

Unanimously approved by WNUSP 2001 General Assembly in Vancouver.

The World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry (WNUSP), an international organisation of present and past recipients of mental health services, is dedicated to protecting the human rights, self-determination and dignity of all users/survivors throughout the world.¹ In addition, it is designed to promote the user/survivor movement in every nation across the globe and to initiate necessary change and reform in how the world views and treats people labelled "mentally ill."

Why has the WNUSP been developed?

The WNUSP finds itself called into being for a number of reasons. First and foremost, recipients of mental health services are human beings and are endowed with all civil, political, legal, economic, social and cultural rights as recognised by the United Nations.²

Historically, users/survivors (whose numbers include up to one in four people) have been shunned, mistreated and disregarded in most societies. Various abuses have been and continue to be inflicted upon users/survivors often in the name of so-called "treatment." This has included such atrocities as government-sponsored hallucinogenic drug experiments on unknowing individuals, forced treatment (including institutionalisation of political prisoners), electric as well as insulin shock "therapies," and even attempted genocide during World War II.

The stigma and myths that surround "mental illness" have resulted in discrimination in housing, employment and education, and a lack of attention to the basic needs of users/survivors. These myths and falsehoods include that users/survivors are dangerous, unintelligent, unable to work and have no chance of recovery. Reality shows that users/survivors are no more violent than "normal" people, as intelligent as everyone else, able to work in all settings and do recover from their difficulties.

This stigma and discrimination have created a class of people who have been systematically disempowered and impoverished. Many users/survivors become homeless, unemployed, under-educated, socially isolated and lack adequate health care. Often they become dependent upon meagre governmental assistance programmes. Compounding this, they are regularly excluded from making decisions and choices that may improve their quality of life.

Recently, however, we (users/survivors) have taken it upon ourselves to become vocal and active participants in changing how we are treated in order to better meet our needs and to strive towards dignity and independence. Over the past thirty years, the users/survivors movement has grown from a few scattered self-help groups to a world-wide network of activities in six continents including users/survivor-operated housing, employment, public education, research, socialisation and advocacy programmes.

The WNUSP was established to further promote this movement and to respond on an international level to the oppression that users/survivors continue to experience.

Core values of the WNUSP

The WNUSP, though representing diverse points of view, finds certain values to be held in common. These values guide the activities of WNUSP and assist in determining its focus.

First, the WNUSP values are based upon those of the users/survivors movement. These values stress empowerment, equality, self-determination, respect, dignity, independence, mutual support, self-help, advocacy, education, and the right to pursue our own spiritual beliefs. One key value is that diversity itself is positive and can be used to bring strength to collaborative efforts.

We also value the acquisition of knowledge and exposure to information as a means to become empowered and take control of our lives. We see knowledge as a pathway leading to greater informed choices and opportunities in order to improve our quality of life. Above all, we hold to person-centred values where the individual is larger and more important than any disease label or any experience they may have had in the mental health system.

Finally, the WNUSP believes that experiences of living with problems can be of value to individuals and to society in exploring the depths of human experience, and that those suffering distress may bear messages of change and offer insight to those in society at large.

WNUSP Statement of Principles

In pursuing the goals and values outlined above, the WNUSP establishes the following principles:

- Every user/survivor shall be treated with the basic respect and dignity afforded to all persons.
- Every user/survivor shall be free from any and all human rights abuses -- no user/survivor shall be subject to physical, sexual or emotional abuse.
- Every user/survivor shall be free from any and all forms of discrimination -- no user/survivor shall be subject to housing, employment, economic, educational, racial or cultural discrimination.
- Every user/survivor shall be granted self-determination and the ability to make informed choices -- no user/survivor shall be denied the opportunity to make educated decisions affecting their lives including full informed participation and informed consent in all mental health "treatment" matters; additionally, users/survivors shall have the opportunity to fully participate in the planning, policy development, delivery, evaluation and research of mental health services.
- Every user/survivor shall be granted full political, legal and civil rights -- no user/survivor shall be denied the right to participate fully in society including the rights to participate in political processes, practice one's religion, free speech and to petition their governments.
- Every user/survivor shall have the opportunity to organise collectively -- no user/survivor shall be denied the opportunity to assemble for mutual support and political action.
- Every user/survivor shall have the right to refuse any and all "treatments or procedures" -- no user/survivor shall be subjected to coerced or forced psychosurgery, sterilisation, over-medication, psychiatric drugging, chemical restraints, physical restraints, insulin shock, electroshock, or inpatient or outpatient commitment.
- Every user/survivor shall have the right to representation on his/her behalf -- no user/survivor shall be denied the opportunity to have an advocate or attorney to ensure the protection of one's rights.
- Every user/survivor shall be provided with having their basic needs met -- no user/survivor shall be subject to hunger, poverty, homelessness or a lack of adequate health care.
- Every user/survivor shall be full integrated as any and all citizens within any community -- no user/survivor shall be segregated and relegated in separate housing or separate areas of communities.
- Every user/survivor within a hospital or mental health setting shall in addition to these principles have the following rights:
 - unrestricted and private communication including receiving and sending unopened letters and to have outgoing letters stamped and mailed, to have access to telephones, to receive visitors of one's own choice, and to make grievances and have those grievances heard and adjudicated promptly with appeals processes in place
 - keep, use and sell personal possessions
 - participate in the development and review of one's "treatment" plan, and
 - to be discharged or released upon one's wishes.
- Every user/survivor shall have the right to handle one's personal affairs -- no user/survivor shall be denied the opportunity for holding a driver's license or professional license, engaging in

personal intimate relationships of one's choice, marrying, obtaining a divorce etc.

- Every user/survivor shall have the right to be paid at equitable pay for any work performed -- no user/survivor shall be forced to work or be paid beneath equitable rate scales for equitable work.

- Every user/survivor shall have the opportunity to participate in alternative services -- no user/survivor shall be restricted in participating in voluntary self-help alternatives as well as other supports such as spirituality, meditation, acupuncture, yoga etc, and voluntary self-help alternatives shall be made available in all communities.

- Every user/survivor shall have the opportunity to become informed of the user/survivor movement -- no user/survivor shall be restricted in becoming educated on this movement.

- Every user/survivor shall have the right to confidentiality and access to any records or documents concerning one's self -- no user/survivor shall have their privacy rights violated.

- Every user/survivor shall be notified of their rights and these principles.

In the implementation of these principles, procedures shall be developed to ensure that they are fully complied with. These procedures must include full user/survivor participation in their development and operationalisation. These procedures must also include processes for monitoring the compliance with these principles as well as enforcement strategies for any violation.

The WNUSP will initiate activities to promote these principles. In addition, it aims to work with other established organisations (user/survivor, governmental, advocacy, family, provider etc) to promote these principles. This will incorporate establishing and maintaining dialogues with the above groups, pursuing advocacy strategies, engaging in human rights campaigns, providing technical assistance, promoting collaborative projects, etc.

The WNUSP sees itself as an evolving and growing force that will continually self-define these principles and corresponding activities as need and opportunity arise.

Developed by World Federation of Psychiatric Users Co-chair, Paolo del Vecchio in 1994

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1) There is a diversity of opinion within this movement over the terminology used to describe individuals who have experienced the mental health system. These terms include: users, survivors, consumers, clients, ex-patients, psychiatrically labelled, ex-inmates etc. For the purpose of brevity within this statement, the term "user/survivor" will be employed.

2) U N Resolutions 217 A (III); 2200 A (XXI); 3447 (XXX); and 43/173, (annex).