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OPEN MINDS *The Behavioral Health & Social Service Industry Analyst*
Tracking the Consumer Revolution

Principles of Recovery & New Service Developments: Operationalization of the Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care Concept

Recovery may seem like an illusory concept. In behavioral health and health care we look for finite cures demonstrating success and progress. Is your organization struggling with how to operationalize the concept of a recovery-oriented system of care? It takes new services and new relationships to make this happen.



Service Delivery Elements in Recovery-Oriented Care Systems

How do you position your organization to be prepared for the implications of developing a service delivery system that meets the needs of the consumer recovery movement? Understanding the guiding principles of recovery, both for mental health and substance abuse is the first step. The principles of a common recovery vision share the notion that for both disorders, recovery is a personal and individualized process of growth that unfolds along a continuum, with multiple pathways leading to recovery. People in recovery from mental illness and/or addictions — and their family members — are leading the call to change the current service systems of care toward a more focused goal of long-term recovery.

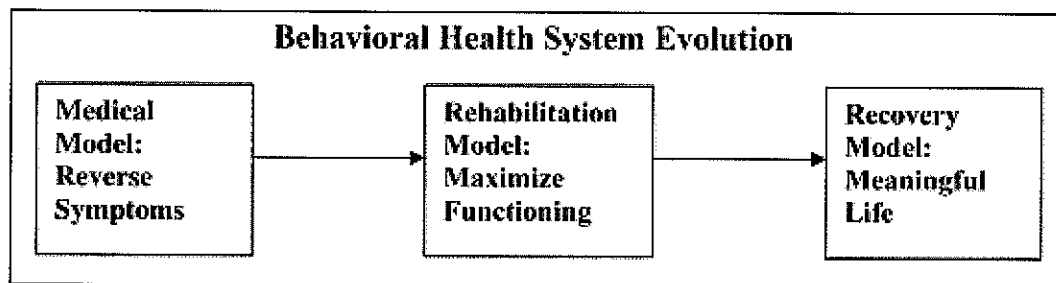
The principles of recovery-oriented mental health and addiction systems are based on the recognition that each person must either lead or be the central participant in his or her own recovery. Two definitions are necessary in eliminating the confusion and in building a workable understanding:

- Recovery refers to the process by which persons with or affected by mental illness and/or addiction experience and actively manage their disorder and reclaim their lives in the community.
- Recovery-oriented care is what psychiatric and addiction treatment and rehabilitation professionals offer in support of the individual/family's own recovery efforts.

The 'principles of recovery' are shared interpretations, whether you visit consumer recovery websites like the Ellen Copeland Center or the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Incorporate These Principles in Your Development of New Services

Providers of behavioral health care would likely be able to embrace these recovery principles (shown below) but need to overcome one major source of the confusion surrounding use of the phrase "in recovery." The critical thinking error is about the respective roles of behavioral health professionals and those of people with behavioral health disorders (the consumers). The shift necessary in correcting the critical error is represented in the behavioral health system evolution below.



Principles of Recovery

1. People who experience mental health difficulties (consumers) get well, stay well, and go on to meet their life dreams and goals.
2. It is up to the consumer, with the assistance of others, to take action and do what is necessary to remain well.
3. Consumers and family members must learn about what they are experiencing so they can make good decisions about all aspects of their life.
4. Consumers and family members need to effectively reach out to others so they can get what it is they need, want, and deserve to support wellness and recovery.
5. While working toward wellness is up to the consumer, receiving support from others and giving support to others will help the consumer feel better and enhance their quality of life.
6. Recovery is a process through which one gradually achieves a greater balance of mind, body, and spirit in relation to other aspects of one's life, including family, work, and community.
7. Each person's recovery process is unique and impacted by cultural beliefs and traditions. A person's cultural experience often shapes the recovery path that is right for him or her.
8. Recovery is a holistic healing process in which one develops a positive and meaningful sense of identity.
9. Recovery involves a process of building or rebuilding what a person has lost or never had due to his or her condition and its consequences. Recovery involves creating a life within the limitation imposed by that condition, and building (or rebuilding) healthy family, social, and personal relationships. Those in recovery often achieve improvements in the quality of their life, such as obtaining education, employment, and housing.
10. Recovery is a process by which people confront discrimination and strive to overcome stigmatization.

The challenge for provider organizations to incorporate the principle in the recovery model is to move toward a partner-based philosophy in which behavioral health providers are integral on the continuum of resources for the consumer. A partner-based philosophy involves engaging the consumer, family members, advocates, and professional provider groups to define their respective roles in the recovery-oriented system of care through focus and advisory groups, and education of all partners on the Recovery Model.

Recovery-oriented interventions need to incorporate the promotion of a level of independence comfortable for the consumer and in line with his/her cultural norms and values concerning family relationships, the development and fostering of good support systems, the reduction of symptoms and

the development of social skills, and the enhancement of strengths while minimizing deficits. Consumers need to be educated and informed in order to advocate for themselves. Recovery-based professional care optimizes natural support networks; however, issues regarding the involvement of family, including which family members, participating in which intervention, and for what duration, would be at the discretion of the consumer.

A critical aspect of the recovery movement is accepting the role that cultural values, beliefs, and norms play in influencing consumer-selected treatment goals. For example, in some cultures familial interdependence may be valued over individual independence. Furthermore, the family itself, rather than the individual consumer, may be the driving force behind the selection of preferred treatments and outcomes. Behavioral health professionals need to be sensitive to both the varying influence other family members may have in determining treatment goals and to relatives' comfort with various family modalities whose effectiveness may differ based on cultural group.

Stay tuned for my June article which will speak specifically to how to operationalize recovery-oriented systems of care and explore the state of availability of recovery-oriented services across the US.

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Aune, Dan M. (2009, May). Tracking the Consumer Revolution: Principles of Recovery & New Service Developments: Operationalization of the Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care Concept. OPEN MINDS, The Behavioral Health & Social Service Industry Analyst 21:2, 8.

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