



Amber Pintar

National Director of Clinical Services
and Nutrition Management
Healthcare Services Group

In this Voices interview, Behavioral Health Business sits down with Amber Pintar, National Director of Clinical Services and Nutrition Management, Healthcare Services Group, to talk about how HCSG is transforming the dining experience at addiction treatment centers to support recovery. She reveals the strategies behind crafting menus that cater to residents' unique nutritional needs and breaks down the benefits of partnering with a seasoned service provider.

Editor's note: This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

With a heritage of excellence spanning half a century, HCSG serves the dining and environmental needs of healthcare communities. As a partner possessing proven systems, innovative resources, and dedicated team members who go beyond traditional expectations, HCSG delivers truly exceptional experiences and enhanced outcomes. Learn more at [HCSG.com/recovery](https://www.hcsg.com/recovery).

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Q: Behavioral Health Business:
How does HCSG ensure that dining menus for health care communities address the unique nutritional needs of residents in addiction recovery?

Amber Pintar: Over the past 12-18 months, HCSG has developed a specialized dining program tailored to the needs of residents in addiction recovery. The key to success lies in striking the right balance between comfort foods that residents enjoy and healthful options that promote healing and recovery. Through extensive research into addiction-specific conditions and collaboration with industry experts, we've created menu templates that achieve this balance.

Q: Behavioral Health Business:
Can you discuss specific foods or dietary practices that you've found particularly beneficial for residents in recovery?

Pintar: Studies show that individuals struggling with addiction often eat irregularly or skip meals entirely. Promoting good eating habits is essential, especially since food addiction can sometimes replace substance addiction. Our approach emphasizes nutrient-dense foods like fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and seafood, alongside a focus on proper hydration. Consistent meal and snack schedules with appropriate portions are crucial in preventing malnutrition and supporting emotional well-being during recovery.

Q: Behavioral Health Business:
How does HCSG accommodate individual dietary restrictions or preferences for residents with complex health conditions related to addiction?

Pintar: We design meal plans that cater to a wide variety of dietary needs, including diabetes, heart disease, gastrointestinal issues and food allergies. Open communication with residents allows us to understand their preferences, address concerns and ensure that their dietary needs are fully met. Additionally, we provide comprehensive training to our kitchen staff on dietary restrictions, food safety and allergen management. Collaboration with the treatment center's medical staff ensures that dietary plans align with the overall treatment goals, addressing any health complications along the way.

Q: Behavioral Health Business:
What are the benefits of partnering with HCSG for addiction treatment centers looking to enhance their dining services?

Pintar: Partnering with HCSG offers addiction treatment centers valuable nutritional expertise and support tailored to the unique needs of individuals in recovery. We develop menus that address nutritional deficiencies, dietary restrictions and co-occurring health conditions. Our registered dietitians work closely with facility leaders to provide expert advice on meal planning, nutrition education and individual dietary needs. This ensures that every resident receives the proper nutrition to support their recovery journey.

In addition to nutritional support, HCSG services can improve operational efficiency by managing food procurement, preparation and service, allowing treatment center staff to focus on core responsibilities. We leverage economies of scale to reduce food costs, minimize waste and ensure safety and hygiene compliance. By providing appetizing, appealing meals, we enhance the resident experience, fostering community-building through positive dining environments. In turn, our food service program can elevate a treatment center's reputation, attract new clients, and offer detailed reports on meal participation, costs, and resident satisfaction for data-driven decision-making.

Q: Behavioral Health Business:
How does HCSG stay ahead of industry trends and continuously improve its dining services to meet the evolving needs of residents in addiction recovery?

Pintar: Our approach is multifaceted. We engage in continuous learning through conferences, workshops, and professional development, and we actively seek opportunities to collaborate with industry stakeholders and the recovery community. Importantly, we learn directly from the residents we serve, adapting our practices based on their needs and experiences. We maintain close relationships with treatment center owners to exchange ideas and stay informed, ensuring we remain flexible and open to new strategies and solutions.

Q: Behavioral Health Business:
What life and career experiences do you most draw from in your role today?

Pintar: I began my nutrition career as a Registered Dietitian working in long-term care communities and providing nutrition education to residents in an addiction recovery center. Working directly with residents and collaborating with nutrition and foodservice professionals has profoundly influenced my career and the programs I've developed. Whether in addiction recovery or another setting, resident feedback and their overall health and satisfaction always guide my decisions.



Q: Behavioral Health Business: Finish this sentence:

In the behavioral health space, 2025 will be defined by...

“...the continued shift toward a “food as medicine” approach in supporting recovery.

We'll see a greater focus on personalized nutrition, food-based interventions and technology-driven solutions. Recognizing nutrition's role in mental, physical and emotional well-being will create new opportunities for improving recovery outcomes, requiring ongoing collaboration between providers, policymakers and food service professionals.”