Foundational Definitions

Mental health is a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity. Mental health is indispensable to personal well-being, family and interpersonal relationships, and contribution to community or society.

Mental illness is the term that refers collectively to all diagnosable mental disorders. Mental disorders are health conditions that are characterized by alterations in **thinking, mood, or behavior** (or some combination thereof) associated with distress and/or impaired functioning. E.g. Depression - alterations in mood and Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder- alterations in behavior (over-activity) and/or thinking (inability to concentrate).
First two definitions come from Surgeon General's report on Mental Health (2000)

Trauma is a reaction to a traumatic event or situation that overwhelms a person's ability to cope, and inhibits their from moving forward with life in a normal manner

As family, classmates, co-workers and friends, we seek to draw on the strengths of one's overall health to deal with mental illness or the effects of trauma.

In the context of mental health, **"resilience"** refers to the capacity of people to succeed and thrive, despite experiencing illness, poverty, neglect and/or trauma. "Resilience" can apply to children, youth and adults. Resilient people are able to succeed because they have "protective factors" that help them survive the adversity.

Protective factors come from many things – they can be inherent qualities the individual possesses, such as optimism, self-confidence or a strong faith. Protective factors can also come from outside, such as the support of loving family, special friends or caring professionals.

Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. Four dimensions:
1. Health – overcoming or managing one's disease and living in physically & emotionally healthy way
2. Home – a stable & safe place to live
3. Purpose – meaningful daily activities, e.g., job, school, volunteerism, family caretaking or creative endeavors; & independence, income & resources to participate in society
4. Community – relationships & social networks that provide support, friendship, love, & hope

Recovery support components:

- Hope – recovery is real – can overcome internal & external challenges, barriers, & obstacles. Hope internalized & fostered by others – catalyst for recovery process
- Person driven – self-determination & self-direction foundations for recovery as individuals define their own life goals & design unique paths towards their goals.
- Holistic - Recovery encompasses individual's whole life, including mind, body, spirit, & community.
- Peers & allies – Mutual support & mutual aid groups, including sharing of experiential knowledge & skills, as well as social learning, play invaluable role in recovery.
- Relationships & social networks – important factor in recovery process presence & involvement of people who believe in person's ability to recover; who offer hope, support, & encouragement; & who suggest strategies & resources for change
- Culturally-based & influenced – culture & culture background, including values, traditions, & beliefs key to determining person's journey & unique pathway to recovery
- Addresses trauma – trauma precursor to drug use, mental health problems, etc – services & supports must be trauma informed
- Individual, family, & community strengths & responsibility – all resources & strengths serving as foundation for recovery & all have responsibility to help & offer support
- Based on respect – Community, systems, & societal acceptance & appreciation for people affected by mental health & substance use problems – including protecting their rights & eliminating discrimination – crucial to achieving recovery

Stigma can be described with three words-

- stereotypes (ideas),
- that lead to prejudice (beliefs),
- that play out in discrimination (behaviors).

It comes in the form of public stigma, internalized shame/self-stigma (for those experiencing mental health challenges), and structural stigma (policies and processes that reinforce discrimination). In relationships where there is a power differential, it is referred to as oppression.