

# Practices of Recovery-Oriented Mental Health Workers

Developed by  
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Derived from Themes and Comments from Recovery-Oriented Practices Forums  
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and

Adapted to the Jacobson Model of Recovery

*“We’re at the beginning stages of this and we need to remember that.”*  
*(participant in focus group)*

1. **Demonstrates knowledge and understanding about the concept of recovery and the Wisconsin model.**
  - Internal Conditions
    - Hope
    - Healing
    - Empowerment
    - Connection
  - External Conditions
    - Human rights
    - Positive culture of healing
    - Recovery-oriented services
2. **Reflective about practice and open to continual learning**

*For example:*

  - Seeks out new information and alternate perspectives
  - Actively participates in supervision
  - Seeks and welcomes opportunities for feedback and constructive critique
  - Willing to talk about hard issues
  - Integrates new concepts and ideas in to day-to-day practice
3. **Recognizes own personal values, assumptions, and biases.**

*For Example:*

  - Avoids imposing personal values on others, but when it happens, owns the values as one’s own
4. **Demonstrates humility**

*For example:*

  - Staff view themselves as hired by the consumers
  - Recognize they are not always the “expert”; willing to admit they don’t know everything

# Internal Conditions

## HOPE

(Attitude change, Grace)

### 1. Uses hope-inspiring practices and strategies

*For Example: (from Rec & MH Con in WI)*

- Communicates expectation of recovery and success
- Expresses genuine concern about person's well being
- Believes fully in person's potential and strength
- Trusting the authenticity of the person's experiences
- Helps people develop hope and belief in a positive future

### 2. Focuses on and building people's strengths and personal resources

*For Example:*

- Emphasizes what is working, not just problems and pathology.
- Reframes to highlight consumer strengths, effort, and resourcefulness.
- Celebrates successes, courage, and good effort.
- Notices and acknowledges success along the way.
- Helps people to recognize and value their own strengths and personal resources.

## HEALING

(Defining self as apart of the illness, control of distress, symptoms, etc.)

### 1. Helps individuals to define themselves as apart from the illness or disorder

**Uses language that straightforward, respectful and non-stigmatizing**

*For Example:*

- Talks to and relates to the whole person; not just the mental illness
- Always uses person-first language; avoids "us/them" language, labels or stereotyping terms such as "high" and "low" functioning.
- Uses straightforward and non-clinical terms to "de-mystify" constructs or ideas.
- Calls person by his/her name, not "patient" or patronymics.
- Accepts individual emotions, disagreements, and differences of opinions as personal expressions rather than as symptoms or signs of pathology.

**Recognizes and honors diverse ways that people view their situations, experiences, and the context understand mental illness**

*For Example:*

- Respects the worldview and experiences of each individual.
- Recognizes that individual views about mental illness arise from different belief systems and cultural contexts.
- Honors the viability of alternate ways of seeing and construing mental illness.
- Works to understand how context and culture affect "what's behind an individual's behavior"
- Tries to find out what is important to each person and how to best connect with that person.
- Uses people's own words when describing their situation, goals and experience.

**Understands how personal experience impacts how individuals view themselves and their circumstances.**

*For Example:*

- Recognizes the impact of hospitalization, discrimination, and stigma affect self-concepts of individuals.
- Understands what it means for a person to have an emergency detention or be an involuntary recipient of a mental health services.
- Understands the impact of personal physical, emotional, sexual trauma on the perception of or manifestation of mental illness.

**2. Helps individuals to identify and individualize ways to manage personal distress, problems, and symptoms.**

**Helps consumers to strengthen existing abilities and to develop additional coping skills and support resources**

*For Example:*

- Assists individuals with creating an inventory of coping skills and resources
- Identifies things that “don’t work” as well as things that “work” and some new approaches to try
- Helps individuals get information and assists with strategy brainstorming when needed
- .
- Helps individuals seek out and use approaches to replace ones that “don’t work”.

**Proactively works with consumers and others to collaboratively develop viable relapse prevention plans.**

*For Example:*

- Helps individuals to write personal plans for how to manage times when they experience symptom or situational changes.
- Emphasizes individual resilience and coping resources first, with how workers and services can support the consumer’s personal resources and abilities second; and how workers or services function or intervene as back-ups last.
- Considers ways to help consumers identify and manage unsafe situations
- Views crisis planning (e.g. WRAP) as a tool, but also as a process, a relationship, and a way of thinking. Avoids viewing relapse prevention plans as contracts.
- Plans reflect understanding of the highly individual nature of crisis, relapse patterns, and each person’s unique interpretation of their situation.

**Develops with consumer and his/her support network a mutually acceptable crisis response plan**

*For Example:*

- Develops with consumer and others a mutual definition of crisis.
- Ensures that consumers have a copy of all crisis plans as well as others involved.
- Talks honestly about what kinds of things can happen and how to keep channels open for negotiation.
- Encourages individual to name a trusted advocate and involve that person (s) in the development and implementation of the plan.

## **Supports use of Advance Directives and Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare (DPOA)**

*For Example:*

- Understands Advance Directives and DPOA and their legal use and limitations in Wisconsin.
- Encourages and supports the use of Advance Directives, DPOA, and crisis plans.

## **EMPOWERMENT**

(Autonomy, Courage, Responsibility)

### **1. Supports consumer autonomy, self-determination and personal decision-making responsibility**

*For Example:*

- Facilitates informed decision-making
- Identifies, creates, promotes, ensures a range of choices and options available to the consumer.
- Ensures people have full information for decision-making
- Encourages and supports personal choices in treatments and service providers
- Expects and allows for people to take risks and make mistakes.
- Supports reasoned and informed risk-taking; negotiates reasonable back-up plans.
- Discusses openly and honestly conflicts between risks, responsibility, and rights
- Talks honestly about whatever “bottom lines” there may be and the limits of support for personal decision-making and risk-taking.

### **2. Helps and supports consumers to deal constructively with their life situations, challenges, and the distressing aspects of mental illness**

*For Example:*

- Helps people use their own coping and problem solving skills.
- Talks about what works and what doesn't work from consumer's vantage point.
- Respects that consumers are their “experts” in their own right (“I'm the expert on me”).
- Helps consumer identify and explore a range of options until “it fits”.
- Knows when to offer assistance and when to “butt out”.
- Encourages exploration of ways of managing and coping with illness and problems in addition to medication.

### **3. Invites and values consumer input and participation in plans, programs, and policies**

*For Example:*

- Encourages and supports consumer involvement in dialogs, forums, meetings, and so forth.
- Offers multiple opportunities and ways to provide input (e.g. suggestion boxes, comment cards, satisfaction surveys)
- Supports consumers to provide input informally (without having to attend a meeting)
- Values and acts on consumer input.

### **4. Honors to the greatest degree possible consumer preferences for meeting frequency, times and places.**

*For example:*

- Notifies consumers whenever the worker needs to cancel or delay an appointment; expects the same respect from consumers.
- Reflects what is expected of others.

## CONNECTION – INTERPERSONAL

### 1. **Communicates in ways that shows respect and facilitates positive relationships**

#### **Approaches communication and interactions from an adult – adult stance**

##### *For Example:*

- Shares information directly, honestly -- even when “I don’t know” is the answer.
- Discusses expectations upfront and recognizes personal assumptions/bias.
- Admits mistakes openly and apologize sincerely
- Conversations demonstrate presumption that consumers have knowledge, skills, abilities, opinions, and dreams

#### **Establishes parameters for safety in each relationship**

##### *For Example:*

- Creates environment where information can be shared, both ways, without recrimination or fear of retaliation
- Discusses and negotiates upfront with consumer the boundaries of relationship
- Talks honestly and encourages dialog about how the relationship itself impacts both parties
- Demonstrates awareness about the impact of trauma that arises out of mental illness and the service system

#### **Listens in a way that makes people feel “listened to”, heard, and understood**

##### *For Example*

- Listens to learn and understand, not diagnose
- Takes the time to listen and learn, even when person may be not fully coherent
- Establishes a tone of openness
- Works to understand what is going on from consumer’s perspective
- Validates that what people feel or experience is “real” – at least to them.

#### **Encourages genuine dialogue**

##### *For Example:*

- Willing to talk about the “hard stuff” and the struggle within the relationship
- Builds a common language and constructs shared meaning
- Takes personal risks through self-disclosure and expression of personal emotion
- Works to earn the trust of others; doesn’t expect it automatically.
- Expects consumer as well as self to openly question and challenge each other, discuss and make conjoint decisions.

#### **Recognizes and addresses power issues upfront and honestly**

##### *For Example:*

- Respectful of own power as well of that of consumer
- Promotes shared decision-making and responsibility, but recognizes the barriers to true “equality” inherent in both the current service system structure and in one’s own personal needs and bias.

#### **Negotiates conflicts, disagreements, and differences of opinion**

##### *For Example:*

- Explores the other person’s perspective and needs
- Searches for common ground
- Clarifies what is negotiable and not negotiable – for both the worker/system and for the consumer
- Shows willingness to “give a little” and does not exercise power just to get own way

## **CONNECTION – COMMUNITY**

(Getting a “life”, shifting roles, Involvement, helping others, dignity/trust, bearing witness)

### **1. Helps people to find personal purpose and meaning in their lives.**

*For example:*

- Encourages and supports consumers to create or reclaim valued adult-life roles: worker, student, tenant, parent, care-taker, artist and so forth.
- Supports the work-life of consumers.

### **2. Supports the ability of consumers to live successfully in lifestyles of their own choosing.**

*For Example:*

- Helps people find, get, and keep adequate housing, work, and income.
- Supports people to establish, build, or maintain personal relationships with family of origin, partners, friends, work colleagues, peer networks and so forth.
- Recognizes and discusses tensions created between personal lifestyle choices and prevailing community, family, or worker values.
- Assists people access necessary resources to be successful in lifestyles of choice.
- Help people develop the knowledge and skills they need to be successful.
- Helps people establish and maintain positive and ongoing personal supports outside the mental health service arena.

### **3. Helps people get on with life beyond mental illness**

*For Example:*

- Recognizes that the process of recovery means that individuals may require fewer professional services over time.
- Demonstrates ability to disengage, fade and discontinue services that are no longer needed.
- Supporting individuals to develop reliable personal networks for support and friendship external to the professional service system.

# External Conditions

## HUMAN RIGHTS

(reduce stigma, opportunity, access)

### 1. Demonstrates knowledge about consumers' legal, civil, and human rights.

*For Example:*

- Considers rights from legal, ethical, and moral bases.
- Recognizes the tensions between individual consumer rights and the rights of communities and families.
- Asks and explores how rights and exercise of rights may look different for varying cultures, ages, and genders.

### 2. Encourages and helps consumers to know and exercise their rights.

*For Example:*

- Provides information and discusses rights with people in a balanced and individualized manner (e.g. more than a poster).
- Asks and explores how rights and exercise of rights may look different for varying cultures, ages, and genders.
- Knows local resources and support for personal advocacy.
- Educates consumers about agency grievance procedures and their protocols
- Encourages and supports consumers to use agency grievance procedures and/or external resources when they believe their rights have been violated.

### 3. Fights evidence of stigma and discrimination internal and external to the organization

*For Example:*

- Does not justify or support people's exclusion from services, opportunity, access, or resources on the basis of race, gender, age, mental illness, and so forth.
- Addresses evidence of stigma and discrimination, internal and external to the organization.
- Recognizes, addresses, and does not reinforce the impact of internalized discrimination on the individuals served.

### 4. Respects and supports the right and desire of individuals to control personal information

*For Example:*

- Supports and assists individuals in accessing their personal records and inserting into them their personal comments or alternate views.
- Understands the importance of "nothing about us without us" and honors it.
- Recognizes people have rights to a private life and not have to answer all questions or make personal space public.
- Helps people know when and how to self-disclose about mental health problems, and when not to

## CULTURE OF HEALING

(tolerance, diversity, attitude change, staff engagement, empowered staff, collaborative relationships, participation, human rights, consumer rights, informed consent)...

### 1. Helps build and develop healing and recovery attitudes and practices within the organization.

*For example:*

- Ensures homey and comfortable look
- Respects privacy of consumers (e.g. make sure there are curtains)

## **2. Minimizes use of involuntary, coercive or intrusive actions**

**Focuses on building positive relationships to minimize use of coercive or intrusive measures**

*For example:*

- Listens to the consumer viewpoint of situation.
- Explores options collaboratively with consumer, family and concerned others.
- Realizes that force or abandonment are not the only options.

**Uses the least amount coercive or intrusive practices needed to assure safety of consumer and others.**

*For Example:*

- Identifies and promotes use of alternative approaches wherever possible.
- Allows and supports natural authorities and natural consequences to occur, rather than dictating and threatening (e.g. bring in landlord to discuss lease and cleaning issues).
- Avoids use of seclusion and restraints

**If/when involuntary, coercive, or intrusive interventions used, ensures consumer safety and dignity**

*For Example:*

- Helps person stay linked with community; reconnect as soon as possible after inpatient care
- Talks with consumer about turmoil, anger, and “what is to be learned” during/after interventions
- If considering an extension of involuntary status, discusses the reasons with consumer

**Selectively and carefully uses payeeships**

*For example:*

- Does not make receiving personal money contingent on taking medications.
- As a case managers, does not function as a direct payee.
- As a standard, works toward getting people off payeeships and provides education and support for them to handle their own money

## **RECOVERY-ORIENTED SERVICES**

(Professional Services, consumer-run, collaborative)

- 1. There is a range of treatment choices: medications, programs, CSPs, work**
- 2. Service plans and treatment/support activities are created with the consumer, highly individualized and personally meaningful to the individual**

**Assessment is used to help the worker and the consumer to develop a shared understanding and set the stage for negotiating change.**

*For Example:*

- Assessments are developed through relationship and dialogue; they are informal, ongoing, collaborative, and done in settings that are comfortable for the consumer.
- All assessments include experiences of emotional, physical, sexual, battle/refugee trauma
- Makes a concerted effort to understand what constructs, assumptions, perspectives, beliefs are created by each person’s individual experiences, and how these impact or drive behavior.
- Gets to know an individual by conversation and relationship, not by reading assessments done by others.



- Takes into consideration the impact of who is doing the assessing or asking, where it is taking place, how things are being asked, and whether an advocate is present.
- Operates from a stance of transparency: people know what is happening and why the questions are being asked and further, allows for mutual disclosure during assessment by asking, “what do you want to know about me”
- In on-going assessments, worker not only gathers data, but also encourages discussion of helping relationship.
- Encourages and values self-assessment by consumers as part of a collaborative process.
- Encourages consumer to invite allies, families, friends, advocates and others to contribute to the assessment.

### **Plans, goals and activities are developed collaboratively**

*For Example:*

- Includes consumer in all treatment discussions and decisions
- Encourages consumer to invite/involve personal advocate, allies, and family in discussions and decisions
- Negotiates differences in opinion about in plans, goals, and activities with all sides making trade-offs
- Encourage people to think about and consult with others about proposed plans, goals and activities before making decisions.
- Separates system goals from consumer goals; promote transparency.
- Supports consumers in writing core portions of a service plan.
- Makes sure consumers have personal copies of their plans.

### **Plans, goals and activities are based on what the individual finds personally meaningful in his/her life**

*For Example:*

- Mutually determines definitions of success the best ways to achieve goals
- Negotiates flexible ways meet requirements, perform tasks, share responsibilities.
- Encourages consumers to *not* sign anything they do not help develop, fully understand or agree with.
- Knows that good service plans are fluid and dynamic, and may change rapidly to reflect changing needs, preferences, or circumstances.

### **Offers information and explores options until the person finds what is right/what fits/what works for them.**

*For Example:*

- Avoids the “laundry list” approach; explores potential options with each person
- Allows people to go at their own pace
- Encourages and supports people to push a bit beyond expectations and to move forward
- Avoids prescriptive or “boiler plate” plans and interventions

### **Views service planning from a broad perspective: Life Planning or Personal Planning**

*For Example:*

- Considers services as one small aspect of a person’s life and helps individuals to view services as a tool to build a desired life.
- Thinks beyond “episodes of care”
- Encourages and helps people to meet their basic needs (for housing, food, clothing, companionship, etc.) in ways that do not rely primarily on mental health services.
- Looks for opportunities to replace formal services with more informal or generic supports.

### **3. Supports use of peer support and consumer operated services**

#### **Understands the value, history, and politics of consumer operated services and peer support**

*For Example:*

- Advocates to keep consumer operated services and drop-in programs away from traditional service settings.
- Recognizes the need and value of “models of recovery” to help people “see” and define recovery, and understand that recovery in serious mental illness is common and doable.
- Support consumers in providing respite and crisis services for each other.

#### **Values colleagues who are consumers**

*For Example:*

- Promotes and supports consumers as staff in mental health services in all capacities.
- Supports and encourages use of consumer mentors for other consumers.

### **4. Respects and protects consumer choice and dignity in institutional settings**

*For example:*

- Smoking choices
- Ask people what works for them when admitted
- Tell people their rights before they go to a hospital, at time of police pick-up
- Police should not pick up people before contact with a mental health worker
- Involve consumer in discharge planning
- Privacy: curtains in bedrooms and bathrooms
- Right to wear own clothing
- Access to bathrooms when in involuntary commitments
- Separate teens from adults
- Avoid using observations rooms and 24-hour observations when admitted to hospital
- Meaningful activities rather than occupational therapy
- Respect patient confidentiality: don't talk about people in front of people
- Understand trauma and retraumatization
- Avoid restraint, handcuffs