



DISCUSSION GUIDE

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: A YOUTH PERSPECTIVE ON RECOVERY-ORIENTED PRACTICE



Mental Health
Commission
of Canada

Commission de
la santé mentale
du Canada

HOW CONFIDENT ARE *YOU* ABOUT HOW TO DELIVER GREAT RECOVERY-ORIENTED SERVICES TO A YOUNG PERSON?

HOW IS RECOVERY-ORIENTED PRACTICE UNIQUE WHEN WORKING WITH YOUTH?

AND WHAT TYPES OF SERVICES WOULD BEST SUPPORT YOUTH ON THEIR JOURNEY TOWARDS RECOVERY?

These are some big questions that don't have simple answers. Good news, the Mental Health Commission of Canada's (MHCC) Youth Council sought out to unpack some of these questions and provide a youth perspective on how they would like to be engaged in and receive recovery-oriented mental health and addiction services.

THE RESULT?

The animated video, *Food for thought: A youth perspective on recovery-oriented practice*. This lighthearted, metaphorical video attempts to break down what young people see as some of the core principles of recovery-oriented mental health and addiction services.

In developing this video, the Youth Council recognized that the full complexity of recovery-oriented services cannot be unpacked in a short 4-minute video. This video is **not** intended to have **all** the answers. It is intended to provoke creative thought and start a discussion among service providers about how they could better support and work with youth in a recovery-oriented mental health and addiction setting. Importantly, some service providers are already providing excellent recovery-oriented care. Different pieces of the video may also resonate or apply differently to people based on their role or sector. We hope this document will help unpack how these principles of recovery-oriented practice may apply to your work.

So, go watch the video! Then use this discussion guide to help direct your self-reflection or to facilitate critical discussions with your colleagues, supervisor, or with young people themselves.

Watch the video at: <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/media/3975>

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

WHAT IS RECOVERY?

The *Changing Directions, Changing Lives: The Mental Health Strategy for Canada* defines recovery as living a satisfying, hopeful, and meaningful life, even when there are ongoing symptoms of a mental health problem or illness. *The Mental Health Strategy For Canada: A Youth Perspective* notes that with the right combination of services and supports, many people who are living with even the most severe mental illnesses can experience significant improvements in their quality of life. Recovery is based on the principles of hope, personal choice, individual goal-setting and being seen as a person—not a diagnosis.

Recovery does not imply a “cure”. Yes, the full remission of symptoms may be possible for some. But for others, mental health issues should be thought of in the same way as diabetes or other chronic health conditions—something that will be managed over the course of one’s life but does not prevent one from leading a happy, fulfilling life.

In a recovery-oriented system, service providers engage in shared decision-making, offering a range of services and supports to fully meet a person’s goals and needs. It recognizes that each person is unique and has the right to determine a path toward mental health and wellbeing. Recovery principles, including hope, dignity, self-determination and responsibility, should be adapted to the realities of different life stages and to individuals of all ages.

WHAT IS THE YOUTH COUNCIL?

The Mental Health Commission of Canada’s **Youth Council** is made up of young people between the ages of 18 and 30 who have lived experience with mental health problems or illnesses, either personally or through a family member or friend. The Youth Council aims to increase youth participation in decisions related to mental health service delivery and policy making and increase the impact of youth involvement in system change.

WHY THE RESTAURANT METAPHOR?

The video, *Food for thought: A youth perspective on recovery-oriented practice*, uses the metaphor of a restaurant interaction to help demonstrate some of the key concepts of youth recovery-oriented services. Notably, the relationship between a mental health service provider and youth is very different from a restaurant interaction. The metaphor is intended to provide an out-of-the-box, creative demonstration of some of these key concepts of recovery-oriented practice and to provoke discussion on how this could apply to the mental health and addiction services setting.

WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES FOR RECOVERY-ORIENTED PRACTICE?

Released in 2015, the MHCC’s *Guidelines for Recovery-Oriented Practice* seeks to build common understanding, shared language, and knowledge of recovery policies, programs and practices, and provide a tool to help transform practice, culture, and service delivery. The *Guidelines* identify principles, values, knowledge, skills and behaviours that underlie recovery and assist in thinking through some of the concrete ways of implementing a recovery orientation across the country in terms of policies, programs and practices.

Notably, *Guideline 4B—Responsive to Needs across the Lifespan*, emphasizes that recovery-oriented mental health services must be responsive and adapted across the lifespan. Recovery-oriented services must emphasize resilience and the unique developmental aspects of a recovery process for youth. Throughout this document you will see references to the *Guidelines* that align with the video scenarios. Each guideline provides further reflective practice questions, opportunities and resource materials for further consideration.

WHAT ELSE IS THE MHCC DOING TO SUPPORT RECOVERY-ORIENTED PRACTICE?

The MHCC has several initiatives aimed to help people involved in implementing recovery-oriented practices, including:

- [Guidelines for Recovery-Oriented Practice](#)
- [Recovery Declaration](#)
- [Recovery Inventory](#)
- [Recovery Webinars](#)

Learn more at:

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/focus-areas/recovery>

INSTRUCTIONS:

This discussion guide walks through the scenarios in the *Food for thought: A youth perspective on recovery-oriented practice* video in sequential order. Key messages and reflective discussion questions are provided for each scenario as well as references to the *Guidelines for Recovery-Oriented Practice*. The *Guidelines* provide further information, reflective questions and resources for the principles discussed in each section.

Suggested ways of using the discussion guide:

- At a team meeting or lunch and learn.
- During staff or management orientation.
- Facilitating a team discussion.
- Discussing with youth.
- Discussing with youth advisory groups or other advisory committees.
- As a self-reflection exercise.

Suggested process for using this discussion guide:

1. Watch the full video.
2. Select a section of the video that stands out to you.
3. Read through the key messages and discussion questions for that section.
4. Re-watch the selected section of the video as needed.
5. Discuss the questions with your colleagues, supervisor or with other youth. Reflect on how this applies to your services setting.
6. Review the applicable sections in the *Guidelines for Recovery-Oriented Practice*.
7. Repeat this process to review other sections of the video.
8. Review the training opportunities and additional supports available at the end of the document.

<p>Key messages</p>	<p>Some youth cannot access the services they need. Social inequities, long wait times and the disconnect between youth and adult services are significant barriers to service.</p>
<p>Reflective questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who currently accesses services at your organization/facility? • Who may have difficulty accessing services? • What happens if a young person needs services right away but is told they must wait? • How can youth be supported as they wait for access to services? • How could accessibility to services for youth be maximized? • How could wait times be reduced at your organization/facility? • How are emerging adults being supported as they transition between youth and adult services?
<p>Guidelines</p>	<p>Guideline 2D: Building Collaborative Relationships and Reflective Practice</p> <p>Guideline 3B: Supporting Social Inclusion and Advocacy on Social Determinants</p> <p>Guideline 6C: Recovery-Promoting Service Partnerships</p>

Key messages	Providing options and supporting youth to make empowered choices on their recovery journey is important. Youth have the right to be fully informed. Be honest, be upfront about what options are available and let youth be the driver of their own care.
Reflective questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you provide youth with multiple options to support their recovery journey? • How do you increase your own awareness and understanding of the various treatment and support options? • How can we promote collaboration between young people and service providers? • How do you support youth as experts of their own experience? • Have you considered if alternative service offerings might be more appropriate?
Guidelines	<p>Guideline 2A: Recovery is Person First and Holistic</p> <p>Guideline 2B: Affirming Autonomy and Self-Determination</p> <p>Guideline 6A: Recovery Vision, Commitment and Culture</p>

<p>Key messages</p>	<p>There is no one-size-fits-all way to provide recovery-oriented services to youth. Assumptions and expectations can be harmful. Youth are diverse—their physical, cultural and spiritual needs must be respected in addition to their psychological needs. Meet youth where they are at—or ask them where they would like to be.</p>
<p>Reflective questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do your own values and assumptions shape your practice approach and influence your practice? • Is your organization welcoming to young people? How could the policies or physical environment be better suited to serve them? • How do you ensure youth’s choices to involve their circle of support (friends, family, etc.) are respected and re-examined regularly? • How are the diverse linguistic, cultural and spiritual needs of youth respected and valued at your organization?
<p>Guidelines</p>	<p>Guideline 3A: Recognizing the Value of Family, Friends and Community</p> <p>Guideline 3B: Supporting Social Inclusion and Advocacy on Social Determinants</p> <p>Guideline 4A: Responsive to the Diverse Needs of Everyone Living in Canada</p> <p>Guideline 4B: Responsive to Needs across the Lifespan</p> <p>Guideline 4C: Responsive to the Needs of Immigrant, Refugees, Ethno-Cultural and Racialized (IRER) Communities</p> <p>Guideline 4D: Responsive to Gender Difference and to the Needs of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Two-Spirited, Trans-Gendered, and Trans-Sexual People, their Families of Choice and Communities</p> <p>Guideline 5: Working with First Nations, Inuit and Métis</p>

Key messages	The power dynamic between youth and service providers can be intimidating for a young person. If they feel dismissed or disrespected they might shut down. Youth need to feel safe to be themselves and express their opinions and feelings without judgement.
Reflective questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How can you create a safe and open culture for youth?• How do you demonstrate active listening and encouragement?• What limits are you placing on someone with the language that you use or with the expectations you have about them?
Guidelines	Guideline 1: Promoting a Culture and Language of Hope and Optimism Guideline 2C: Focusing on Strengths and Personal Responsibility

Key messages	People often feel like they should sugar-coat things for youth; however, honesty is always the best policy. Please be honest, transparent and be open to feedback.
Reflective questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How do you promote a culture of transparency in your work?• How do you encourage a culture of honesty and openness?• How do you demonstrate humility and empathy in your practice?• Are you open to honest feedback from young people? How could you encourage and support a positive two-way dialogue with them?
Guidelines	<p>Guideline 2A: Recovery is Person First and Holistic</p> <p>Guideline 2B: Affirming Autonomy and Self-Determination</p> <p>Guideline 2D: Building Collaborative Relationships and Reflective Practice</p>

Key messages	<p>It is important to acknowledge the flaws and barriers in existing systems. As a service provider, you have the responsibility to educate and inform yourself and youth about these realities. It can be helpful to communicate that these circumstances and decisions will often be beyond the control of both the service provider and youth.</p>
Reflective questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When have you felt powerless to systemic barriers? What have you found helpful in the face of these barriers? • How can you better explain these barriers to young people? • What steps might you take to help break down barriers? • How could you include a youth voice in the policy and governance of your organization?
Guidelines	<p>Guideline 6A: Recovery Vision, Commitment and Culture</p> <p>Guideline 6B: Acknowledging, Valuing and Learning from People’s Experiential Knowledge and from Families, Staff and Communities</p> <p>Guideline 6C: Recovery-Promoting Service Partnerships</p> <p>Guideline 6D: Workforce Development and Planning</p>

Key messages	<p>Check-ins are important as the lives of young people are constantly changing. It is important to be aware of inherent power dynamics in your relationship as a service provider with them. Some may feel hesitant to ask questions, or may not know what questions to ask. Youth may also feel unsure of how to ask for help. Checking in often can help to open that dialogue.</p>
Reflective questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could you proactively check-in with youth? • How could you develop a culture of openness and communication? • How can young people be supported through the continuum of care? • How can you proactively support long-term recovery instead of only responding to crises when they arise? • What is your understanding of the power imbalance between service providers and youth? • How does your own identity translate into your work?
Guidelines	<p>Guideline 2A: Recovery is Person First and Holistic</p> <p>Guideline 2B: Affirming Autonomy and Self-Determination</p> <p>Guideline 2C: Focusing on Strengths and Personal Responsibility</p> <p>Guideline 2D: Building Collaborative Relationships and Reflective Practice</p>

<p>Key messages</p>	<p>In a safe, recovery-oriented service environment, youth should not feel censored or tone-policed. Support them to express themselves using whatever words or medium they may choose.</p>
<p>Reflective questions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you currently respond to youth expressing themselves differently than you are used to? • How could you create a safer space for youth expression? • How could you offer creative or different options for expression? • How can you promote accessible and inclusive methods of communication with youth? • How open are you to honest feedback from young people? How can you open this two-way dialogue? • How do you engage with youth who may be 'different-to-engage' (NOT difficult to engage)?
<p>Guidelines</p>	<p>Guideline 1: Promoting and Culture and Language of Hope and Optimism</p> <p>Guideline 2A: Recovery is Person First and Holistic</p>

Key messages	The recovery journey doesn't end when a young person leaves the office. It is an ongoing part of everyday life. As a service provider, you are a partner along this journey—help youth understand that you'll be there with them no matter where the journey may lead.
Reflective questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you show your continued support to youth, even when they require less formalized support/treatment? • How are young people being connected to other services? How could referrals be made more seamlessly? • Are you supporting youth through their entire recovery journey (not just in times of crisis)? • Post-discharge of mental health services, how can we ensure that youth are not “lost in the system”?
Guidelines	<p>Guideline 1: Promoting and Culture and Language of Hope and Optimism</p> <p>Guideline 2A: Recovery is Person First and Holistic</p> <p>Guideline 2C: Focusing on Strengths and Personal Responsibility</p>

MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

- Mental Health First Aid for adults who work with youth: <http://mhfa.ca/en/course-info/courses/adults-who-interact-youth>
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST): <https://www.livingworks.net/programs/asist/>
- safeTALK: <https://www.livingworks.net/programs/safetalk/>
- Certified Psychosocial Rehabilitation Recovery Practitioner (CPRRP): <http://www.psrrpscanada.ca/index.php?src=gendocs&ref=IntroandEligibility&category=Main>
- Cultural competency training

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT/RESOURCES:

- Guidelines for Recovery-Oriented Practice: <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/initiatives/11869/guidelines-recovery-oriented-practice>
- Recovery Inventory: <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/inventory>
- Recovery Webinars Archive: <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/issues/recovery/free-monthly-webinars-recovery-oriented-practice/recovery-oriented-practice-webinars>
- Consensus Statement on the Mental Health of Emerging Adults: <https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/emerging-adults/sign?destination=/English/emerging-adults>



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