

What was my journey to advocacy and why do I advocate?

My recovery journey has been long and non-linear. In fact, a year prior to seeking recovery this time I actively tried to take my own life because I believed that my life had no purpose. Upon entering recovery, I was much more compassionate and empathetic than I had ever been with a determination to give back and live a life of purpose. One of the things that has always made my recovery fulfilling is a commitment service. The ability to share my lived experience with others and to help them no matter where they are on their journey. What truly began my passion for advocacy was the movie *The Anonymous People* and the recognition that people in recovery are not only a valued constituency, but a constituency of consequence if we show up and use our voices.

I began attending NCADD meetings as an informed and engaged person in recovery early on, participating where possible and attending training sessions. My recovery and life journey eventually led me to obtaining my CPRS credential and to embrace the domain of advocacy as an integral part of my position, learning that there is both personal advocacy as well as policy advocacy.

As I became more comfortable in my role and was entrusted with more responsibility as the Director of Recovery Support for Community in Crisis, I began to testify where possible. In fact, I testified at the last in person budget hearing prior to the state being shut down during Covid. I testified at a few virtual hearings during Zoom, becoming more comfortable with my advocacy voice. Most recently I have testified in person regarding the Opioid Settlement Funding in our state because I truly believe that the voices of lived experience need to be a part of every conversation.

In my role at our organization, I ensure that all those that work with us are introduced to advocacy and are given the time and resources to engage in the process. I KNOW that I have earned my seat in recovery, and I want to make sure that lawmakers KNOW that I have earned my space at those tables as well. A space not only for myself but for others who are unsure of their voices.

If you are new to advocacy, I invite you to join us, your voice is important and needed, if you are old to advocacy, I invite you to join us, your voice is important and needed. Together our voices are much clearer, much more powerful, and much more impactful than when we are alone. Advocacy proves the value of one voice to make a difference.