pathroot health

News Release

Family Support is the Secret Weapon in Managing Substance Use Disorder and Reducing Relapse

Greenville, SC – September 16, 2025 — As the nation grapples with the devastating toll of substance use disorder (SUD), one mother's loss underscores a powerful truth: families can be the most important, underutilized asset, the secret weapon, in the fight against addiction.

Carolyn Bradfield, an entrepreneur and behavioral health pioneer, lost her daughter to overdose after years of struggling to navigate an outdated treatment system. "I had the determination, the resources, and the will to help my daughter," Bradfield, founder and CEO of Pathroot Health said. "But I didn't have the tools to support her in the right ways. Families are often left on the sidelines, when in fact we can play a decisive role in supporting their loved one's recovery."

Her story reflects a systemic gap: while families bear the weight of addiction, they are rarely equipped with training, resources, or reimbursement-supported pathways to actively engage in care. Experts in behavioral health and public-sector insurance programs say changing this dynamic is critical to saving lives and reducing cost.

Family as a Force Multiplier in Addiction Recovery

Research shows that individuals with strong family involvement in treatment are up to 50% less likely to experience relapse. Families provide not only emotional support but also accountability and stability, two essential elements for recovery.

"Recovery doesn't happen in isolation," Bradfield added. "Integrating families into the treatment process increases retention and improves long-term success. Investing in families is compassionate and cost-effective: engagement helps people stay in recovery and eases the burden on staff. Because discharge against medical advice (AMA) is a costly, industry-wide problem, engaging families from the moment a loved one enters treatment reduces the risk of an early exit. AMA averages 10-15% in most programs, with some seeing as much as 25% or more."

Public-sector payors like Medicaid are starting to recognize the impact of family-centered care and increasing reimbursement for family support with in-person and virtual meetings. Programs that include family therapy, peer support, and education modules not only improve patient outcomes but also reduce the revolving door of relapse, repeated hospitalization, and justice system involvement.

Bradfield's experience has driven her mission to change the system. By amplifying family voices and creating scalable solutions that equip family members, siblings, spouses and even friends, she hopes no parent will have to endure the loss she suffered. "If families are the secret weapon, then we must put them on the front lines," she said.

Pathroot is hosting a webinar on Tuesday September 23, 2025, to inform treatment programs about the impact family activation can have on outcomes.
https://pathroothealth.com/page/201765/september-23-webinar#cta

About Pathroot Health

Pathroot Health transforms how substance use disorder (SUD) care is delivered by partnering with treatment programs to support individuals and families from day one through the high-risk weeks and months after discharge. Recovery often breaks down after treatment, so Pathroot keeps people connected with technology-driven, behavior-aware engagement, monitoring, and family-centered support. Our platform uses AI-based predictive analytics to spot early relapse risk and send timely alerts to providers and families so they can act before a setback. By extending care and empowering families, Pathroot helps programs sustain recovery, strengthen families, and lessen SUD's impact on communities. Learn more at https://pathroothealth.com.

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