



# STAR Center

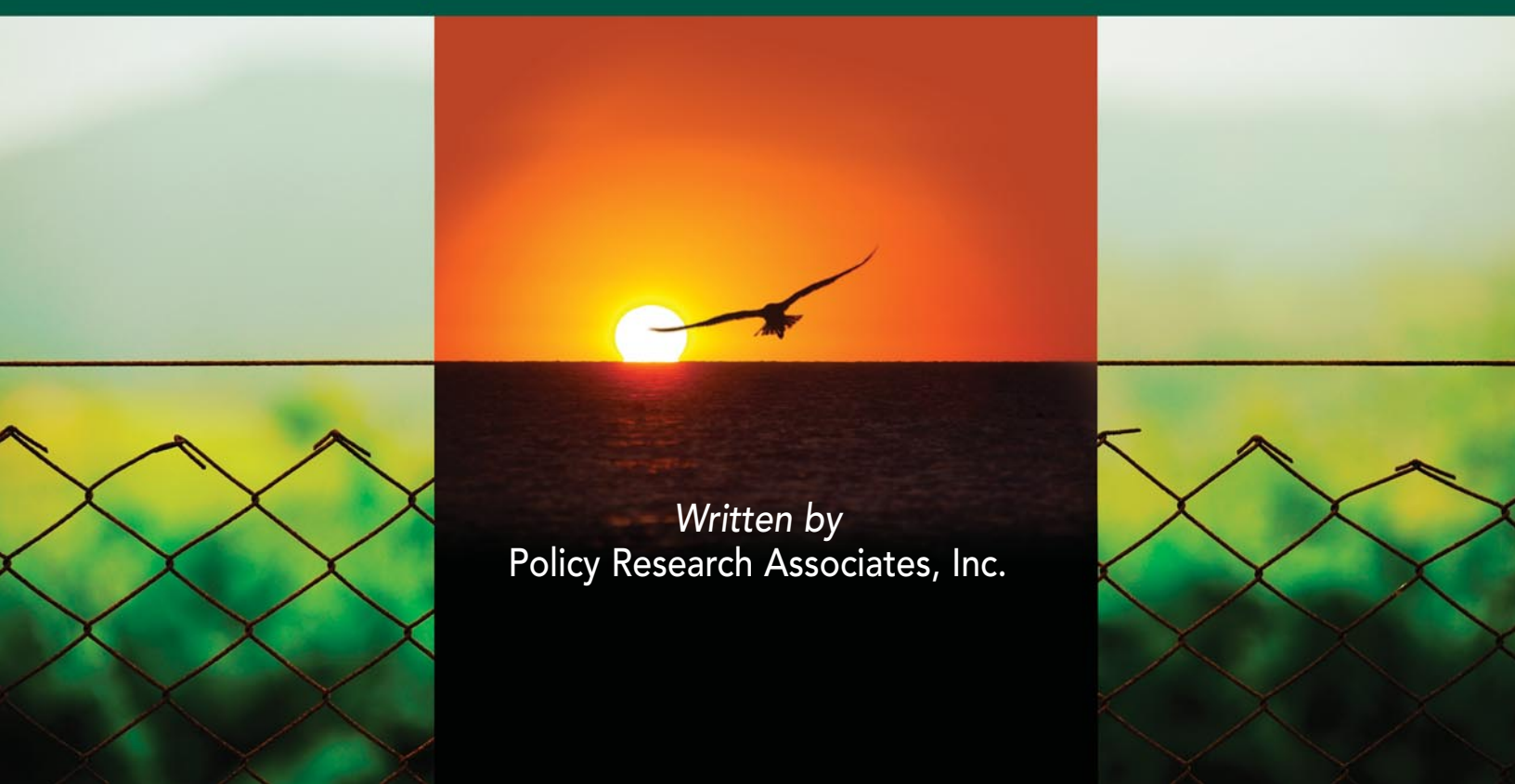
Support, Technical Assistance and Resources Center

Part 2 of a 3-part  
Support Series

## Self-Advocacy and Empowerment Toolkit



*For Individuals Currently Involved with  
the Justice System*



Written by  
Policy Research Associates, Inc.



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The NAMI STAR Center is a SAMHSA-funded technical assistance center dedicated to promoting and enhancing recovery, mental health, and wellness through information, training, and resources on effective self-help and multicultural competence and social inclusion approaches with a special focus on working with underserved communities.

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[www.twitter.com/namistarcenter](http://www.twitter.com/namistarcenter)



The STAR Center gratefully acknowledges SAMHSA as the funding source for the STAR Center's work and activities.  
Please visit SAMHSA/CMHS at [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov) for many helpful resources, self-help tools, guides and links.

The views and opinions presented in this document do not necessarily reflect those of SAMHSA or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and should not be construed as such.

NAMI's STAR Center would like to acknowledge Policy Research Associates (PRA), operators of SAMHSA's GAINS Center, and the following PRA/GAINS Center staff who authored and edited this publication:

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## The Journey

*Yearning for...searching for...and asking why?*

*The struggle to find the answers ran wild.*

*Then I stopped and asked and then I heard...I am here.*

*I have always been here and I will always take care of you.*

*For so long what I have searched for I found...*

*Hope*

*This small word with such enormous meaning...*

*Has been the light that guides me on my journey of*

*Acceptance*

*Forgiveness*

*Healing and...*

*Recovery*

*By Tracy C. Love*

*Published with Permission from the Author*

## Acknowledgements

Each recovery journey begins with just one step and we hope *Learning About Us, Learning to Help Us: Supporting People with Psychiatric Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System* will help you assist people as they begin and progress through their recovery journeys. Developing this guide was truly a collaborative effort and we were driven throughout the process by the conversations we had with the consumers who played an indispensable role in its development.

Whether it was someone experiencing his or her first contact with the police or someone looking for employment upon release from a long period of incarceration, their strength and optimism truly inspired this guide's creation. Most importantly, the consumers who provided input made us even more aware of the types of resources and supports that are the most helpful to people in their recovery processes. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the dozens of justice-involved consumers who shared their recovery journeys with us. They shared their challenges and successes in an effort to ensure that this guide was developed by people who know the most about the true predicament of justice-involved consumers in our country consumers themselves.

For this project, members of this largely invisible community chose to break their silence to bring a message of hope to others, many times sharing painful experiences. In so doing, they picked hope over fear, success over failure and forgiveness over anger.

Lastly, we thank the members of the Advisory Committee for providing invaluable support and guidance for this project; without their leadership, none of this would have been possible.

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“I did not use my past as an excuse to fail; I used it as a source of strength and truth to move me forward. I learned to love again; first myself and then others. I learned to forgive, it set me free.”  
—David F.

The Self-advocacy and Empowerment Toolkit identifies resources and strategies to guide you, its readers—individuals with behavioral health issues and past or current contact with the criminal justice system—in achieving personal recovery goals. The Toolkit responds to the expressed need of justice-involved people with behavioral health issues for additional resources to assist them in making informed decisions about their futures in a manner that accounts for their unique challenges. Although all consumers experience challenges, justice-involved consumers face a special set of challenges and barriers in their recovery journeys. These tools were designed to help you overcome these challenges and allow you to enjoy all the opportunities and benefits of a full life in the community.

This toolkit discusses services and supports and provides you with contact information to help you access them. Most importantly, these resources can connect you with something necessary to move forward with your life – hope. Hope is one of the keys to being able to overcome life’s challenges.

## What is Recovery?

Recovery is a term used frequently throughout this guide, in the Consumer Toolkit and in the Personal Narratives. You have probably heard this term in the context of stopping the use of drugs or alcohol or getting better from an illness or an injury. In December 2011, SAMHSA released a working definition of recovery and a set of guiding principles. This definition was the result of a comprehensive process that began with an August 2010 Dialogue Meeting and ended with a formal public engagement process in August 2011. At the time SAMHSA released the working definition, SAMHSA indicated that they would continue dialogue to refine the definition and principles and based on additional stakeholder input, SAMHSA then issued a slightly revised definition.

The revised definition is below.

**Recovery from Mental Disorders and/or Substance Use Disorders:** A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. Four major dimensions that support a life in recovery:

- **Health:** overcoming or managing one’s disease(s) or symptoms—for example, abstaining from use of alcohol, illicit drugs, and non-prescribed medications if one has an addiction problem—and

for everyone in recovery, making informed, healthy choices that support physical and emotional wellbeing.

- **Home:** a stable and safe place to live;
- **Purpose:** meaningful daily activities, such as a job, school, volunteerism, family caretaking, or creative endeavors, and the independence, income and resources to participate in society; and
- **Community:** relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope.

## Guiding Principles of Recovery

**Recovery emerges from hope:** The belief that recovery is real provides the essential and motivating message of a better future – that people can and do overcome the internal and external challenges, barriers, and obstacles that confront them. Hope is internalized and can be fostered by peers, families, providers, allies, and others. Hope is the catalyst of the recovery process.

**Recovery is person-driven:** Self-determination and self-direction are the foundations for recovery as individuals define their own life goals and design their unique path(s) towards those goals. Individuals optimize their autonomy and independence to the greatest extent possible by leading, controlling, and exercising choice over the services and supports that assist their recovery and resilience. In so doing, they are empowered and provided the resources to make informed decisions, initiate recovery, build on their strengths, and gain or regain control over their lives.

**Recovery occurs via many pathways:** Individuals are unique with distinct needs, strengths, preferences, goals, culture, and backgrounds including trauma experiences that affect and determine their pathway(s) to recovery. Recovery is built on the multiple capacities, strengths, talents, coping abilities, resources, and inherent value of each individual. Recovery pathways are highly personalized. They may include professional clinical treatment; use of medications; support from families and in schools; faith-based approaches; peer support; and other approaches. Recovery is non-linear,

“I’m stronger now...when you heal you become a different person. Having an illness doesn’t define who you are. It’s going to take a lot of work, a lot of voices and a lot of healing. The system is healing.”

—Tracy L.

characterized by continual growth and improved functioning that may involve setbacks. Because setbacks are a natural, though not inevitable, part of the recovery process, it is essential to foster resilience for all individuals and families. Abstinence from the use of alcohol, illicit drugs, and non-prescribed medications is the goal for those with addictions. Use of tobacco and non-prescribed or illicit drugs is not safe for anyone. In some cases, recovery pathways can be enabled by creating a supportive environment. This is especially true for children, who may not have the legal or developmental capacity to set their own course.

**Recovery is holistic:** Recovery encompasses an individual’s whole life, including mind, body, spirit, and community. This includes addressing: self-care practices, family, housing, employment, education, clinical treatment for mental disorders and substance use disorders, services and supports, primary healthcare, dental care, complementary and alternative services, faith, spirituality, creativity, social networks, transportation, and community participation. The array of services and supports available should be integrated and coordinated.

**Recovery is supported by peers and allies:** Mutual support and mutual aid groups, including the sharing of experiential knowledge and skills, as well as social learning, play an invaluable role in recovery. Peers encourage and engage other peers and provide each other with a vital sense of belonging, supportive relationships, valued roles, and community. Through helping others and giving back to the community, one helps one’s self. Peer-operated supports and services provide important resources to assist people along their journeys of recovery and wellness. Professionals can also play an important role in the recovery process by providing clinical treatment and other services that support individuals in their chosen recovery paths. While peers and allies play an important role for many in recovery, their role for children and youth may be slightly different. Peer supports for families are very important for children with behavioral health problems and can also play a supportive role for youth in recovery.

**Recovery is supported through relationship and social networks:** An important factor in the recovery process is the presence and involvement of people who believe in the person’s ability to recover; who offer hope, support, and encouragement; and who also suggest strategies and resources for change. Family members, peers, providers, faith groups, community members, and other allies form vital support networks. Through these relationships, people leave unhealthy and/or unfulfilling life roles behind and engage in new roles (e.g., partner, caregiver, friend, student, employee) that lead to a greater sense of belonging, personhood, empowerment, autonomy, social inclusion, and community participation.

**Recovery is culturally-based and influenced:** Culture and cultural background in all of its diverse representations including values, traditions, and beliefs are keys in determining a person’s journey and unique pathway to recovery. Services should be culturally grounded, attuned, sensitive, congruent, and competent, as well as personalized to meet each individual’s unique needs.

**Recovery is supported by addressing trauma:** The experience of trauma (such as physical or sexual abuse, domestic violence, war, disaster, and others) is often a precursor to or associated with alcohol and drug use, mental health problems, and related issues. Services and supports should be trauma-informed to foster safety (physical and emotional) and trust, as well as promote choice, empowerment, and collaboration.

“I got involved with a wonderful support group with other mothers who were on parole. I learned that it was a process. I could work and move forward. I had a support network of peers and providers to help me through this process. They met me where I was at and did not impose standards on me but held me accountable for my actions. They helped me reconnect with my family.”

— Jeanette B.

“The best part about my journal was when I looked back at what I had written, months and years later. I was able to gain even more strength from reading how I was able to get through life’s trials and tribulations...it gave me hope to use when new challenges arose later in my recovery.”  
— Matt C.

**Recovery involves individual, family, and community strengths and responsibility:** Individuals, families, and communities have strengths and resources that serve as a foundation for recovery. In addition, individuals have a personal responsibility for their own self-care and journeys of recovery. Individuals should be supported in speaking for themselves. Families and significant others have responsibilities to support their loved ones, especially for children and youth in recovery. Communities have responsibilities to provide opportunities and resources to address discrimination and to foster social inclusion and recovery. Individuals in recovery also have a social responsibility and should have the ability to join with peers to speak collectively about their strengths, needs, wants, desires, and aspirations.

**Recovery is based on respect:** Community, systems, and societal acceptance and appreciation for people affected by mental health and substance use problems—including protecting their rights and eliminating discrimination—are crucial in achieving recovery. There is a need to acknowledge that taking steps towards recovery may require great courage. Self-acceptance, developing a positive and meaningful sense of identity, and regaining belief in one’s self are particularly important.<sup>1</sup>

### Components of Recovery



## Self-help and Peer Support Services

### Self-help Groups

Consumers have developed many self-help programs where people provide support to each other in recovery. A number of well-known self-help groups and organizations in your community may assist your recovery process. Consumer self-help groups and 12-step programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, are founded on the principle that people receive the best support from others who are overcoming similar challenges. It is important that you find self-help groups that welcome you and that meet your individual needs. These programs and groups are often a good place to begin the transition back into your community following incarceration. You may be looking for a self-help group for parents or you may be looking for a self-help group to help you remain “clean and sober”—most communities have many different groups and we suggest that you try out a few before deciding which one(s) you want to attend regularly.

Nothing prevents you from attending more than one support group at a time. If you are looking to establish new friendships, self-help groups are a wonderful way to meet new people and to socialize.

These groups complement other forms of treatment you may be receiving. To find self-help groups and peer support services in your area, contact:

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
A.A. World Services, Inc  
P.O. Box 459  
New York, N.Y. 10163  
(212) 870-3400  
<http://www.aa.org>

<sup>1</sup>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2011). SAMHSA’s Working Definition of Recovery from Mental Disorders and/or Substance Use Disorders. Rockville, Md.: Author.



“I am now empowered to learn about trauma, PTSD, depression and all the mental health things that would help me and help me... advocate for myself. This journey was the hardest and probably still is the hardest thing in my life. I have gotten training on WRAP Plans and I worked with others that have similar trauma experiences just like me.”

— Ruben B.

#### **Narcotics Anonymous**

P.O. Box 9999  
Van Nuys, Calif. 91409  
(818) 773-9999  
<http://www.na.org>

#### **Peer-to-Peer Organizations**

##### **National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse**

1211 Chestnut Street, Suite 1207  
Philadelphia, Pa. 19107  
(800) 553-4539  
<http://www.mhselfhelp.org>

##### **SAMHSA's Resource Center to Promote Acceptance, Dignity and Social Inclusion Associated with Mental Health (ADS Center)**

4350 East West Highway, Suite 1100  
Bethesda, Md. 20814  
(800) 540-0320  
<http://promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov>

### **Warm Lines**

Consumer-operated warm lines are phone numbers people can call to receive peer support over the phone. Warm lines are available in many communities to assist individuals who are unable to travel to peer support groups or are in need of immediate support. Warm line operators receive peer support training and ongoing supervision by the organization operating the warm line. Most warm lines have toll-free numbers and many operate 24 hours a day. To find out more information about warm lines and to locate one in your community visit <http://buzz.freeshell.org/wlines/> or contact:

#### **National Empowerment Center**

599 Canal Street  
Lawrence, Mass. 01840  
(800) 769-3728  
<http://www.power2u.org>

#### **National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse**

1211 Chestnut Street, Suite 1207  
Philadelphia, Pa. 19107  
(800) 553-4539  
E-mail: [info@mhselfhelp.org](mailto:info@mhselfhelp.org)  
<http://www.mhselfhelp.org>

## **Self-exploration Tools and Recovery Tools**

Each year thousands of people with mental health issues come into contact with the criminal justice system. Jails and prisons have cultures of their own. The same behaviors and attitudes you may have developed in jail or prison to make it easier to fit in and feel protected may become major obstacles to your recovery. We would like to support you in finding new ways of thinking about your life. Below is a list of resources that can be used by you to help support you in your recovery journey.

### **Personal Journals**

Journals are a good way to begin the process of talking about yourself, your feelings, your past, your needs and your dreams and aspirations. Keeping a personal journal can help you experiment with new ways of dealing with the problems or issues you want to confront and overcome during your recovery journey. You can chart your feelings about trying new behaviors and the benefits these new behaviors have on recovery. By keeping a journal and charting the ways that you were able to get through tough times in your life, you will be able to look back at these tough times with a clear view of the ways you were able to overcome challenges, while keeping consistent with your path to recovery. This helps you understand that, while some time periods may be harder than others, you can still overcome and get through anything.

## WRAP®

The Wellness Recovery Action Plan® (WRAP®), was developed to empower consumers to take personal responsibility for maintaining their personal wellness and recovery. This innovative evidence-based practice can be used to identify your own wellness tools and how to use them when you are feeling unwell or unsafe.<sup>2</sup> Increasingly, WRAP® is being used by justice-involved consumers. Research has found that WRAP® is very helpful in helping people avoid crisis and relapse.

If you are interested in developing your own WRAP® or finding a WRAP® facilitator in your community, contact the Copeland Center:

**Mary Ellen Copeland**  
**Mental Health Recovery and WRAP®**  
PO Box 301  
W. Dummerston, Vt. 05357  
(802) 254-2092  
[www.mentalhealthrecovery.com](http://www.mentalhealthrecovery.com)

## Pathways to Recovery: A Strengths Recovery Self-help Workbook

The Pathways to Recovery self-help workbook was created by staff at the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare together with an advisory group of peer providers, directors of consumer-run organizations and other progressive mental health providers. The lead author of Pathways to Recovery is Priscilla Ridgway. This tool can help you set goals and address difficult aspects of recovery, such as self-stigma and the impact of discrimination.<sup>3</sup>

For a copy of the *Pathways to Recovery: A Strengths Recovery Self-Help Workbook* contact:

**Office of Mental Health Research and Training**  
**KU School of Social Welfare**  
Twente Hall  
1545 Lilac Land  
Lawrence, Kan. 66044  
(785) 864-4720  
<http://www.socwel.ku.edu/mentalhealth/projects/value/pathways/workbook.shtml>

## The South Carolina Share Recovery Planner

The South Carolina Share Recovery Planner is a quick and easy workbook that can help you think about goals and areas to focus on. It addresses change, positive self-talk, physical health, emotional/mental wellness, stress, substance use, living space, money, down time, employment/volunteer work, education/training, relationships, legal issues, spirituality and daily routine. The Planner is available in both English and Spanish.<sup>4</sup>

To access a copy of the South Carolina Share Recovery Planner, contact:

**South Carolina Share**  
427 Meeting Street  
West Columbia, S.C. 29169  
(800) 832-8023  
<http://www.scsshare.com/about.html>

## Wellness Tools

Over the past few years there has been a growing recognition that mental health is related to overall health and wellness. This guide provides an overview of wellness and ways that you can take ownership for your overall well-being. Wellness services and activities are often available in your community for little to no cost. Many wellness activities can be pursued individually, such as a walk on the beach or at a nature center at the end of a long day. To learn more about the services and activities offered in your community, contact your local chamber of commerce. Below are several tools you can use to take control of your overall health and wellness. Four “categories” of wellness are portrayed in the diagram below; discussed here are physical, spiritual and financial wellness.

### Physical

Physical wellness is as important as mental wellness and poor physical health can negatively impact mental health. There are three basic components to physical wellness: prevention, recovery and maintenance. Begin by setting a wellness goal. Some examples of physical wellness are safely taking medications, engaging in

<sup>2</sup> Copeland, M.E. (2010). Wellness Recovery Action Plan®. Retrieved July 21, 2010, from <http://mentalhealthrecovery.com/aboutwrap.php>.

<sup>3</sup> University of Kansas, School of Social Welfare. (2003). Pathways to recovery: A strengths recovery self-help workbook. Retrieved July 21, 2010, from <http://www.socwel.ku.edu/mentalhealth/projects/value/pathways/workbook.shtml>.

<sup>4</sup> South Carolina SHARE. (2008). *Recovery planner*. Retrieved July 21, 2010, from [http://www.scsshare.com/recovery\\_programs.html](http://www.scsshare.com/recovery_programs.html)



physical activities, eating a nutritious diet, maintaining healthy sleep habits and connecting with nature. Chart your daily activities; start slowly and work your way up to a lifelong behavioral change. Charting how you feel after physical activities and how you feel after a full night's sleep will help you understand what your body needs to feel healthy. For more information on the importance of mental and physical wellness contact:

**Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

1600 Clifton Rd.  
Atlanta, Ga. 30333  
<http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/index.html>

**USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion**

3101 Park Center Drive  
Alexandria, Va. 22302-1594  
(888) 779-7264  
[ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://ChooseMyPlate.gov)

**SAMHSA 10 x 10 Wellness Campaign**

2121 K Street, NW, Suite 300  
Washington, D.C. 20037  
[10x10@samhsa.hhs.gov](mailto:10x10@samhsa.hhs.gov)  
<http://www.promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/10by10>

**Spiritual**

Spiritual wellness is a personal matter involving values and beliefs that provide a purpose in our lives. While different individuals may have different views of what spirituality is, it is generally considered to be the search for meaning and purpose in our recovery processes. It is important for everyone to explore what they believe is their own sense of meaning and purpose. Below are four ways to explore your values and beliefs.

1. Make time in your day to relax.
2. Make time for meditation and/or prayer.
3. Reflect on your values. Do your values guide your decisions and actions?
4. Reflect on others' values. Do you accept the views of others?

As we discussed in a previous section, journaling can be a good way to reflect on your values and on others' values. To learn more about spiritual growth and its impact on your recovery, contact NAMI's STAR Center:

**NAMI STAR Center**

3803 N. Fairfax Dr., Suite 100  
Arlington, Va. 22203  
(866) 537-7827  
[star@nami.org](mailto:star@nami.org)  
<http://www.consumerstar.org>

**Financial**

Finances are one of the leading stressors faced by justice-involved consumers. Financial problems can impact housing, employment and education. Confronting the challenges related to your finances is important because it is difficult to focus on your recovery when you do not have a source of income, medical coverage or a place to live. You may be eligible for disability benefits and other benefits that can provide a safety net during your recovery process. Obtaining many of these benefits can be time-consuming and frustrating. Many justice-involved consumers abandon efforts to obtain benefits because of the time and energy involved in applying for them. Although employment is an important part of the recovery process and employment may be one of your recovery goals, applying for and receiving these

benefits do not prevent you from pursuing employment. We recommend that you carefully explore the options available to you and then make informed choices about how you want to move forward.

### **Social Security Benefits**

Social Security disability benefits can help individuals obtain housing, treatment and other services. Contact your local Social Security Administration field office or the Social Security Administration for information and resources related to Social Security disability benefits.

#### **Social Security Administration**

Office of Public Inquiries  
Windsor Park Building  
6401 Security Blvd.  
Baltimore, Md. 21235  
(800) 772-1213  
[www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

### **Annual Credit Report**

Many justice-involved consumers find they have difficulty obtaining credit or approval for housing or employment. Many of these difficulties can be traced to negative information contained in credit reports. In general, a credit report contains information about your previous credit history, as well as legal judgments.

A judgment is obtained where legal action is taken by a "creditor," such as a landlord, bank or credit card company, seeking compensation and the creditor is awarded money (the judgment) because the creditor either wins the court case or the defendant fails to appear in court. We are finding in many instances that justice-involved consumers are either unaware they are being sued or simply ignore notices summoning them to court. These judgments do not go away and most remain on your credit report for at least seven years. Consequently, it is important to be proactive and obtain a copy of your credit report and carefully review it. Once you review your credit report, you can exercise your right to dispute information contained in the report. The reporting agencies are required by law to investigate your claim and provide the outcome of their investigation to you.

My Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor told me to "stop beating myself up." She helped me improve my self-esteem. I applied for a Peer Advocacy position in hospital and I got the job."

— Keisha

The Federal Trade Commission has set up a website where you can request to view your free credit report from the three largest nationwide credit reporting companies and file your dispute electronically or you can request by phone or by mail a copy of your free report. You can obtain a free copy of your current credit report annually. This allows you to keep track of your current credit history. To obtain a copy of your free credit report contact:

#### **Annual Report Request Services**

P.O. Box 105281  
Atlanta, Ga. 30348  
(877) 322-8228  
<https://www.annualcreditreport.com>

## **Alternative Approaches to Wellness**

Many justice-involved consumers successfully use alternative activities/services/treatments as an important part of their overall wellness routine. These alternative approaches often replace or complement traditional behavioral health services. Many of these activities/services/treatments may be provided at no or low cost by local community-based organizations or by community-based volunteers. Below is a small sample of some of the alternatives you may want to explore.<sup>5</sup>

#### **National Empowerment Center**

599 Canal Street  
Lawrence, Mass. 01840  
(800) 769-3728  
<http://www.power2u.org>

<sup>5</sup> SAMHSA Health Information Network. (2003). *Alternative approaches to mental health care*. Retrieved August 31, 2010 from <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/KEN98-0044>

Approaches	Descriptions
Spiritual Counseling	Some individuals seek counseling from pastors, rabbis, priests or other spiritual advisors.
Animal Assisted Therapies	A therapeutic approach that uses animals as a part of the support given to people to help them with communication, self esteem and other treatment goals.
Expressive Therapies	Art therapy, dance/movement therapy and music/sound therapy are therapeutic approaches that use the arts to support people's healing processes
Culturally Based Healing Arts	Approaches usually connected to the traditional healing techniques of certain ethnic or spiritual groups: acupuncture, reiki, yoga and talking circles incorporate herbal/natural remedies, nutrition, exercise and medication/prayer to help individuals balance their spiritual, physical and mental "selves."

**National Mental Health Consumers' Self-Help Clearinghouse**  
 1211 Chestnut Street, Suite 1207  
 Philadelphia, Pa. 19107  
 (800) 553-4539  
[info@mhsselfhelp.org](mailto:info@mhsselfhelp.org)  
<http://mhsselfhelp.org> Community Connections

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**  
 451 7th Street S.W.  
 Washington, D.C. 20410  
 (202) 708-1112  
<http://portal.hud.gov/portal/page/portal/HUD/topics/homelessness/localassist>

## Community Connections: Housing, Employment/ Education, Voting Rights

### Housing

Involvement with the criminal justice system frequently leaves individuals facing many challenges around community connections in housing, employment/ education and voting rights.

Supportive housing programs are available nationwide to ensure that temporary and permanent housing options are available to justice-involved consumers. To learn more about the housing assistance options in your community and state, contact your local county behavioral health agency and/or the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):

### Employment/Education

Justice-involved consumers are often faced with obstacles that may prohibit their employment in particular professions. Through the U.S. Department of Education, each state provides counseling, evaluation and job placement services. To find a vocational rehabilitation agency in your state contact:

**U.S. Department of Education  
 State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency**  
 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.  
 Washington, D.C. 20202-4760.  
[http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/org\\_list.cfm?category\\_ID=SVR](http://wdcrobcolp01.ed.gov/Programs/EROD/org_list.cfm?category_ID=SVR)

**The National H.I.R.E Network**  
 236 Massachusetts Ave. NE, Suite 505  
 Washington, D.C. 20002-4980  
 (202) 544-5478  
<http://www.hirenetwork.org>

## Criminal Records

It is important for justice-involved consumers to obtain an official copy of their “rap sheet.” Rap sheets often contain inaccurate information and it is important for justice-involved consumers to get an idea of what type of information a potential employer may see when conducting a background check. It may be difficult to revisit the information contained in these records; however, it is equally important to directly confront it. Virtually every state has a criminal justice advocacy agency that can assist justice-involved consumers in obtaining a rap sheet and in resolving any inaccurate information contained in the record. These services are usually free.

Similarly, many states have enacted statutes that eliminate many of the legal barriers that justice-involved consumers may face. Most of these statutes require you to “petition” a court for “relief from civil disabilities” (the title of this type of action may be different depending on the state you live in). You can be proactive in learning about your legal rights and responsibilities by contacting the Legal Action Center or other legal advocacy organizations in your community.

The Legal Action Center is an advocacy organization devoted to advocating for the rights of all individuals who have been involved in the criminal justice system. They have developed a website that lists advocacy organizations in each state that assist justice-involved consumers in obtaining their rap sheets and requesting corrections of inaccuracies and provide other types of support. For more information about accessing your criminal justice system records and the availability of other resources in your state contact:

### Legal Action Center

225 Varick Street  
New York, N.Y. 10014  
(800) 223-4044  
<http://www.lac.org>

## Voting Rights

In many states, justice-involved individuals are faced with disenfranchisement laws that prohibit them from voting due to their histories of justice system

involvement. Unfortunately, many justice-involved individuals are unaware of the law and voting rights restoration process in their state. Most states restore justice-involved individuals’ voting rights after a condition of their sentence is met. For more information on your state’s voting rights restoration process contact your local board of elections and:

### Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law

1101 15th Street, NW, Suite 1212  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
(202) 467-5730  
<http://www.bazelon.org>

### National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)

Voting Rights Restoration Process  
444 North Capitol Street, N.W., Suite 515  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
(202) 624-5400  
<http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=16529>

# Understanding the Behavioral Health System

The mental health service system is composed of four sectors that provide both inpatient and outpatient mental health care to adults and juveniles. These sectors are: specialty mental health providers (psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric social workers and psychiatric nurses); general medical/primary care providers (family physicians, nurse practitioners and pediatricians); human services providers (social welfare, criminal justice and religious); and voluntary support networks (self-help groups).<sup>6</sup> It is important to educate yourself about the options available in your community before choosing the services you feel are best for you. For more information on behavioral health services available in your community contact:

### Mental Health America

2000 N. Beauregard Street, 6th Floor  
Alexandria, Va. 22311  
(800) 969-6642  
<http://www.nmha.org>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1999). Mental health: A report of the surgeon general – Chapter 2: The fundamentals of mental health and mental illness. Rockville, Md.: Author.

## National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

3803 N. Fairfax Dr., Suite 100  
Arlington, Va. 22203  
(703) 524-7600  
<http://nami.org>

# Sequential Intercept Model

Since this toolkit was designed to empower you to overcome challenges and to enjoy all the opportunities of community life, it is important that you have a solid understanding of the different stages of criminal justice system involvement. A good way to start is to look at the *Sequential Intercept Model*.<sup>7</sup>

The *Sequential Intercept Model* is a general description of the different stages of the criminal justice process, from first contact with law enforcement to release from jail or prison. The model is organized in a way that can help you identify different parts of the system that might provide opportunities for you to receive needed services.

Below you will find a detailed description of the five intercept points and interventions that may be available in your community:

**Law enforcement:** police Crisis Intervention Teams, police-friendly crisis drop-off centers and mental health mobile crisis teams;

**Initial detention/initial court hearings:** Screening and referral processes for identifying defendants with psychiatric disabilities at jail intake or at a point prior to initial appearance court hearing, pre-trial jail diversion;

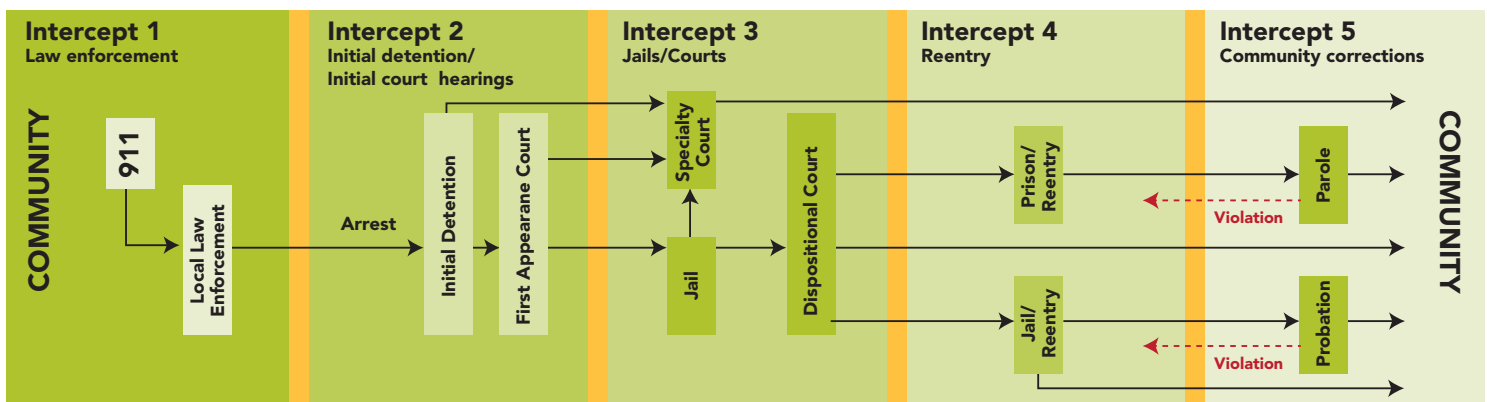
**Jails/courts:** Pre-sentence jail diversion, specialty court dockets and jail-based services and linkages; Jail and prison reentry: Transition planning, linkage to community-based supports, gap medication services and pre-discharge benefit enrollment/activation (SSI/SSDI, Medicaid, Medicare);

**Community corrections:** Specialized probation and parole caseloads, diversion of probation and parole violators and use of graduated sanctions for noncompliance.<sup>8</sup>

It is important to understand each stage and how you can best prepare yourself and assist advocates, family members and other supporters in ensuring that you have the best possible opportunity to start or continue your recovery journey.

## Intercept 1: Crisis and 911 Calls

Many communities have crisis services available and it is important to be aware of the services available in your community. You can learn about the services in your community by contacting your local behavioral health agency. In some communities, consumer-operated services provide crisis respite services that enable you to stay in a warm homelike environment with the support of trained peers in the event you are unwell. A list of these services and contact information



<sup>7</sup> Munetz, M.R., & Griffin, P.A. (2006). Use of the sequential intercept model as an approach to decriminalization of people with serious mental illness. *Psychiatric Services*, 57, 544-549.

<sup>8</sup> CMHS National GAINS Center. (2009). Developing a comprehensive plan for mental health and criminal justice collaboration: The sequential intercept model. Delmar, N.Y.: Author.

is provided in the resources section of this document. Always remember that it is better to be prepared and knowledgeable about the available services when you are well than to wonder what they are and how to reach them when in crisis.

Many communities have Crisis Intervention Teams comprising specially trained officers who have either chosen or been selected to respond to 911 calls involving a person with a history of behavioral health issues. These officers are also very familiar with the services that are available in a community and can help you make choices about what services you may want or need.

Again, it is important to know what is available in your community to be prepared to call your local police department and behavioral health agency before a crisis event ever occurs.

### Intercept 2 and 3: Arrest and Jail Diversion

In the event you are arrested, you may want to consider taking action to avoid additional involvement with the criminal justice system or to make sure you receive the services and support you need while you are at the earlier stages of this process.

Depending on where you live and the type of court that you are in, you may want to consider whether to continue moving through the criminal justice system process like others charged with a crime or whether to learn about alternatives that you may be eligible for.

Your locality may operate a behavioral health court or other form of jail diversion or alternative-to-incarceration program. There are different types of jail diversion and alternative-to-incarceration programs you may be eligible to participate in. You, a family member or trusted friend can ask about your participating in these programs rather than remaining in jail or continuing along the traditional criminal justice process. Most of these programs enable you to leave jail with the agreement that you will adhere to follow a predetermined treatment plan.

Always remember, the choice to participate in a program is yours and you should carefully weigh your options with your family, attorney and other people there to support your needs.

### Intercept 3 and 4: Incarceration and Reentry

In the event that you are sentenced to a term of incarceration in jail or prison, there are usually opportunities for you to receive services and start or continue your recovery journey while you are incarcerated. These services can range from peer support groups to psychotherapy. Forensic Peer Specialists or Peer Specialists may be available to provide support and connections to additional supports/services.

In addition, many jails and prisons provide discharge planning services that can help you link to services in your community and assist you in such areas as applying for benefits and housing. Most importantly, they can give you hope that you can recover.

### Intercept 5: Parole and Probation

Parole and probation are types of community supervision. It is important that you know the conditions of your parole or probation. These conditions are detailed in an agreement you sign. You will be interviewed by parole and probation staff so they can prepare a report and make recommendations regarding your release. During this process you have an opportunity to discuss your goals for the future and what types of services and support you will need to achieve these goals. Speak up and discuss what has been working for you and what you need. It is important for you to establish a good relationship with your parole or probation officer and to honestly discuss challenges you are experiencing. Some probation/parole jurisdictions even offer specialized probation/parole programs for people with substance abuse issues or mental health concerns.

For more information and additional resources on the Sequential Intercept Model, pre-booking jail diversion, post-booking jail diversion and behavioral health courts, contact:

#### **SAMHSA National GAINS Center**

345 Delaware Ave  
Delmar, N.Y. 12054  
(800) 311-GAIN  
gains@prainc.com  
www.gainscenter.samhsa.gov



## **The Criminal Justice/Mental Health Consensus Project**

100 Wall Street  
20th Floor  
New York, NY 10005  
(212) 482-2320  
<http://justicecenter.csg.org>

## **Conclusion**

We hope that this toolkit helps you understand how planning, advocacy and support can help you successfully overcome many of the challenges that you, as a justice-involved consumer, might encounter in your recovery journey. We strongly encourage you to continue your search for tools and resources that are helpful and share them with us and your peers. Knowledge is power.

## **Glossary**

Below is a list of terms commonly used in the criminal justice and behavioral health fields. These terms do not capture the complete list but are provided as a reference for those with justice system involvement.

### **Advocacy**

A service delivery model that provides comprehensive community-based treatment to people with serious psychiatric disabilities.

### **Behavioral Health Courts**

A specialized court docket for certain defendants with psychiatric disabilities that substitutes a problem-solving model for traditional criminal court processing. Participants are identified through mental health screening and assessments and voluntarily participate in a judicially supervised treatment plan developed jointly by a team of court staff and mental health professionals. Incentives reward adherence to the treatment plan or other court conditions; non-adherence may be sanctioned; and success or graduation is defined according to predetermined criteria.

### **Clubhouse**

A place where people with psychiatric disabilities, known as members, participate in their own recovery process by working and socializing together in a safe and welcoming environment.

### **Consumer**

A person who previously used or is currently using mental health and/or substance abuse services. Sometimes used interchangeably with the term "peer."

### **Co-occurring Disorders (COD)**

An individual with co-occurring disorders (COD) has both a psychiatric disability and a substance use disorder. From a treatment perspective, both disorders are primary. Although the disorders may impact each other, neither are merely symptoms of the other.

### **Consumer-operated Services**

An organization providing behavioral health services in which consumers constitute the majority (at least 51 percent) on the board or group that decides all policies and procedures. With limited exceptions, staff consists of consumers who are hired by and operate the program and control the operating budget. Role opportunities for participants might include board and leadership positions, volunteer jobs and paid staff positions.

### **Cultural Competence**

The set of attitudes, skills, behaviors and policies that enable effective interactions in cross-cultural situations and the incorporation of these attributes in all aspects of policymaking, administration, practice and service delivery.

### **Forensic Peer Specialist**

A specialized position for trained peer staff having histories of psychiatric disability and incarceration.

### **Illness Management and Recovery (IMR)**

Illness Management and Recovery (IMR) is a set of practices that provides people with serious psychiatric disabilities the skills to manage their illness in order to achieve personal recovery goals. Practices include psychoeducation, relapse prevention skills and the development of coping strategies. Illness Management and Recovery is often referred to as Wellness Management and Recovery (WMR) and Symptom Self-Management.

### **Integrated Dual Disorders Treatment (IDDT)**

Treatment of co-occurring disorders is integrated when mental health and substance use treatment take place in the same service setting with cross-trained staff.

### **Jail Diversion**

The avoidance of or radical reduction in jail time by using community-based treatment as an alternative to incarceration.

### **Peer**

A person who shares the same or similar lived experience as another.

### **Peer Programs**

Peer programs are mental health service programs administered and staffed by individuals in recovery.

### **Peer Specialist**

Peer Specialists are individuals with histories of psychiatric disabilities who provide support to other consumers.

### **Post-booking**

Jail diversion programs that divert people to services after booking into the jail. Post-booking jail diversion programs may be court-based or jail-based.

### **Pre-booking**

Jail diversion programs that divert people to services in the community as an alternative to arrest before they are booked into jail.

### **Psychiatric Advance Directive (PAD)**

A legal instrument that may be used to document an individual's specific instructions or preferences regarding future mental health treatment, as preparation for the possibility that the person may lose capacity to give or withhold informed consent to treatment during acute episodes of psychiatric symptoms.

**Recovery**

Recovery in the context of behavioral health means to live one's life completely despite illness or loss.

**Recovery Partner**

Individuals or organizations that support a person through the recovery process. They can be peers, family members, clinicians, case managers, parole officers, probation officers, corrections officers, self-help groups or any other individual or group that supports the recovery.

**Re-Entry**

A term that covers issues relating to the transition of individuals from correctional settings into the community.

**Supported Employment**

A set of supportive services, including follow-along support, for people with psychiatric disabilities who want to pursue and maintain competitive employment.

**Supportive Housing**

Affordable rental housing with support services. Support services, such as case management or vocational training, may be offered on-site or at locations in the community.

**Transition Planning**

Often called discharge planning, transition planning from jail to community-based services entails assessment of an individual's service needs, development of a comprehensive service plan, identification of agencies responsible for treatment and supervision and effective linkages to those services and supports.

**Trauma-informed Services**

Services that acknowledge the special needs individuals with trauma histories may have in a particular treatment setting or service by promoting empowerment and acknowledgement of the impact of trauma on peoples' lives.

**WRAP®**

WRAP® is the acronym for Wellness Recovery Action Plan®, developed by Mary Ellen Copeland. It is a tool used to relieve difficult feelings and maintain wellness.



*“Let your star shine!”*



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