



# Association of Recovery Schools

## Accreditation Manual

### PREFACE

This manual has been assembled by the Association of Recovery Schools to assist recovery high schools in the self-reflective process of developing an accreditation report as a component to completing the accreditation process. *The Accreditation Manual* is based on the *Accreditation Framework for Association of Recovery Schools Members*, which is used to determine a school's success relative to a common set of indicators, as well as school-based goals.

### Rationale

The purpose of the Association of Recovery Schools (ARS) accreditation review is to support recovery high schools in a self-reflective process of examining the conditions and practices within their schools. The review intends to assist a school with an in-depth look at what currently exists and what needs to be improved in relation to student learning, student recovery support, and the overall school administration.

## ACCREDITATION PROCESS

### Eligibility for Accreditation

Schools must be recognized as a recovery high school by the Association of Recovery Schools and must have been in operation for at least three years.

### Application for Accreditation

Accreditation visits typically occur in October and April. Schools may submit requests for accreditation by October 1 for April accreditation and by April 1 for October visits.

### Self-Review and Self-Evaluation

The process requires multiple sources of evidence to understand the school's performance. The school collects evidence and writes a self-evaluative report **prior to the visit**. The school report is then submitted **at least one-month** prior to a visitation. The review of the school program continues through an on-site visit, which includes additional document review, classroom observations, and interviews with any number of stakeholders. Findings provided by the site visiting team can be used to validate what the school is doing well and prioritize its areas for improvement. It is the task of the site visiting team to report on the pre-identified indicators of the Accreditation Framework and give to the Association of Recovery Schools Board of Directors information to aid them in accreditation decisions.

### Accreditation Visit and Onsite Evaluation

An Association of Recovery Schools site visit team engages in a number of evidence-collecting activities. The focus of this evaluation is to validate the school self-report and to gauge perceptions of key stakeholders at the school, in relation to the areas of the accreditation framework that are part of the evaluation. The ARS site visit team conducts focus group discussions with students and staff, as well as interviews with the school administration. These focus groups and interviews are conducted over the course of the site visit. Classroom observations are performed on site using the classroom observation instrument provided by ARS. The onsite observations last approximately 30 minutes (or a full class period if

possible), with a goal of observing over half of the teaching staff.

### **Accreditation Report and Follow-Up**

As an outcome of the review, ARS will provide the school with a written report. An executive summary of that report will be presented on the last day of the visit, and the site visit team will provide a full report within 60 days of the visit. The report will include a judgment and supporting evidence on various aspects of the school. The report will be based on a rubric of indicators developed for each of the four core questions and sub-questions in the Performance Framework. The assessment system utilizes the following judgments: *Meets Standard, Approaching Standard, or Does Not Meet Standard.*

Schools can use the report to develop a plan to address areas of concern or use as a reference for federal, state, or local planning. Should the site visit team recommend accreditation, the ARS Board of Directors will approve within 30 days of receiving the final report. Should the site visit team not recommend accreditation, the school will be given recommendations and a timeline in order for the school to meet the appropriate standards.

### **EVALUATION PROCESS AND SCORING**

The Association of Recovery Schools Framework Review is designed to assess whether a recovery high school is meeting the dual goals of providing a high quality education and supporting students' recovery from substance use and co-occurring disorders. The Accreditation Review Protocol is based on the *Accreditation Framework for Association of Recovery Schools Members*, which is used to determine a school's success relative to a common set of indicators, as well as school-based goals.

#### **The Evaluation Process**

The Accreditation Report presents to the school and the Association of Recovery Schools a professional judgment on conditions and practices at the school, which are best provided through an external perspective. This report uses multiple sources of evidence to understand the school's performance. Evidence collection begins before the visit with the review of key documents and continues on-site through additional document review, classroom visits and interviews with any number of stakeholders. Findings provided by the site visit team can be used to celebrate what the school is doing well and prioritize its areas for improvement. It is the task of the site visit team to report on the pre-identified indicators of the *Accreditation Framework* and give to the Association of Recovery Schools Board of Directors information to aid them in accreditation decisions.

#### **Scoring**

There are 4 accreditation categories:

- School Organization
- School Community
- Recovery Practices
- Educational Practices

Within each category, there are 6 standards, and each standard has 6 indicators:

- A school must pass at least 4 of 6 *indicators* (67%) within each standard to meet the minimum expectation for that standard.
- A school must pass at least 4 of 6 *standards* (67%) within a category to meet the minimum expectation for that category.
- A school must pass all *categories* to earn accreditation, and a school must pass *75% of all indicators* (at least 108 of 144) across the 24 total standards. This means simply passing each standard at the minimum level of 4 indicators will not be sufficient to earn accreditation.

### **Final Accreditation Determination**

The outcome of this review will provide the school with a written report that includes a judgment and supporting evidence on various aspects of the school, based on a rubric of indicators developed for each of the four core questions and sub-questions in the *Accreditation Framework*. The assessment system utilizes the following judgments:

- Meets standard
- Does not meet standard

In the Accreditation Report, standards and indicators are listed with relevant evidence given related to the performance criteria. Following the discussion of each indicator, a summary of strengths and areas for attention are provided for the framework questions.

### **Mid-Cycle Review**

Each accredited school must pass a mid-cycle review, three years after receiving accreditation. This mid-cycle review will be a self-review, through the sharing of electronic documents and an online panel interview. The focus of the mid-cycle review will be any of the indicators not met during the initial accreditation period, as well as any substantive changes to the school's structure and procedures.

### **Re-Accreditation**

Schools must be re-accredited every six years. The re-accreditation process is similar to the initial, comprehensive review, with schools submitting a full report and hosting a visit by an accreditation team. Emphasis will be placed on any of the indicators not met during the initial accreditation period or mid-cycle review, as well as any substantive changes to the school's structure and procedures.