



## Declaring our commitment to recovery

The concept of 'recovery' in mental health refers to living a satisfying, hopeful, and contributing life, even when there are on-going limitations caused by mental health problems and illnesses. This Declaration outlines key recovery principles. Its purpose is to stimulate dialogue about how to make recovery a reality across the mental health system.

There is growing momentum across Canada to implement recovery-oriented policies, programs, and practices. The Mental Health Commission of Canada invites you to join this journey of learning together by reading and endorsing this Declaration of Commitment to Recovery.



Mental Health  
Commission  
of Canada

Commission de  
la santé mentale  
du Canada

# Declaring our commitment to recovery

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*The Mental Health Strategy for Canada* identifies recovery as central to improving health outcomes and quality of life for people living with mental health problems and illnesses and to changing the way we approach mental health and mental illness. Recovery approaches stand on two pillars:

- 1 Recognizing that each person is a unique individual with the right to determine his or her own path towards mental health and wellbeing;
- 2 Understanding that we live our lives in complex societies where many intersecting factors (biological, psychological, social, economic, cultural, and spiritual) have an impact on mental health and wellbeing.

Recovery is a process in which people living with mental health problems and illnesses are actively engaged in their own journey of wellbeing. Recovery journeys build on individual, family, cultural, and community strengths and can be supported by many types of services, supports, and treatments. The goal is to enable people to exercise all their rights as citizens and to enjoy a meaningful life in their community while striving to achieve their full potential. Recovery principles – including hope, 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 a new idea. It has been developed and championed by people with lived experience for decades. It is being embraced by policy makers, service providers, and practitioners in Canada and around the world. It is widely recognized as a key to achieving better mental health outcomes and improving mental health systems.

## Purpose of the declaration

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The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) is committed to working with all stakeholders to make recovery and recovery-oriented services a reality across the country. It has initiated this Declaration to promote an understanding of key recovery principles and stimulate dialogue about implementing recovery-oriented approaches. The MHCC will also support this process by sharing best, leading, and promising practices and by developing practical resources, including guidelines for recovery practice.

Everyone with an interest in fostering mental health and wellbeing – regardless of role, expertise or profession – is invited to endorse this Declaration, encourage discussion of the guiding principles of recovery within their organization or community, and embark on an ongoing journey of learning together. Every endorsement, by individuals or by organizations, is important and will contribute to broadening awareness and strengthening the momentum behind recovery.

# Recovery principles

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## Recovery is person-driven

- Recovery starts with hope, optimism, and the fundamental belief that recovery is possible.
- There is no single pathway to recovery. It is a uniquely personal, self-determined, and self-managed journey.
- Recovery is an ongoing journey – marked by achievements and by setbacks – that enables people to take charge of their mental health and wellbeing.

## Recovery is supported by building meaningful relationships and through social networks

- Recovery is enhanced by people's full participation in all aspects of the life of their community.
- Family, friends, and peers –through their support – facilitate and strengthen the journey of recovery.
- Families are best able to contribute to the recovery of their loved ones when their own needs are recognized and they are supported in their own journeys of recovery.
- Supportive communities are welcoming, address stigma and discrimination, and seek to ensure equitable access to services, resources, housing, and income.
- Peer support can play a central role in recovery and peer supporters are an integral part of a recovery-oriented system.

## Recovery-oriented practices and services support the recovery journey by:

- Looking beyond illness and seeing the resilience, strengths, and capacities people have to achieve their full potential.
- Enabling people to define their own goals and master the tools they need to take responsibility for their own recovery.
- Maximizing the opportunity for people to choose for themselves the most appropriate treatments, services, and supports.
- Working to create genuine partnerships between service providers, service users, families, and supporters that are based on respect for the expertise gained through lived experience as well as professional expertise.
- Respecting the dignity of risk and balancing calculated risk-taking with legal obligations of care.
- Acknowledging the multiple factors that influence mental health and wellbeing across the course of people's lives – including access to education, employment and housing, as well as freedom from all forms of prejudice and discrimination.
- Recognizing that trauma can impact people's mental health and applying principles of trauma-informed inquiry and care.
- Working to minimize all forms of coercion, seclusion, and restraint within services.
- Responding to the worldview of Canada's Indigenous peoples and respecting their specific cultures, values, and history.
- Providing culturally safe and responsive care to meet the needs of Canada's diverse population.
- Adapting practices to the full spectrum of people's lives: supporting children and youth as they develop by strengthening resilience, families, friendships, and community supports; treating older adults with dignity and respect, maximizing their independence and fostering social and community connections.

## Supporting recovery requires leadership

- Implementing a recovery orientation is a shared responsibility of everyone involved in the mental health system and requires commitment and ongoing learning throughout each organization.
- The development of recovery-oriented practices and supports relies on the best available evidence, including that derived from the experience of people living with mental health problems and illnesses and their families.
- Recovery-oriented practices and services can best be supported by governments that are able to join together the efforts of the numerous departments whose work has an impact on mental health and wellbeing.
- Recovery-oriented practices and supports promote social inclusion and uphold the rights and full citizenship of people living with mental health problems and illnesses.

# Commitments

The purpose of this Declaration is to promote awareness and greater understanding about recovery. You can help by sharing the Declaration with others, signing it yourself or having your organization endorse it.

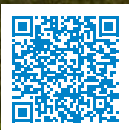
By signing this declaration I/we recognize the importance of the above recovery principles and commit to:

- **Learning more about how to advance recovery and recovery-oriented mental health services and supports and sharing this knowledge and experience with others.**
- **Encouraging dialogue within our own organizations and communities and with others on adopting recovery-oriented policies, programs, and practices.**
- **Seeking opportunities to learn from people with lived experience, peer supporters, families and caregivers, and to engage them in all aspects of service planning, delivery, research, and evaluation.**
- **Promoting a greater understanding of recovery and encouraging others to become Declaration signatories.**

By registering your support online you can help build momentum for change. Please join with us as we travel along this journey of learning by signing the Declaration today.

Sign the Declaration at:

➤ <http://communications.mentalhealthcommission.ca/s/Declaration/langeng/>



Read and sign the Declaration at:

➤ <http://mentalhealthcommission.ca/recovery>



## Calgary Office

Suite 320, 110 Quarry Park Blvd SE  
Calgary AB T2C 3G3

Tel: 403-255-5808

Fax: 403-385-4044

[www.mentalhealthcommission.ca](http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca)

## Ottawa Office

Suite 600, 100 Sparks Street  
Ottawa ON K1P 5B7

Tel: 613-683-3755

Fax: 613-798-2989



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