

SCDMH wishes to establish within and throughout its organization an environment where the process of recovery can be experienced by people who have mental illnesses by the setting of agency-wide goals that create, support and maintain the following principles/values:

1. Recovery happens when people take responsibility for their mental health and begin to direct the course of their lives.
2. All people have strengths and talents that they can use to establish a life in recovery.
3. People in recovery and service providers must focus on health holistically, being aware of mind, body, spirit and environment.
4. Meaningful work, safe housing and pleasurable leisure are necessary components of recovery.
5. People with mental illnesses must be given choices about all aspects of their lives, and they must be supported in these choices even when there is a likelihood of failure.
6. People in recovery need valuable roles in the community.
7. People in recovery may still experience symptoms.
8. Having adequate finances to meet basic needs is vital to recovery.
9. People recover in partnership with family, friends and professional mental health workers and in communities where public and private service providers and advocacy groups work in partnership to provide support.
10. Hope is a vital component of recovery.



“Recovery is a process by which a person overcomes the challenges presented by a mental illness to live a life of meaning and purpose.”

**Story Submission Information:
Send Your Story To:**

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How to Write and Submit Your Recovery Story

What is a Recovery Story?

A recovery story is simply an accounting or recounting of your experiences with mental illness and/or substance abuse. They are meant to offer hope and inspiration to others who are experiencing similar issues while at the same time celebrating how far you have come.

What's in a Recovery Story?

Before discussing what goes in a story, let's explore what recovery is and isn't. To make things difficult there is no one single definition of recovery. It has been described as a deeply personal, unique process of changing one's attitudes, values, feelings, goals, skills, and/or roles, "the process by which a person overcomes the challenges presented by a mental illness and/or substance to live a life of meaning and purpose".

It is also important to remember that there are two kinds of stories – an illness story and a recovery story. Illness stories tend to be more negative, focusing on graphic images or details, anger, feelings of hopelessness, etcetera. If you decide to try to tell or write your story and it has more negative elements than positive ones, that's okay. Sometimes people find they have to tell or write an illness story first, before being able to move on to the recovery story.

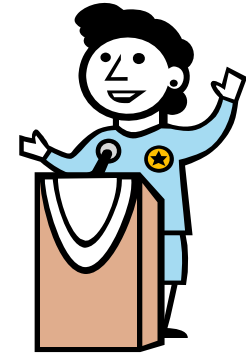


How Do I know if I Am Ready?

Deciding if you want to share your story is a very important decision, deserving of careful reflection and thought. On the positive side, the stories are very empowering because your experiences put you in unique position to offer hope, understanding and information to others struggling in ways that no other person can. On the negative side telling your story when you are not ready can leave you feeling pressured and overwhelmed.

Recounting your experiences, good and bad, can leave you feeling vulnerable. It is also important to remember that your story will probably change and grow over time as you change and grow. This combined with the lack of a concrete definition, means that it is up to you to decide if when you are ready to begin sharing your story. Below are some guidelines that may help you decide.

- ☑ **Write and Leave Alone:** Write your story and leave it alone for a day or two. When you are ready, read it over, is it an illness or a recovery story? If it is an illness story, try recounting your experiences again.
- ☑ **You Don't Have to Share Everything:** Deciding that you want to share your story does not mean you have to report or detail every experience you have had. Not disclosing more than you are comfortable with is okay.
- ☑ **Understand Why** In telling your story, you can offer insight and hope to others struggling to understand what is happening in ways that no other person can. But keep in mind what you can't do; you can't recovery for someone else or tell them how to do it.



I Am Ready to Try but I Still Need Help. What Do I Do?

When writing your story, keep in mind that you are talking about you and your experiences – you are not giving directions, medical advice or instructions to others. If you have trouble deciding what might go in your story the question below may help.

1. What were some of the early indications that you were beginning to have difficulties?
2. How would you describe (briefly) yourself and your situation when you were at your worst?
3. What helped you move from where you were to where you are now? What did you do? What did others do?
4. What have you had to overcome to get where you are today?
5. What have you learned about yourself and what we call recovery? What are some of the strengths you have developed?
6. What are some of the things that you do to keep you on the right path?