

IOOV Candidate Information Revised September, 2019

In Our Own Voice (IOOV) is a recovery education program presented by volunteer NAMI members all around the state of New Jersey (comparable programs exist in many other states). It is a good program – good for the people presenting, good for people hearing and seeing presentations, and good for the larger community of people pursuing mental health recoveries. People who want to present in this program come with a passion – a passion to tell the story about their own mental health recovery to help advance public awareness.

We make 200 or more presentations every year in NJ. A pair of trained presenters goes out to an audience which has requested a presentation – a high school class, a college class, a senior center, a church group, a mental health center, etc. The presenters speak about their recoveries, interleaving their stories with some short bites of presentation shown from a DVD. We present in 2-3-minute segments about ourselves (introduction, “what happened” to us, “what helps” us, and “what’s next” for us). We answer audience questions at the end of each segment.

Only trained IOOV presenters speak in this program. Training is in two parts. If you and our program coordinator decide that getting involved in IOOV is right for you, you will be invited to take an online course, where you will learn

- about the program
- how to place your own unique story into the segments which work with the presentation
- how to make careful choices to maintain your own privacy and personal comfort while disclosing
- how to tailor your presentation for various audiences and handle audience questions..

Most people finish the online training in 5-7 hours, and you may do it over any period which makes sense for you. Content is stored online, so you do not have to have a dedicated computer to do the training. After that, we scheduled you in to an upcoming one-day classroom training where you meet fellow trainees, polish your presentation, and “put it all together.” Almost everybody who completes the online course and attends the day of training is certified to go out and make IOOV presentations, and they do. Our association typically conducts 1-2 classroom trainings every year. If you are invited to the training and are not local to the training location, NAMI New Jersey will reimburse you for travel expenses, assist you with travel plans, and/or provide you with one night of lodging.

So many of us have a recovery story we want to tell to benefit others that we get far more potential speakers than we are able to train and use. Therefore the seats our trainings are competitive. If you wish to be considered as a candidate for the next IOOV training, please answer the questions below. If you have been able to answer yes to all of questions 1-10, and want to be considered for the presenter training, please send your answers to any non-yes questions, along with your contact info, to ioov@naminj.org. You will be contacted within two weeks or less to schedule a short phone interview.

1. I live year-round in New Jersey, and have no specific plans for that to change in the next two years?
2. I am over the age of 18?
3. I live or have lived with a significant mental health issue?
4. I currently consider myself to be recovering from and with that issue?
5. I have some sense of what has contributed to that recovery, and am prepared to explain it (may or may not be medication or other treatment)?

6. I am the person volunteering to tell my story of my own free will¹?
7. I spend my days doing things I value, like work, volunteering, going to school, taking care of my family, etc., rather than spending significant time every week using a treatment program?
8. I consider myself able to speak in front of groups as large as a school class – I can speak up and speak out clearly and without excessive fear?
9. I am prepared to speak about my mental health recovery in front of a public group, knowing that I may encounter neighbors, colleagues, and others I know in the community, and that my name, image, and personal story may get shared by and with others²?
10. If selected, I am prepared to follow the following basic rules of the program, including:
 - Agreeing to make at least six presentations offered to me in my area in the 12 months following the in-person training
 - Attending any presentation I agree to make, unless an emergency comes up
 - Keeping my talk focused within the four segments
 - Keeping my talk focused on my personal experiences, and presenting in a positive manner³
 - Accepting and sometimes co-presenting with people whose views differ significantly from my own⁴
 - Making presentations for the basic community education and stigma reduction purposes of NAMI IOOV, rather than selling my book, advancing my political candidacy, etc.

If you have not been able to answer YES to those ten questions, then IOOV is not right for you at this time. You may certainly reach out to us in the future.

Now please answer two more questions:

11. I drive and have access to a car⁵?
12. I am currently involved in NAMI or another mental health self-help or advocacy group?

¹ We all depend on the support of professionals, family, and friends, but this program does not work well for people fulfilling someone else's idea or passion.

² Think carefully about this one. NAMI NJ will not publicize you by name. Nonetheless, remember that dropping out of the program does not erase postings, pics, etc. which have found their way online.

³ Many of us have experienced challenges in treatment, and/or discrimination, and have a passion to change the system. However, presenters whose talks focus on negative experiences or on approaches to change, rather than their own personal experience, are not generally effective.

⁴ For instance, you may feel that injectable psychiatric medications are an intolerable coercion, while your co-presenter may feel that they are a lifesaver for him/her.

⁵ While we do not make having a car a requirement for IOOV participation, we do know that people who do not drive regularly often get few opportunities to present. If your answer was no, please explain how you get around,