

Title: Psychiatric Justice for Survivors of Suicide Attempts

Presenter: Jess Stohlmann-Rainey

- At the conclusion of this presentation, attendees will be able to: understand the historical marginalization of suicide attempt survivors by the mental health system, connect the history of marginalization to current experiences of suicide attempt survivors, and integrate the core values of psychiatric justice into their practice.

- Abstract: Utilizing new methods for understanding recovery can help us develop more inclusive definitions, measurements, and services for survivors of suicide attempts. This workshop will center psychiatric justice in the recovery experience. Psychiatric justice refers to the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for people living with mental health conditions, their loved ones, and their allies. Throughout history, the mental health system has criminalized and pathologized suicide attempt survivors, and in many ways continues to systematically exclude, punish, and discriminate against them. Mental health, wellness, and treatment efficacy continue to be defined by the mental health system that has historically failed survivors of suicide attempts. This approach systematically centers the goals and experiences of the provider or preventionist, rather than the person receiving treatment.

This workshop will shift that paradigm. Participants in this workshop will create a timeline of psychiatric (in)justice related to suicide attempt survivors. After developing the historical context, participants will be invited to explore the lived experiences of suicide attempt survivors in the current mental health system. The presenter will share findings from phenomenological interviews with survivors of suicide attempts about what was helpful, harmful, meaningful, and needed in their recovery experience. The findings have been organized to develop explanations of the conditions that suicide attempt survivors identify as most crucial to their recovery (clinical and non-clinical), descriptions of common detrimental experiences in clinical care, and recommendations for the field regarding the care of suicide attempt survivors. Participants in this workshop will synthesize the lessons learned from the historical context, current lived experience, and the core values of psychiatric justice to design strategies for integrating suicide attempt survivors more fully and respectfully into their practice as prevention workers, clinicians, and researchers.