Participants’ assessment of the impact of behavioral health self-direction on recovery

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Abstract: Self-direction involves managing a flexible budget, selecting and purchasing services and supports to meet individual needs and preferences. An emerging practice in the behavioral health field, self-direction is part of a systemic shift toward person-centered approaches to service provision. To understand the relationship between recovery and self-direction, the authors conducted a content analysis of 30 in-depth interviews with individuals from two self-direction programs in one state. A positive relationship between self-direction and recovery was established. Meeting basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter are important first steps in the recovery process for self-directing participants. Recovery domains were dynamic and interrelated, with gains in independence, self-esteem, and self-confidence facilitating achievement of goals in other domains. To maximize the benefits of self-direction, program administrators may need to develop clearer program implementation standards and address poverty and limited access to appropriate behavioral health services and supports.

Keywords: Self-direction, Self-directed care, Mental health and substance use recovery, Qualitative research, Self-determination