

Harm Reduction

Recovery-Oriented Care

A recovery-oriented approach uses strategies to empower people to use their strengths and skills to help them lead the life that they choose when experiencing substance use and mental health issues.

Harm reduction is closely linked to recovery-oriented care

Harm reduction is founded on kindness, compassion, and caring. A harm reduction approach includes policies, programs, and practices that aim to reduce the negative consequences of using psychoactive substances, without necessarily reducing substance use itself.

Using a recovery-oriented approach, we empower people experiencing substance use and mental health issues to use their strengths and skills to live the life they choose. Empowering a person often includes a harm reduction approach, where their choices are supported and they are treated with dignity and respect.



Key recovery terms

A **recovery goal** is individually defined. It involves a person living a satisfying, hopeful, and contributing life, even when they may be experiencing ongoing symptoms of mental health illness or substance use. A person's recovery goal may not include abstinence.

Recovery is realized when a person reaches their recovery goal. Recovery is self-defined and looks different from one person to the next. Recovery may not necessarily mean abstaining from substance use.

A **recovery journey** is a process of change on the way to reaching an individual's recovery goal. The person has increasing responsibility and control of their life to improve health and wellness, and move towards hope and a positive identity.

Recovery-oriented care involves healthcare providers working with individuals and their families to reach their chosen recovery goals. Healthcare providers build on personal strengths and skills to enhance health outcomes and quality of life. This includes a broad range of activities that are person-centred and promote resilience.

Principles of Recovery

There are many pathways in Recovery

- Recovery involves a process of personal growth along a continuum leading to abstinence. It includes a range of services and supports that spans peer support, mutual aid, early identification and intervention, outreach and engagement, specialized treatment, relapse prevention, and continuing care.

Recovery requires collaboration

- Recovery-focused systems require collaboration across sectors, including peer support and mutual aid, health, social, educational, criminal justice, employment, economic, spiritual, and housing sectors.

Recovery is a personal journey toward well-being

- Recovery is an ongoing and dynamic process that is unique to the individual's strengths, culture, gender, personal qualities, and experiences.

Recovery extends beyond the individual

- Recovery involves family, peers, workplaces, and the community.

Recovery is multidimensional

- Recovery enhances physical, social, mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

Recovery involves everyone

- Everyone has a role to play in overcoming the stigma of addiction and in supporting and celebrating Recovery

The Mental Health Commission of Canada on the concept of recovery

“The concept of recovery in mental health refers to living a satisfying, hopeful, and contributing life, even when a person may be experiencing ongoing symptoms of a mental health problem or illness. Recovery journeys build on individual, family, cultural, and community strengths and can be supported by many types of services, supports, and treatments.

Recovery principles including hope, dignity, self-determination, and responsibility can be adapted to the realities of different life stages, and to the full range of mental health problems and illnesses. Recovery is not only possible, it should be expected.

Championed by people with lived experience of mental health problems and illnesses for decades, recovery is being widely embraced by practitioners, service providers, and policy makers in Canada and around the world. It is recognized as key to achieving better mental health outcomes and improving mental health systems.”



Recovery-oriented services do not address addictions and mental health problems sequentially, do not use exclusion criteria or impose treatments.

Recovery-oriented practitioners and providers in both mental health and addictions services work with people at whatever happens to be their current state and respect the choices, autonomy, dignity and self-determination of service users.

They see to people’s safety and offer support for harm reduction, positive risk-taking and continual personal growth.

**Mental Health
Commission of Canada**



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