

## **Engaging people with lived experience**

Effective ROSC councils include individuals with lived experience. Individuals with lived experience can and should have the opportunity to be engaged at every level of the work of the ROSC council. To include but not limited to, employment (including leadership positions), council membership, advisory and subcommittee work. Successful ROSC councils have variety in their membership roster, representatives from the recovery community (as well as family members and allies) play a key role.

“SAMHSA is committed to encouraging the involvement of individuals in recovery and families to support development of policies and programs related to mental and/or substance use disorders. Maintaining individuals (mental and/or substance use program recipients) and family participation in design, development, and implementation of projects funded through SAMHSA's grant programs is a key part of that commitment.”

ROSC programming should focus on serving substance use and mental health issues and it is vital that participation from people with lived experience (PLE) be front and center in all ROSC councils. Engagement of PLE's in ROSC is a fundamental need and concern to be able to recruit, employ and keep as active council members people in recovery from substance use and mental health concerns.

**Making connections and establishing positive rapport and relationships with PLE's must be consistent, ongoing and be able to grow and change based on mutual feedback and respect.**

Making PLE's feel welcome and valued is key to gaining buy in and membership in your ROSC council. The best experts on how your ROSC council should function are the people who have firsthand experience. Making sure that all materials advertising ROSC events, employment and services should plainly state its focus that PLE's, their family members and allies are important to the council and highly regarded as participants in ROSC at whatever level they choose to participate.

There has evolved an ongoing strategy of seven principles as a guide for the inclusion of people with lived experience. They are:

- 1. Using people first and plain language.**
- 2. Ensuring that people feel safe.**
- 3. Proactively identifying and resolving any barriers to participation, like scheduling those conflicts with employment or access to transportation or childcare.**
- 4. Preparing for a variety of language and cultural backgrounds.**
- 5. Valuing people and their perspectives regardless of what led to their experience.**
- 6. Taking time to ensure that everyone is up to speed before shifting gears or making decisions.**
- 7. Compensating people for sharing their expertise, whenever possible.**

Sources: [People with Lived Experience Must Be Meaningful Partners in Ending Homelessness | United States Interagency Council on Homelessness \(USICH\)](#)  
[Participation Guidelines for Individuals with Lived Experience and Family | SAMHSA](#)