

# PROPER ROLES FOR RECOVERY

**ISSUE:** Appropriate roles in the recovery movement

- What must clinical provide?
- What can be expected of the client/consumer of services?
- What must Consumer Survivor Initiative's provide?

## **SPECIFICS OF ISSUE:**

It is imperative that clinical mental health organizations simply ensure an attitude of care and hope for individuals and provide unencumbered access to services whenever a client/consumer is in need.

What must be understood is that recovery is essentially a taking back of control of one's own life in order to achieve a quality of life improvement. Stages and time frames cannot be imposed nor expected. Services must never be curtailed because a person has not arrived at a certain point and at a certain time.

Individuals will need to learn to take responsibility for their own lives and decide what they need to do from time to time and how to go about it, in order to satisfy the emerging issue/s. Referrals to consumer-run organizations are an important piece of the mental health continuum. Where such organizations do not exist, efforts should be made to establish them. Their mutual aid philosophy and peer support approach is a cornerstone of the recovery process.

## **ANALYSIS:**

There is a concern being voiced by many consumers and consumer groups. This concern is arising from the interest being shown for 'recovery' from a mental illness. The concern is the potential for co-option by traditional/clinical service providers throughout the mental health system. No one person or group may have done this in the clinical research or practice fields; but we have seen before and are seeing now where 'claims' are being staked out.

We feel that this potential will lead to a situation in which a process that has been described will become one that will be prescribed-even if, unintentionally. It is interesting to note that when scientists discover a pattern in nature, there is no claim ownership of it. But in the mental health system, it would appear that one can and does. It is hard to understand how observation and description imply ownership. It is one thing to observe that individuals do recover from a mental illness whether completely or to a degree that provides the person with a quite satisfying life; it is another to effectively declare adoption and control over the process. This must be guarded against.

Even though it is important that an individual be informed of the possibility of recovery and even full recovery; the specifics along the way will be those that the person themselves

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determines from time to time and particularly when ready. What constitutes recovery and what is necessary to an individual is quite personal to his or her own interests, needs and circumstances in life.

Organizations run by individuals who are or have been in the mental health system were founded by individuals in recovery and have as their basis, a lived-experience, been there and done that, understanding of the difficulties of living with a mental illness and getting one's own life back on track.

Only one person can claim recovery or the potential to recover and the process for recovering: the individual.

**AUDIENCE:**

Clients/Consumers in the mental health system; Provincial Ministries of Health; Federal Committees on Mental Health; Provincial MPP's and Federal MP's; Consumer-run organizations.

**POLICY:**

- Recovery from mental illness is real! All persons with a mental illness have the potential to recover.
- Recovery is the goal and task of the person in the process. Self-determination / self-direction are critical components of recovery. Persons recovering from mental illness require the opportunity to define their own solutions to their problems, and must have access to the knowledge, resources and supports they require to achieve their solutions.
- Clinical services and service providers are responsible for providing a hopeful, respectful environment that encourages the individual in their recovery process.
- Services must be accessible and responsive to the individuals self-identified needs. Services must build on an individual's strengths.
- Consumer-run organizations having a peer support / mutual aid philosophy, are a demonstrated evidence-based best-practice that may greatly enhance a person's recovery and must be included as a first step referral option for people seeking help for their mental health struggles.
- Consumer-run organizations operating as demonstrated best practices must be supported and funded adequately to carry out their roles.

**INFORMATION SOURCES:**

There is an abundance of Recovery literature available to us. If interested in some of the literature, please refer to the [recovery resources page](#) on the [PCE webpages](#). In addition,

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additional, alternative recovery resources are available at the [ccamhr.ca](http://ccamhr.ca) website.

'If you have hope, you just can't keep someone down'.  
Doctor in Biloxi Mississippi, Coastal Family Health Center,  
ABC, *Extreme Makeover*, March 23, 2006



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Property of the Canadian Coalition of Alternative Mental Health Resources and the consumer/survivor community of Canada