



Description of In Our Own Voice: Living with Mental Illness

In Our Own Voice (IOOV) is a unique informational outreach program developed by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) that offers insight into the recovery now possible for people with severe mental illness.

The personal and educational components of this program dispel many myths surrounding mental illness. A study completed by Dr. Otto Wahl and Dr. Amy Wood of George Mason University concluded with evidence that there is a significant decrease in stigma against mental illness among audience members after seeing the presentation. An article about the study was published during the summer of 2006 in the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal.

Goals:

- Raise public awareness of the realities of mental illness, dispel myths,
- Reduce stigma of mental illness
- Encourage those who need help to seek it,
 - Increase awareness of effective treatment
 - Increase hope for recovery
- Increase opportunities for individuals living with mental illness
- Provide opportunities for those who have struggled with mental illness to share their individual experiences of recovery and transformation.
 - To set a standard for quality education about mental illness from those who have been there;
 - To offer genuine work opportunities;
 - To encourage self-confidence and self-esteem in presenters;
 - To focus on recovery and the message of hope.

Process:

- Presenters are carefully screened and trained
- IOOV presentations are given to consumer groups, students, law enforcement officials, educators, providers, faith community members, politicians, professionals, inmates, and interested civic groups.
- **All presentations are offered free of charge.**

Outcomes since September, 2006 through September 2009:

112 presenters

290 presentations

7950 total audience

Comments from evaluations:

- “Hearing about your darker days gives me a sense of where you have been; treatment tells me how professionals help you. The coping skills you described tell me how to help my clients. Structure was the best coping skill to me.”
- “I feel this gives others hope.”
- “It was the light at the end of the tunnel!”
- “I’ve always felt alone until now.”
- “We had clients involved who needed all of the above information + to let them know that they are not alone and recovery is possible.”
- Family members, consumers, providers and social workers have all represented on audience evaluations that after seeing a presentation that they see recovery as possible for the first time.
- Commissioner Virginia Trotter Betts has requested IOOV presenters to accompany her as she presents to Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs across the state.
- Presenter Data:
 - 100% of reporting presenters report that speaking in the IOOV program helps in their recovery.
 - 87% report that their confidence increases each time they do a presentation
 - 100% report that becoming an IOOV presenter has met or exceeded their expectations.

We want to share the message to all Tennesseans that **hope is real** and **recovery is possible**. All Tennesseans should hear **consumer stories** of dark times, how they have coped and how they have **triumphed**.

Will you partner with us as we **empower consumers, educate Tennesseans** and help **stamp out stigma** across the country? Our **trainings are** offered **free** of charge to participants. However, **we need your help** to keep up with the increasing demand for trainings. Your gift of **\$500 will train, supervise** and **equip** one presenter to conduct two presentations in a year.

“Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you help them to become what they are capable of being.” Goethe