the Akron Greek Festival. Each project reminds members that their contributions matter and that they can be a force for good.

"REACH loved me when I did not love myself. They gave me hope when I was hopeless. They gave me direction when I was lost. Today, thanks to IBH's REACH Program, I am sober. I have a purpose and I am loved."

One of the most powerful aspects of REACH is its team model. REACH Associates Hailey Harris and Mikey Zofchak work closely with participants to ensure each experience is positive, purposeful, and healing. Hailey may pull someone aside to offer guidance or encouragement, while Mikey might identify a need and redirect efforts to keep things running smoothly. This hands-on, team-based approach models the same principles—structure, communication, accountability, and care—that members can carry into their personal lives and workplaces.

Community partners often remark on how organized, respectful, and enthusiastic REACH volunteers are. Employers, too, notice that those who have participated in the program bring with them a professional attitude, teamwork, and a sense of purpose that sets them apart. These qualities aren't accidental, they're deliberately cultivated through every REACH activity and interaction.

As Hailey and Mikey often say, "The stigma we fight in recovery requires us to positively impact the very place we once caused harm." The "C" in REACH—Community—represents more than outreach; it symbolizes healing in both directions. When REACH members pull weeds at

Harmony Grows Garden, carry supplies at a local festival, or lend a smile at a neighborhood event, they're planting seeds of restoration and hope.

Perhaps the greatest testimony comes from the participants themselves. One member recently shared:

"REACH loved me when I did not love myself. They gave me hope when I was hopeless. They gave me direction when I was lost. Today, thanks to IBH's REACH Program, I am sober. I have a purpose and I am loved."

Every act of service and every moment of connection proves that recovery is not only possible, it's powerful. Through REACH, hope doesn't just stay within IBH Addiction Recovery's walls; it reaches out, changes lives, and rebuilds communities.

Akron Mayor Visits Our Campus



L-R: Mayor Shammias Malik, Jess Rist, and Richelle Wardell

We were honored to welcome City of Akron Mayor Shammias Malik and Richelle Wardell, City of Akron Education & Health Specialist, to our main campus recently.

It's always a privilege to share the life-saving work happening at IBH Addiction Recovery and discuss how, together, we can continue strengthening access to treatment, recovery, and hope for individuals and families across our community.

Thank you to Mayor Malik for your interest and support!

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Staff Recognized for Excellence

At IBH Addiction Recovery, our mission is strengthened each day by the extraordinary dedication of our leaders and staff. This year, several members of our team have been recognized across Greater Akron for their leadership, excellence, and community impact. These honors reflect not only individual achievements but also the collective commitment of IBH Addiction Recovery to building healthier lives and stronger communities.

Jess Rist, Chief Executive Officer

We're proud to announce that Jess Rist, Chief Executive Officer of IBH Addiction Recovery, was named a 2025 30 For the Future honoree by the Greater Akron Chamber. This recognition celebrates young professionals making a significant impact through their leadership, vision, and dedication to the Greater Akron region. Jess's selection reflects her tireless work to expand recovery opportunities and strengthen community resilience.

Meredith Myers, Chief Clinical Officer



Meredith Myers

We are also pleased to share that Meredith Myers, Chief Clinical Officer, was selected as a member of Leadership Akron Signature Class 42. This prestigious program brings together leaders from

diverse sectors to deepen understanding of community issues and inspire collaborative solutions. Meredith's inclusion underscores her clinical expertise and commitment to shaping a stronger, healthier Akron.

IBH Addiction Recovery Business Office Team

IBH Addiction Recovery's Business Office team members—Melissa Burgess, Courtnei Craig, Amanda Dardenne, Sharon Goodrich, Samantha Peterson, Emily Rich, and Joanne Waters were honored as 2025 Employees of Distinction by Goodwill Industries of Akron. Recognized among 90 honorees, their

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A Message from Jess Rist

Policy, Progress, and Purpose: Supporting Our Mission Ahead

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Yet, it's important that our community knows about the implications of this bill and how it will impact IBH Addiction Recovery, our clients, and our community.

More than half of our revenue comes from Medicaid – 57% last year, with many of our clients being part of the Medicaid expansion eligibility group. The state of Ohio's budget passed with trigger language that states if the federal match for Medicaid expansion drops below a certain threshold, Medicaid expansion will end, eliminating coverage for approximately 770,000 Ohioans. This made the federal budget even more important.

On a positive note, the federal bill preserved Ohio's federal match rate, protecting Medicaid expansion eligibility for at least another year. However, policy analysts still forecast significant cuts to federal Medicaid spending, which could cause millions of people to lose their health insurance. According to the Congressional Budget Office, new Medicaid work requirement provisions represent the largest share of the projected savings.

These new provisions require individuals to work, volunteer, be enrolled in school or a job training program for at least 80 hours a month, with more frequent proof of compliance. Fortunately, our clients will be exempt from these requirements while they're in treatment. This is critical, so that they can focus on their healing and reintegrate into society more effectively.

Moving forward, much of our focus will be on educating our clients on their health coverage status as they leave treatment. IBH Addiction Recovery is well-positioned for this transition. Thanks to our established partnerships with recovery-friendly employers, we connect our clients with employment opportunities, enabling them to either maintain their existing Medicaid benefits or to successfully transition to coverage under their employer's health plan. Further, our IBH REACH Alumni Support Program provides consistent volunteer opportunities at various organizations which also align with the new policy provisions. While we are prepared for the new requirements, we must remain vigilant, as further changes are likely on the horizon, requiring us to stay flexible and continue seeking your support.

As we continue to adapt to changing policies, I want it to be very clear that one thing will remain unchanged: our commitment to our clients.

The people we serve are at the heart of everything that we do. Our team's unwavering commitment and dedication to helping individuals on their recovery journey energizes our work, and we will continue to provide the life-saving care we've been providing for more than 55 years.

And I ask that you join us.

Advocate for recovery support services in your community. Donate to support our critical mission. Share our resources so that your neighbor, colleague, friend, or loved one can connect to our services.

However you chose to get involved, thank you. Together, we can create healthier and happier communities.

With Gratitude and Purpose, Jess Rist, IBH Addiction Recovery CEO



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Mission

IBH Addiction Recovery offers persons with alcohol and drug addiction, including those with a co-occurring mental health disorder, the opportunity to restore hope and gain skills for a lifetime of sobriety.

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Representatives from the IBH Addiction Recovery business office pose with senior leadership at the Goodwill Employee of Distinction Luncheon: Joanne Waters (Finance Assistant), Meredith Myers (Chief Clinical Officer), Anthony Henderson (CFO), Melissa Burgess (Business Office Director), Samantha Peterson (Billing Specialist), Jess Rist (CEO).

Staff Recognized for Excellence

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selection highlights their exceptional quality of work, steadfast dedication, and vital contributions to supporting IBH Addiction Recovery's mission every day.



Curtis Witherspoon, Residential Supervisor

We are also excited to celebrate Residential Supervisor Curtis Witherspoon, recipient of the "Just A Dad" award from Just A Dad From Akron. This recognition honors fathers who lead with integrity and positively influence their families and communities. Curtis's commitment, compassion, and leadership exemplify the heart of our mission.

Curtis Witherspoon receiving his "Just A Dad" Award from Kenny Lambert, owner of Just A Dad From Akron.