



ARHE / ARS / AAPG Annual Conference

Justification Toolkit for Institutions of
Higher Education, Recovery High Schools,
and Alternative Peer Groups

Purpose Of This Toolkit

Budgets are tight, and travel requires a clear return on investment. This toolkit is designed to help you make a strong, data-informed case for why your institution or organization should fund attendance at the ARHE / ARS / AAPG Annual Conference.

This toolkit includes:

- An overview of the conference and its relevance
- Key benefits tailored to colleges/universities and recovery high schools
- A simple game plan to maximize value
- A cost & ROI worksheet
- A customizable justification letter/email to decision-makers
- Optional language for business/organizational sponsors

You can adapt this for program staff, faculty, administrators, counselors, and student or peer staff.

1. About The ARHE / ARS / AAPG Annual Conference

The ARHE / ARS / AAPG Annual Conference brings together:

- The Association of Recovery in Higher Education (ARHE) - the national association for collegiate recovery programs (CRPs) and communities (CRCs). The ARHE conference is designed to deepen understanding of collegiate recovery, share national standards, ethics, and sustainability strategies, and support the development of recovery support systems on college and university campuses.
- The Association of Recovery Schools (ARS) - the national organization of recovery high schools, providing training, consulting, and accreditation, while advancing the inclusion of youth in recovery in educational settings.
- The Association of Alternative Peer Groups (AAPG) - the national body supporting the creation and expansion of Alternative Peer Groups (APGs) for adolescents and young adults.

Together, the combined conference offers:

- Plenary and breakout sessions on collegiate recovery, recovery high schools, APGs, harm reduction, student success, and program sustainability
- Sessions aligned with national standards and best practices for recovery-supportive education settings
- Opportunities to earn continuing education (CE) credits through Amedco in partnership with NASW, APA, and NAADAC (typically around 20 CE hours are available each year for a \$100 CE fee)
- A Recovery Program Showcase where institutions and recovery high schools share their work and innovations

For 2026, the conference will be held in Denver, Colorado, continuing a long history of national gatherings dedicated to collegiate and youth recovery.

2. Why Investing in Conference Attendance Matters

a) Impact on Student Success & Institutional Outcomes

Research on collegiate recovery programs (CRPs) shows that students engaged in CRPs often have:

- Higher GPAs and stronger retention than the general undergraduate population
- Improved academic outcomes for students in early recovery compared to their own pre-recovery performance

Studies of recovery high schools (RHSs) show that students who attend RHSs:

- Have better substance use outcomes, with significantly higher abstinence rates at 12-month follow-up than peers in non-recovery schools
- Demonstrate lower relapse and absenteeism and higher graduation rates than similar students in traditional schools

Sending staff to the ARHE / ARS / AAPG Conference directly supports these outcomes by improving the quality, reach, and sustainability of CRPs, RHSs, and APGs.

b) Benefits for Institutions of Higher Education

Attendance helps colleges and universities:

- Strengthen or launch a Collegiate Recovery Program (CRP) by learning from national exemplars and evidence-informed models
- Align with student mental health and wellness priorities, supporting students in recovery as part of a comprehensive campus health strategy
- Improve retention and graduation among students in recovery, a group that often enters with high SUD severity but demonstrates strong success with proper supports
- Integrate recovery into equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiatives, recognizing students in recovery as an underserved population

- Stay informed on national standards, ethics, and accreditation pathways for recovery-supportive campuses
 - Earn CE credits for counseling, social work, psychology, and peer staff, reducing the need for separate training budgets
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c) Benefits for Recovery High Schools

For recovery high schools and school districts, the conference:

- Offers direct access to ARS training, consulting, and accreditation resources
 - Supports improved graduation and abstinence outcomes through exposure to effective RHS models and implementation insights
 - Helps schools integrate recovery supports into broader student support services, MTSS frameworks, and special education/504 planning
 - Connects staff with a national network of administrators, clinicians, and peer professionals dealing with similar student needs
 - Provides up-to-date content on youth and adolescent treatment, family engagement, and transition planning between RHSs, APGs, and higher education
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d) Benefits for Community & Business Organizations

For employers, foundations, treatment providers, and other partners sponsoring attendance, the conference:

- Builds a pipeline of skilled recovery-informed staff and leaders
 - Strengthens community partnerships with campuses and schools, expanding referral networks and coordinated care
 - Demonstrates visible commitment to workforce wellness, community health, and recovery-friendly policies
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e) Benefits for the Individual Attendee

Attendees can expect to:

- Gain specialized knowledge on collegiate and youth recovery, harm reduction, and recovery-supportive educational practices
- Earn CEs toward licensure or certification
- Build a nationwide network of colleagues, mentors, and collaborators

Return with ready-to-implement tools: policies, curriculum ideas, evaluation strategies, and program templates

3. Your Game Plan: How You'll Maximize Value

Use this section when speaking with supervisors or funders to show you'll be intentional and accountable.

Before the Conference

- Identify 3-5 priority goals (e.g., launch CRP, expand RHS services, improve retention data, develop peer program).
- Review the conference schedule and pre-select sessions that align with institutional goals.
- Coordinate coverage so your day-to-day responsibilities are covered while you're away.
- Plan to meet with specific presenters or institutions whose models you want to learn from.

During the Conference

- Track sessions attended and key takeaways in a simple learning log.
- Collect materials (slides, handouts, sample policies) for your team.
- Participate in networking events, the Recovery Program Showcase, and any regional or topical meet-ups to build your contact list.

After the Conference

Commit to specific deliverables, such as:

- A brief written summary or slide deck for your supervisor and colleagues
- A lunch-and-learn or staff training where you present key lessons and tools
- Draft updates to program policies, strategic plans, or grant proposals informed by what you learned
- A short reflection on ROI (e.g., number of students impacted, new partnerships formed, CEs earned, program changes implemented)

4. Cost & ROI Worksheet

You can paste the table below into a document or spreadsheet and fill in actual amounts.

Conference Cost Estimate Worksheet

Expense Category	Description / Notes	Estimated Cost (USD)
Conference Registration	Use current rate for member/non-member based on current date	\$
CE Fee (if applicable)	CE processing fee (\$100 per person)	\$
Lodging	Estimated nightly rate x number of nights	\$
Airfare or Long-distance Travel	Round-trip estimate	\$
Local Transportation	Airport transfers / rideshare / public transit	\$
Parking / Mileage (if driving)	Institutional rate or IRS per-mile rate	\$
Meals & Incidentals	Based on institutional per-diem	\$
Other (e.g., baggage fees, Wi-fi, etc.)		\$
Total Estimated Cost		\$

ROI Talking Points (fill these in later):

- CEs earned: ~20 hours available annually, as eligible sessions permit
- Anticipated number of students directly impacted in next 12 months
- Anticipated number of staff trained with materials you bring back
- Planned program improvements (e.g., new peer program, revised policies, evaluation tools)

Potential grants, donations, or partnerships strengthened as a result of networking

5. Sample Justification Letter - Higher Education (CRP / Campus Staff)

You can adapt this into an email or formal memo.

Subject: Request for Support to Attend ARHE / ARS / AAPG Annual Conference

Dear [Supervisor's Name],

I am writing to request your approval and financial support to attend the ARHE / ARS / AAPG Annual Conference, the national gathering focused on collegiate recovery programs, recovery high schools, and alternative peer groups for young people. This multi-day conference brings together campus administrators, counselors, faculty, students, recovery high school leaders, and community partners who are committed to supporting students in or seeking recovery from substance use disorders or behavioral addictions.

Our institution is actively working to support student mental health, academic success, and equity. Students in collegiate recovery programs often demonstrate stronger academic outcomes - including higher GPAs, retention, and graduation rates - than many of their peers when robust supports are in place. Attending this conference will equip me with current best practices, tools, and connections to strengthen these supports on our campus.

The ARHE / ARS / AAPG Annual Conference is designed to:

- Share national standards, ethical guidelines, and sustainability strategies for collegiate recovery programs and recovery-supportive campuses;
- Highlight effective models of student housing, peer support, counseling, and academic recovery supports;
- Provide training and consultation from experts working in higher education, recovery high schools, and alternative peer groups; and
- Offer approximately 20 hours of continuing education for professionals in social work, counseling, psychology, and peer support (with CEs available through Amedco, NASW, APA, and NAADAC for a modest additional fee).

If I attend, I plan to focus on sessions that align with our institutional goals, specifically:

- Goal 1 - e.g., “Developing or expanding a Collegiate Recovery Program (CRP) with a sustainable funding model.”
- Goal 2 - e.g., “Improving student retention and graduation among students who have experienced substance use challenges.”
- Goal 3 - e.g., “Strengthening coordination between our campus, local treatment providers, and community partners.”

To maximize the return on this investment, I will:

- Prepare a written summary and slide deck of key takeaways for our department and relevant campus partners;
- Host at least one training or lunch-and-learn to share tools, policies, and resources I obtain;
- Identify specific, actionable changes we can make to our program or services within six months of the conference (e.g., new peer programming, revised referral pathways, or grant opportunities).

I estimate the total cost of attendance to be approximately \$_____, which includes:

- Registration: \$_____
- Travel: \$_____
- Lodging: \$_____
- Meals and incidentals: \$_____
- CE fee (if applicable): \$_____

I am confident that the knowledge, skills, and professional connections gained through this conference will directly advance our institution’s priorities around student success, mental health, retention, and equity - particularly for students in or seeking recovery. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this request further and to adjust my plans so they best meet our department’s needs.

Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Title / Position

Department

Institution

6. Sample Justification Letter - Recovery High School / K-12 Setting

Subject: Request for Support to Attend ARHE / ARS / AAPG Annual Conference

Dear [Principal / Superintendent / Director],

I am requesting approval and financial support to attend the ARHE / ARS / AAPG Annual Conference, which includes the annual conference of the Association of Recovery Schools (ARS). This event brings together leaders from recovery high schools, collegiate recovery programs, and alternative peer groups to share best practices for educating and supporting adolescents and young adults in recovery from substance use disorders.

Evidence shows that students who attend recovery high schools experience better abstinence rates, reduced absenteeism, and higher graduation rates compared to similar students in traditional schools. By attending this conference, I will gain updated strategies to support our students' recovery, academic success, and safe reintegration into postsecondary education or employment.

Conference sessions will address topics such as:

- Effective school-wide recovery support frameworks and multi-tiered systems of support;
- Academic and behavioral interventions tailored for students in recovery;
- Family engagement, transition planning, and coordination with treatment providers;
- Data-driven approaches to demonstrating outcomes and cost-effectiveness of recovery high schools; and
- Opportunities for accreditation, consulting, and technical assistance through ARS.

I plan to attend sessions that will help us:

- Goal 1 - e.g., "Refine our recovery-supportive code of conduct and reintegration policies."
- Goal 2 - e.g., "Enhance coordination with local treatment programs and community partners."

- Goal 3 - e.g., “Strengthen our data collection and reporting on student outcomes.”

After the conference, I will share key takeaways with our leadership team and staff, provide a concise summary of recommended changes, and propose a timeline for implementation. I will also explore opportunities to strengthen our partnerships with collegiate recovery programs and alternative peer groups to support students’ transitions after high school.

I estimate a total attendance cost of \$_____, including registration, travel, lodging, and per diem. Given the documented benefits of recovery high schools for both educational and health outcomes, this investment is likely to produce measurable returns in student success and retention._

Thank you for considering this request and for your ongoing commitment to our students in recovery.

Sincerely,

Your Name

Title / Position

School / Program

7. Optional Paragraph for Business / Community Sponsors

You can insert this (or a version of it) into letters or grant proposals to local businesses, foundations, or community partners:

Sponsoring my attendance at the ARHE / ARS / AAPG Annual Conference will strengthen our ability to serve students in recovery and their families. The conference convenes national leaders in collegiate recovery, recovery high schools, and alternative peer groups to share evidence-informed strategies that reduce relapse, improve graduation and retention rates, and support long-term recovery for young people. Your investment will directly translate into enhanced services, stronger community partnerships, and better outcomes for youth and young adults affected by substance use disorders in our region.

8. Quick Talking Points (for meetings or budget hearings)

- **Student success:** CRPs and RHSs are linked to higher GPAs, improved retention, and higher graduation rates for students in recovery.
- **Risk management & duty of care:** Well-trained staff help institutions respond ethically and effectively to substance use concerns, reducing crises and liability.
- **Equity & inclusion:** Students in recovery are an often-overlooked population disproportionately impacted by substance use and related harms; supporting them advances institutional equity goals.
- **Efficiency:** One conference trip provides ~20 CE hours plus a large volume of tools, templates, and partnerships - more efficient than piecemeal trainings.
- **Reputation & recruitment:** Having robust collegiate recovery or recovery high school supports can attract students and families who prioritize wellness and safety when selecting schools.

Thank you!

We hope to have you join us in Denver, CO
June 26-30, 2026.



For more information about the conference itself, please visit
www.collegiaterecovery.org/conference.