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National Consensus Statement on Mental Health Recovery

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
 Center for Mental Health Services
www.samhsa.gov

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Background

Recovery is cited, within Transforming Mental Health Care in America, Action Agenda: First Steps, as the "single most important goal" for the health service delivery system.

To clearly define recovery, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Interagency Committee on Disability Research in partnership with six other Federal agencies convened the National Consensus Conference on Mental Health Recovery and Mental Health Systems Transformation on December 16-

Over 110 expert panelists participated, including mental health consumers, members, providers, advocates, researchers, academicians, managed care representatives, accreditation organization representatives, State and local officials, and others. A series of technical papers and reports were completed that examined topics such as recovery across the lifespan, definitions of recovery in cultural contexts, the intersection of mental health and addiction recovery, and the application of recovery at individual, family, community provider, organizational, and systems levels. The following consensus statement was derived from expert panelist deliberations on the findings.

Mental health recovery is a journey of healing and transformation enabling a person with a mental health problem to live a meaningful life in a community of his or her choice while striving to achieve his or her full potential.

The 10 Fundamental Components of Recovery

Self-Direction: Consumers lead, control, exercise choice over, and design their own path of recovery by optimizing autonomy, independence, and resources to achieve a self-determined life. By definition, the recovery must be self-directed by the individual, who defines his or her own life and designs a unique path towards those goals.

Individualized and Person-Centered: There are multiple pathways based on an individual's unique strengths and resiliencies as well as his needs, preferences, experiences (including past trauma), and cultural identity in all of its diverse representations. Individuals also identify recovery as an ongoing journey and an end result as well as an overall paradigm for a wellness and optimal mental health.

Empowerment: Consumers have the authority to choose from a range of options and to participate in all decisions—including the allocation of resources that affect their lives, and are educated and supported in so doing. They have the ability to join with other consumers to collectively and effectively speak for themselves about their needs, wants, desires, and aspirations. Through empowerment, an individual gains control of his or her own destiny and influences the organizational and societal structures in his or her life.

Holistic: Recovery encompasses an individual's whole life, including mind, spirit, and community. Recovery embraces all aspects of life, including employment, education, mental health and healthcare treatment and services, complementary and naturalistic services, addiction treatment, spiritual and creative, social networks, community participation, and family support determined by the person. Families, providers, organizations, systems, communities, and society play crucial roles in creating and maintaining meaningful opportunities for consumer access to these supports.

Non-Linear: Recovery is not a step-by-step process but one based on growth, occasional setbacks, and learning from experience. Recovery begins with an initial stage of awareness in which a person recognizes that positive change is possible. This awareness enables the consumer to move on to fully engage in the work of recovery.

Strengths-Based: Recovery focuses on valuing and building on the many capacities, resiliencies, talents, coping abilities, and inherent worth of individuals. By building on these strengths, consumers leave stymied life roles behind and engage in new life roles (e.g., partner, caregiver, friend, student, employee). The process of recovery moves forward through interaction with others in trusting, trust-based relationships.

Peer Support: Mutual support—including the sharing of experiential knowledge and skills and social learning—plays an invaluable role in recovery. Consumers encourage and engage other consumers in recovery and provide each other with a sense of belonging, supportive relationships, valued roles, and community.

Respect: Community, systems, and societal acceptance and appreciation of consumers—including protecting their rights and eliminating discrimination and stigma—are crucial in achieving recovery. Self-acceptance and regaining one's self are particularly vital. Respect ensures the inclusion and full participation of consumers in all aspects of their lives.

Responsibility: Consumers have a personal responsibility for their own and their families' journeys of recovery. Taking steps towards their goals may require courage. Consumers must strive to understand and give meaning to their own experiences and identify coping strategies and healing processes to promote their own wellness.

Hope: Recovery provides the essential and motivating message of a bright future— that people can and do overcome the barriers and obstacles that face them. Hope is internalized; but can be fostered by peers, families, friends, providers, and others. Hope is the catalyst of the recovery process. Mental health recovery not only benefits individuals with mental health disabilities but also enhances their abilities to live, work, learn, and fully participate in our society, which enriches the texture of American community life. America reaps the benefits of the contributions individuals with mental disabilities can make, ultimately becoming a stronger and healthier Nation.

Resources

www.samhsa.gov

National Mental Health Information Center
1-800-789-2647, 1-866-889-2647 (TDD)

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