Mental Health Recovery 101

**What is Recovery?**

Recovery is the belief that, in spite of challenges presented by a mental health diagnosis, individuals can still live a full, productive and meaningful life. Traditional mental health services often believed that a mental health diagnosis meant an individual had limited capacity and the services often fostered dependence on the system; self-determination for individuals was greatly limited by this mindset. Recovery encompasses the belief that with proper support, education and introduction to various coping strategies people are able to live the life that they dreamed of regardless of diagnosis.

**The recovery process:**

-Provides a holistic view of mental illness that focuses on the person, not just their symptoms

-Believes recovery from severe mental illness is possible

-Is a journey rather than a destination

-Does not necessarily mean getting back to where you were before

-Happens in “fits and starts”, and, like life, has many ups and downs

-Calls for optimism and commitment from all persons concerned

-Is profoundly influenced by people’s expectations and attitudes

-Requires a well-organized system of support from family, friends or professionals

-Requires services to embrace new and innovative ways of working

[www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

**Recovery is supported by:**

-Education of consumers, families and service providers

-Access to recovery oriented services, including the utilization of peer specialists

-Stigma reduction

-Strong support systems that encompass varying levels (friends/family, professionals, community, state/local governments, etc.

-Ongoing advocacy efforts by individuals, agencies and grassroots groups

**How does recovery fit with the IL philosophy?**

There are many similarities between the mental health recovery model and IL philosophy. The similarities between the two models has allowed ILR to easily provide recovery oriented services to mental health consumers that mesh with the IL philosophy as a whole.

-IL philosophy utilizes peer support, or individuals who have lived experience with a disability in their services. Recovery also uses individuals with lived experience, known in Wisconsin as Certified Peer Specialists. Having people with lived experience provide services not only allows for peer support and increases comfort levels for consumers, it also acts to break the stigma surrounding various disabilities.

-IL philosophy believes in “doing with, not for”. Any goals that are worked on are based on what the individual is wanting to work on, regardless of what others (family/friends, service professionals) believe that they should be working on. This works well for the recovery model, as it supports people’s right to self-determination and gets away from previous service system belief that people needed to be taken care of.

-ILC’s provide individuals with access to information and referral services, which provides the required access to support systems that is a key element of recovery.

-Advocacy is essential in both IL philosophy and recovery. Individuals should have access to not only advocacy services but an opportunity to learn how to become strong self-advocates-this allows them to address future concerns on their own if necessary.