

TEEN CHALLENGE CANADA

STEPPING TOWARD RECOVERY

Navigating Substance Addiction
Recovery *Together*



ISSUE 2

ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTS

P • 4-5 → Replying to a Husband – “Hope, Healing and Coming Home...”

P • 9 → Q&A with Teen Challenge Canada

P • 10-11 → Understanding the Journey Beyond Recovery

State of Substance Addiction ...

Across Canada

Did you know that in Canada, more than 200 people die every day due to substance use?

At Teen Challenge Canada, we believe that recovery is more than just overcoming addiction—lasting sobriety is about embracing a new way of life. We are committed to helping individuals and families rebuild their lives. We are proud to be at the forefront of the addiction battle and stand committed with other non-profits, ministries, and government agencies in a concentrated effort to address the evolving addiction crisis.

13.8% of Albertans are considered in the “high risk” category for alcohol and consume more than 7+ drinks per week.¹

Saskatchewan has seen an increase of more than **160%** in suspected drug toxicity deaths since 2019.²

In Northern Ontario, accidental overdoses are the **leading cause of death** for adults under 50 years old.³

Drug use prevalence among drivers in the Atlantic provinces was **much higher** than the national average on all classes of impaired substances.⁴

Over 39% of the population of Newfoundland and Labrador report lifetime use of one or more illicit drugs.⁵

In Ontario, it is estimated that **10% of the population** use substances problematically.⁶

1. <https://c2journal.ca/2024/11/drinking-by-the-numbers-what-statistics-canada-doesnt-want-you-to-know/>
2. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/drug-toxicity-opioid-death-record-17076069>
3. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/death-overdose-drug-toxicity-homelessness-northern-ontario-1.7468047>

4. <https://med-for-rsph.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2024/06/NDD-Atlantic-Provinces-2024-final.pdf>
5. <https://crismprairies.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Newfoundland.pdf>
6. <https://ontario.cmha.ca/addiction-and-substance-use-and-addiction/>

Note from the Editor:

Welcome to the second edition of our newly formatted “**Stepping Toward Recovery - Navigating Addiction Recovery Together**” newsletter. We are grateful to continue this journey with you, and even more excited to focus this issue on **family & community**.

At Teen Challenge, we know that addiction doesn’t just affect individuals—it touches entire families and communities. We also know that recovery doesn’t end at graduation. In many ways, it’s just the beginning of a new chapter—**for the individual and for everyone connected to them**.

This edition highlights how **families** can prepare for and support a returning loved one, how **churches** can be a place of grace and accountability, and how **communities** can provide practical tools like mentorship, employment opportunities, and healthy social connections. When graduates return to environments that are welcoming, structured, and rooted in faith and understanding, their chances of long-term success increase dramatically.

We hope you find this edition both meaningful and encouraging as you walk alongside those in recovery.

**The letters included in this newsletter are representational of letters and inquiries sent to Teen Challenge Canada.*

Message From The CEO ...

There’s a moment many families dream about—the moment when a loved one, after a long journey through addiction recovery, finally comes home. When a graduate walks into their church again—not with shame, but with purpose and hope. These moments are filled with excitement, anticipation, and, understandably, a bit of uncertainty. How do we support them as they step back into everyday life? What’s my role in their recovery?

If someone you love is in recovery—whether that’s through an in-patient treatment program, an outpatient support group, or just beginning to desire change—welcome. This issue of *Stepping Toward Recovery* is for you.

You Are Not Alone

First, I want to say: you’re not alone. At Teen Challenge Canada, we witness the full range of emotions—uncertainty, hope, grief, and deep love. I’ve met parents who cry in parking lots after visiting their son at a centre. I’ve heard from spouses who want to trust again but don’t know how. I’ve received letters from churches struggling to connect with those in their congregation struggling with addiction. Recovery isn’t a tidy line from brokenness to healing. It’s a winding road—marked by deep grace, hard conversations, and daily steps forward.

That’s why our commitment extends beyond those in our centres. We walk with families and communities, too. Through our expanded post-care programs, new resources for churches, and guides like this newsletter, we’re doing more to stand with you as you support someone in recovery. And we’re listening. Every story we hear from families, every phone call from a church leader, helps shape what we do next.

This is not just a strategic decision—it’s a spiritual one. **We believe that lasting recovery happens in community**. After a year immersed in our faith-based in-residence recovery program—one built on the transforming power of Christ, biblical teaching, and community accountability—our clients don’t just leave addiction behind. They step into a new identity, healed and made whole.

But what happens next is just as important as the healing that takes place within our walls. It happens when churches welcome someone back with grace. It happens when family members learn how to support without enabling. And it happens when someone in recovery finds strength in Christ and stays connected to others who understand their journey.

These moments are more than emotional reunions; they are glimpses of redemption in motion.

At Teen Challenge Canada, we’ve never just focused on addiction—we’ve focused on people. We believe in long-term healing. We believe in second, third, and fourth chances. And we believe that God is still in the business of restoration—even after setbacks or relapses.

You may be wondering what your role is now that your loved one is in recovery or has completed a program. My encouragement is this: **don’t underestimate your presence**. Keep showing up. Keep asking questions. Keep inviting Christ into the middle of the mess. And if you feel weary, know that it’s okay. God isn’t asking you to carry it all—He’s asking you to trust Him through it.

We’re Here for You

Teen Challenge Canada is here for you. If you need encouragement, prayer, or resources, please reach out to a local TCC centre. **We want to help you walk this journey with faith and hope.**

Thank you for your prayers, your support, and for believing that change is possible. Whether you’re a donor, a family member, a pastor, or someone on the journey yourself—this ministry continues because of you.

Sincerely,



Glen Smeltzer
CEO, Teen Challenge Canada

Hope, Healing, and Coming Home...

A Husband's letter about life after addiction—and a pathway forward for the whole family.

Letter from a Husband...

Dear Teen Challenge Canada,

I never thought I'd be writing a letter like this. For the past year, my wife has been in your care, walking the long road of addiction recovery. And while I am so thankful she's made it this far—thankful she's alive, healing, and coming home—I have to be honest: I'm scared. I'm not the same man I was a year ago, and our kids aren't the same either. We've learned how to get through birthdays without her, school nights on our own, and celebrate holidays with an empty chair. I've had to be both mom and dad. I've spent nights wondering if she was going to make it. And now that she's coming home, I find myself wondering...what's next?

What does life look like now that she's in recovery? How do we as a family help? I want to welcome her with open arms and an open heart, but there's also fear—fear that I won't know what to say, how to support her, or what to do if she struggles again.

I'm reaching out because I need help—not just for her, but for me, and for our family. We want to move forward with faith and wisdom, not fear. We want to build something stronger than what we had before. But I know I can't do this alone. I'm deeply grateful for what your program has done—not just in helping her find freedom, but in helping her come back to us. I just want to be ready for this next chapter. Not perfectly—but faithfully.

Sincerely,
Hopeful but Hurting Husband

Dear Hopeful but Hurting Husband,

First, thank you for your courage and for supporting your wife. **You are not alone.** What you're feeling right now is not only valid, but incredibly common. The return of a loved one from long-term addiction recovery is a significant and often emotional transition—for everyone. Your life, your children's routines, and your relationships have all adapted over the past year. Reuniting after such a season brings both hope and uncertainty. That's okay. What matters most is what you are already doing: you are staying. You're choosing grace. You are walking together.

At **Teen Challenge Canada**, we believe recovery is not just an individual story—it's a *family story* too. **And healing doesn't end when someone completes our program; in many ways, it's only the beginning.** Recovery is not the finish line—it's a journey. One that takes time, patience, and a deep well of love.

So, how can family members help their loved one?

Be patient with the process.

Recovery is not linear. It will have victories and setbacks. Progress may be slow, but love—steady, grace-filled love—is what gives recovery room to grow. You don't have to have all the answers. Just be there.

Communicate openly and gently.

Honest conversations are healing. Share your thoughts. Listen to hers. Celebrate growth. Talk through hard days. Keep grace at the centre of every exchange.

Build rhythms that support sobriety.

Consider what helps her feel safe, supported, and spiritually grounded. Whether it's church, community support, prayer, or accountability partners—lean into practices that help anchor her recovery.

Invite others into the journey.

Many Teen Challenge graduates emphasize the need and desire for community throughout their recovery journey. People to provide connection, accountability, and support. Whether it's a small group, local addiction recovery resources, trusted friends, or support from your local church, allow others to come alongside your family with encouragement and wisdom.

Let grace lead.

Addiction tries to define people by their past. But Christ defines us by our redemption. Remind her (and yourself) daily: she is not her addiction. She is a daughter of God, deeply loved, wholly known, and never beyond restoration.

2 Corinthians 5:17 reminds us, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come."

At Teen Challenge Canada, we've seen firsthand how recovery changes lives—but we've also seen how family members, like you, **become part of that transformation.** Your hope, your prayers, your presence—it matters more than you know. And when things get hard, please remember relapse is not failure. Struggle is not shameful. These moments don't undo the healing already begun—they are simply more steps on a longer journey. We are here to walk with you. Whether it's resources, encouragement, or simply a reminder that God is still at work—Teen Challenge Canada exists to support not only those in recovery, but the families walking alongside them.

You don't have to be perfect. You just have to keep showing up.

Please know Teen Challenge Canada is here and ready to help you both as you rebuild, renew, and rediscover life after addiction—one grace-filled day at a time.

With compassion,

Teen Challenge Canada

www.teenchallenge.ca/get-help
www.changedlives.ca

When Someone in Recovery Walks into **Your Church...**

A Church’s Honest Letter—and a Ministry’s Hopeful Response

A Letter from a local Church...

Dear Teen Challenge Canada,

We’re writing from a small church in a small town. We have a big heart—but also a lot of questions.

Earlier this year, one of your Program graduates joined our congregation. He stood in front of our church during a praise, prayer, and testimony night—raw, emotional, full of God’s grace. We were moved to tears. That Sunday, our people hugged him, prayed with him, and made him feel welcome. It was unforgettable.

Now, a few months later, we find ourselves unsure of what comes next.

He’s still with us, and we’re still grateful. But it hasn’t been without challenges. There have been a couple of minor relapses—not public or disruptive, but real. Members from our pastoral staff were involved, and it left us reflecting. We know that recovery is a journey, not a switch you flip. Still, we’re left wondering: are we doing this right? Are we helping—or unintentionally hurting? Are we really ready for this?

We’re not writing because we’ve failed—we’re writing because we care deeply. And we want to do better.

One of our elders put it well: **“He’s not the only one God is transforming. We are being changed, too.”**

That’s become true in more ways than we expected. We’ve started having deeper conversations in our small groups. We’re talking more openly about addiction, recovery, and what it means to be a church with a heart for our community. We’re asking questions. We’re realizing that being welcoming isn’t the same as being equipped.

So, we’re reaching out. We want to know: how do we walk alongside someone in recovery with wisdom, grace, and love? How do we create a space that supports—not pressures—a person trying to rebuild their life in Christ?

Sincerely,
A Church That’s Learning

Dear Church That’s Learning,

Thank you. Your honesty, humility, and willingness to ask these questions reflect the kind of love that brings lasting change.

You are not alone in this. Many churches across Canada are on the same journey—hopeful, compassionate, and sometimes unsure. And that’s okay. What matters is that you’ve already taken the first—and most important—step: you’ve shown up. You’ve stayed present. You’ve asked the right questions.

Recovery is not a solo act. It is a community calling.

When someone in recovery joins a church, they’re not looking for perfection. They’re looking for people. People who will walk with them, offer grace, remain steady, and point them to Christ—even when it’s messy. They need a church family that doesn’t give up.

So How Can A Church Respond?

Be present. If relapse happens, don’t retreat. Let it be a cue to lean in—with compassion, honesty, and a steady presence. Recovery is fragile and nonlinear. A church that stays the course becomes a true anchor.

Ask honest questions. Support often begins with listening. “How can we help?” is a great place to start. Ask what helps, what doesn’t, and what rhythms or relationships are essential to their recovery. Every person’s journey is different, let them tell you what they feel they need.

Create a culture of openness. Normalize the conversation around addiction and recovery. Share stories of hope. Reference recovery in sermons. Encourage small groups to talk honestly about struggles and grace. When these topics are no longer taboo, shame starts to lose its grip.

Equip your congregation. You don’t need to create a new ministry overnight. Start by connecting with proven tools—Celebrate Recovery groups, mentorship programs, or addiction-awareness presentations. Invite a Teen Challenge graduate to share their story. Small steps build understanding and compassion.

Model patient discipleship. Walking with someone in recovery is not a short-term effort. It requires time, humility, and faithful presence. Long-term healing grows through long-term relationships. The church is uniquely positioned to offer what few others can: community rooted in grace.

Continued on pg. 8 >>



Every Church that Welcomes Someone in Recovery Becomes Part of their Healing Story.

You may not feel ready but readiness isn't the goal—*relationship* is. You don't have to be a professional addiction counsellor to make a difference. In fact, you shouldn't try to be. What matters most is consistently showing the love of Christ, especially when it's hard, or when progress feels slow.

We've seen it across Canada: when churches walk with someone in recovery, lives change. Families are restored. Communities are impacted. By fostering compassion and understanding, your church can help individuals find the support and encouragement needed as they continue to step toward recovery.

Let Us Walk With You, Too.

Teen Challenge Canada is here to help equip you—with insight, encouragement, resources, and the testimonies of real people who've walked this road. Whether you're a rural church of 40 or a city congregation of 400, your presence can be the difference in someone's life after addiction.

Please know, our thoughts and prayers are with your church as you continue to discern how you can best serve and uplift those within your congregation and the wider community.

Sincerely,

Teen Challenge Canada

Want to Learn How Your Church Can Support Addiction Recovery?

Book a Teen Challenge Canada presentation today.

www.teenchallenge.ca/presentations



Scan the QR code to visit our website

Q&A with Teen Challenge Canada

Q Why is recovery more than about just getting sober?

A Recovery is a lifelong process that allows for freedom from addiction. During our 12-month program, clients get used to functioning without substances, start to think more clearly, and begin to find hope for their future. Through a safe place of refuge, addiction counselling, education, new life skills, and with support both before and after the program, men and women in our care come to embrace God's truth that they are loved and accepted. Individuals find compassion and that helps unlock the shame and allows real transformation to occur.

Q Why is the Teen Challenge program 12-months?

A At Teen Challenge Canada, we know that the path to recovery is hard and time-consuming. Therefore, to support those who come to us seeking freedom from addiction, we offer individualized treatment programs through our 12-month, three-phase core program. Our yearlong program provides men and women time to learn to face their past, equips individuals with tools to overcome obstacles, and helps them embrace a new life.

Q What role does community play?

A Living in community with staff and others in recovery, individuals learn to care and be cared for again. Recovery is a series of daily choices on the lifelong road to recovery. Strong community ties, rewarding

work, faith, and mentorship all help individuals cope with life's inevitable challenges and not turn to drugs and alcohol during difficult times.

Q How can I get someone into the program?

A Overcoming addiction is a formidable challenge, but it is not insurmountable. At Teen Challenge Canada, we believe in the power of taking the first brave step towards recovery and we stand ready to assist those and their families who are willing to embark on this transformative journey. Calling our toll-free number **1-877-343-1022** to talk to an admissions coordinator or visiting our website at www.teenchallenge.ca/get-help for more information, could be the first step to freedom from substance addiction for you and your family.

If a Loved One Relapses: Understanding the Journey Beyond Recovery

You celebrated the moment your loved one returned home from a recovery program. Maybe it was the first time in years they looked truly free. The fog of addiction seemed to lift, relationships were mending, faith was being renewed and the future felt full of possibility.

Recovery Is a Lifelong Journey

Teen Challenge Canada often reminds families that recovery isn't a single breakthrough moment—it's a walk of faith and perseverance, one step at a time. Graduates may leave the program clean and hopeful, but the road ahead may still hold challenges. One graduate shared, *"The real recovery work started when I stepped outside the Centre. I find I must choose sobriety every day. I remind myself all the time, recovery is a lifelong process."*

Graduates may leave treatment clean and hopeful, but the path ahead may remain challenging. Triggers still exist. Temptations may still arise—sometimes suddenly, sometimes subtly. When support is missing and life gets overwhelming, relapse can become a very real possibility.

Why Does Relapse Happen?

There isn't one answer, but there are common patterns.

- **Returning to Old Environments or Relationships:** Visiting places or connecting with people associated with past substance use can reignite unhealthy habits.
- **Isolation:** Disconnection from faith, community, or mentorship often leads to vulnerability.
- **Overconfidence:** Believing recovery can be maintained without support may lead someone to drop accountability practices.
- **Unresolved Pain:** Depression, anxiety, or trauma—when left unaddressed—can quietly resurface and drive someone back to old coping mechanisms.

In nearly every case, relapse begins well before the first drink or pill—it starts in the mind and heart, when commitment to recovery starts to fade.

Recognizing the Warning Signs

Family and friends can play a critical role in helping loved ones navigate potential relapses by watching for signs of trouble. These signs can include:

- | | |
|---|---|
| » Withdrawal from close relationships | » Financial instability or secrecy |
| » Mood swings or noticeable changes in appearance | » Defensiveness when asked about how things are going |
| » Avoiding recovery meetings, church, or support groups | » Justifying risky behaviour or minimizing past struggles |
| » Missing work or avoiding responsibilities | |

Relapse rarely happens overnight. Recognizing these signs early can give you a chance to gently intervene and offer support before a relapse occurs.

How You Can Help

You can't walk the recovery journey for someone, but you can walk with them. To help your loved one navigate this journey, stay engaged. Make time for regular, open and honest conversations. When you notice changes, ask questions with compassion, not suspicion. Your presence matters more than your advice.

It is important to provide support without enabling. That means having and observing boundaries. Offer support without taking responsibility for their choices and avoid shielding them from consequences.

Continue to encourage accountability to your loved one. Recommend staying connected to recovery group resources, a church community, or a trusted mentor. It is important to celebrate the small victories and create space for structure, faith, and spiritual growth.

Above all, remain patient and prayerful. Remind your loved one that you are here to support and offer encouragement even if setbacks come along.

Part of the Journey

Relapse is not the end of the story—it's a chapter in the greater story of recovery. With faith, support, and perseverance, even setbacks can lead to deeper healing and renewed strength.

As Galatians 6:2, reminds us:

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ."

If your loved one has relapsed, don't lose hope. Don't give into shame. Keep the door open, keep praying and keep believing.

Life after addiction is not just possible—it's worth fighting for!

Need More Support as You Step Toward Recovery?

If you or a loved one is navigating the journey of recovery, know that **Teen Challenge Canada** is here for you. We're ready to walk alongside you with support, guidance, and hope-filled resources every step of the way.

To learn more about our program, post-care options, and how we can help, visit www.teenchallenge.ca today.



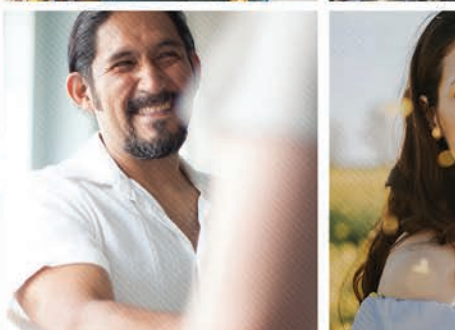
Scan the QR code to visit our website

GET HELP TODAY
THERE IS *hope*...LET US *help*

Teen Challenge Canada is a drug & alcohol rehabilitation program with Centres located across Canada. We offer help and hope to those struggling with alcoholism and/or addiction to other drugs.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT US AT WWW.TEENCHALLENGE.CA

1-877-343-1022



Our Commitment

At Teen Challenge Canada, our commitment extends beyond the walls of our addiction treatment centres. We are dedicated to supporting individuals, their families, and communities on their recovery journey, offering support, compassion, and hope. Celebrating over 50 years of addiction recovery, Teen Challenge Canada strives to continually improve our programs to meet the evolving needs in our communities. Through initiatives like this newsletter, we aim to provide resources and inspiration to those who may never come to our centres but are still looking for support.

Our resolve is clear, to demonstrate God's love by helping individuals overcome substance dependency and live meaningful lives. As Galatians 6:9 says, "*Let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*" We encourage you to pass along this newsletter to those in your communities who need hope, support, and inspiration as loved ones step toward recovery.

Together, we are creating an environment of understanding and healing.
Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

Our mission is to demonstrate God's love by helping individuals become free from substance addiction and equipping them to live full and meaningful lives.



Teen Challenge Canada Centres in the Prairie Region

Teen Challenge Alberta Men's Centre

PO Box 24010 RPO Evergreen, Calgary, AB T2Y 0J9

PHONE: 403.931.3501 TOLL FREE: 1.800.856.8902

Teen Challenge Saskatchewan Men's Centre

PO Box 21111, Saskatoon, SK S7H 5N9

PHONE: 306.257.3325 TOLL FREE: 1.877.396.9152

Teen Challenge Prairie Hope Women's Centre

PO Box 21111, Saskatoon, SK S7H 5N9

PHONE: 306.225.2213 TOLL FREE: 1.866.663.7060

Teen Challenge Canada Inc.

Lambeth Box 777, London, ON N6P 1R6

TOLL FREE: 1.888.417.7777

www.teenchallenge.ca



For a full list of our other centre locations across Canada, visit our website.

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Teen Challenge Canada Centres in the Ontario Region

Teen Challenge Ontario Men's Centre

Lambeth Box 777, London, ON N6P 1R6

PHONE: 519.652.0777 TOLL FREE: 1.888.417.7777

Teen Challenge Ontario Women's Centre

PO Box 100 Stn Main, Aurora, ON L4G 3H1

PHONE: 905.727.3913 TOLL FREE: 1.877.979.7770

Teen Challenge Northern Ontario Men's Centre

PO Box 20012 RPO East End, Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6A 6W3

*RELOCATING TO SUDBURY ONTARIO

Teen Challenge Eastern Ontario Men's Centre

PO Box 61 Stn Main, Renfrew, ON K7V 4A2

PHONE: 343.361.1011 TOLL FREE: 1.877.568.8282

Teen Challenge Canada Inc.

Lambeth Box 777, London, ON N6P 1R6

TOLL FREE: 1.888.417.7777

www.teenchallenge.ca



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Teen Challenge Canada Centres in the Atlantic Region

Teen Challenge Atlantic Men's Centre

PO Box 911, Moncton, NB E1C 8N8

PHONE: 506.758.2377 TOLL FREE: 1.800.965.7170

Teen Challenge Atlantic Hope Women's Centre

PO Box 8713 Stn 'A', St. John's, NL A1B 3T1

PHONE: 709.781.7118 TOLL FREE: 1.866.968.9450

Teen Challenge Canada Inc.

Lambeth Box 777, London, ON N6P 1R6

TOLL FREE: 1.888.417.7777

www.teenchallenge.ca



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