

**1. Title:** Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Policy on the Inclusion of People with Lived Experience

**Effective Date:** May 1, 2023

**2. Background:** The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has identified recovery as a guiding principle in pursuit of its mission to lead public health and service delivery efforts that promote mental health, prevent substance misuse, and provide treatments and supports to foster recovery while ensuring equitable access and better outcomes. SAMHSA's definition of recovery emphasizes the importance of self-determination and involvement of people with lived experience. Executive Order 14035 requires Federal agencies to promote Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) in the workplace.

In 2021, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) identified that "(e)ngaging people with lived experience represents one key way that federal agencies gather important information, shape programming and policy, and help improve outcomes for those served."

Finally, SAMHSA's vision reflects a recovery-orientation that "people with, affected by, or at risk for mental health and substance use conditions receive care, thrive and achieve wellbeing."

**3. Policy Statement:** SAMHSA recognizes that people with lived experience are fundamental to improving mental health and substance use services and should be meaningfully involved in the planning, delivery, administration, evaluation, and policy development of services and supports to improve our processes and outcomes.

**4. Scope:** All SAMHSA activities should be fully inclusive of people lived experience including, but not limited to, the areas of:

- Human resources (e.g., recruitment and retention in all levels of the organization),
- Grants and contracts (e.g., required activities, peer reviewers),
- Data and evaluation,
- Meetings
- Communications,
- Evidence-based practice development,
- Equity),
- Policy formulation,
- Site Visits; and
- National advisory councils (e.g., membership).

Such activities should include a focus on engaging diverse, under-represented and under-resourced populations including youth and young adults, older adults, people of color, Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex LGBTQI+, rural populations, veterans, and people with co-occurring disabilities in meaningful participation (i.e. more than one person or representative).

**5. Responsibilities:**

5.1 The lead office for the development and oversight of the SAMHSA Policy on the Inclusion of People with Lived Experience is the Office of Recovery (OR)

5.2 The approving authority for this policy is the Assistant Secretary (AS).

5.3 The responsible party for ensuring this policy is updated when a significant change occurs is the OR working on conjunction with members of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT).

5.4 The members of the ELT are the responsible parties for implementing the policy.

5.5 The OR is responsible for providing consultation regarding adoption and update of this policy.

**6. Procedures:**

6.1 Process for including people with lived experience:

- a. On an annual basis, each ELT member will meet with the OR to review current and planned activities to identify:
  - 1) Current level of involvement and targets.
  - 2) Gaps in involvement.
  - 3) Challenges in complying with this policy in any particular activity.
  - 4) Efforts to advance inclusion moving forward.
- b. OR will report to ELT the findings and recommendations from this review.
- c. The OR will offer technical assistance in helping resolve gaps and overcoming challenges and in identifying steps to advance inclusion moving forward.

**7. Special Requirements:**

7.1 Renewal Frequency - Review annually in January of each year.

/Thomas Coderre/  
/s/ \_\_\_\_\_

Thomas Coderre  
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary

/Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon/  
/s/ \_\_\_\_\_

Miriam E. Delphin-Rittmon, Ph.D.

## Addendums

### A. Abbreviations - As used in this Policy, the following abbreviations signify:

- a. AS – Assistant Secretary for Mental Health and Substance Use
- b. DEIA – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility
- c. ELT - Executive Leadership Team
- d. HHS – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- e. LGBTQI+ - Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning and Intersex
- f. OAS - Office of the Assistant Secretary
- g. OMTO - Office of Management, Technology, and Operations
- h. OR – Office of Recovery within the OAS
- i. People with lived experience – individuals who self-identify as having experienced mental health and/or substance use conditions and their family members.
- j. SAMHSA - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

### B. Reference Documents:

- a. Draft SAMHSA Strategic Plan (2023): accessed on 4/11/23 at <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/draft-strategic-plan-2023.pdf>
- b. [SAMHSA's Working Definition of Recovery](#); accessed on 3/1/23 at:
- c. <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/pep12-recdef.pdf>
- d. Executive Order 14035: accessed on 11/22/22 at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/06/25/executive-order-on-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility-in-the-federal-workforce/>
- e. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2021). *Methods and Emerging Strategies to Engage People with Lived Experience*. Accessed on 11/22/22 at: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/47f62cae96710d1fa13b0f590f2d1b03/lived-experience-brief.pdf>