



MENTAL PATIENTS LIBERATION ALLIANCE

The Alliance

DEFINITIONS

advocate/advocacy - Advocacy is to speak or write in support of something. An advocate is a person who pleads another's cause, such as a lawyer.

alternative - An alternative is something different from, and able to serve as a substitute for, something else. The mental health system, for example, is an *alternative* to natural supports.

empowerment - Empowerment means to give authority to someone or to inspire confidence and/or self-esteem. For many people who have experienced emotional disturbances and/or have undergone treatment for those disturbances, empowerment is often used to describe the *regaining of self-confidence*.

facilitate - Facilitate means to make something easy or easier to do. Used in the context of groups (*to facilitate the group*), the term is often mis-used as a synonym for govern or control.

group - A group generally means a number of people (perhaps two) who share something in common, such as, an interest or experience. The importance of this definition is its simplicity and broadness. *Group* is NOT a psychiatric term.

key stakeholder - *Stakeholder* is somebody who holds a direct interest. In regard to the mental health system, everyone is a stakeholder - people who have or may access services, people who provide services, community members, etc. *Key stakeholder*, however, refers only to people who have a psychiatric label.

mutual support - *Support* is generally defined as encouragement, assistance, comfort, corroboration, or reinforcement. *Mutual support* is much more unique; it embraces two essential elements - 1) the commonality of the experiences of the people involved; and 2) the understanding that the people involved are each (all) giving AND receiving within the act of *mutual support*.

peer - *Peer* refers to a person of equal standing with another or others. It can refer to a companion or friend. Each of us is a peer in many contexts. At times, for example, when we are together with another or others who have had a psychiatric experience or emotional difficulty, we generally refer to ourselves as *peers*.

peer advocacy - *Peer advocacy* refers to the process or act of a person of equal standing pleading the cause of a person who shares that equal standing. For example, a lawyer who provides a legal defense for another lawyer. Another example is a person who has an experience of emotional difficulties or challenges providing advocacy for another person with similar experiences.

recovery - There is no single definition of the term *recovery* or how each of us applies the word in our lives. This is not because of any vagueness or ambiguity; it is simply because we are each fundamentally unique, and our lives' journeys are self-defined and self-determined. In fact, people have different understandings of what they are recovering *from*. While one individual may be recovering from an emotional crisis or particular period of his/her life, another may be recovering from the aftereffects of that crisis.

It is only possible for people to choose their own meaning of recovery as it pertains to him/her. For some, the process of doing this offers personal clarity. Some people change their perception of recovery and acknowledge recovery to be a dynamic process of growth and healing. At a time, for example, a person may feel that recovery is "getting back on my feet". At a later time, that same person may choose recovery to mean "regaining my dreams".

While acknowledging the personal journey that is recovery, a general definition applied for the recovery within the mental health system might be: ***meaningful social roles for every person.***

self-determination - A Thesaurus offers several nouns for *self-determination* that readily offer definition such as, freedom, independence, autonomy, self-rule, and freewill.

self-help - The adverb *help* means to assist. It also can mean to make things better. *Self-help* means to assist one's self and/or to make things better for one's self. A broader definition includes gaining help of one's choice or by one's own design.