Statement of Purpose

The Scattergood Foundation recognizes that behavioral health organizations must meet the highest standards of mental health literacy in order to best serve their constituencies. That is why we have created a set of mental health literacy principles under the guidance of Dr. Larry Davidson, director of the Program for Recovery and Community Health at the School of Medicine and Institution for Social and Policy Studies at Yale University. Our grantees and partner organizations have shown support for these principles and we are asking that you pledge to incorporate these benchmarks into your policy and practice.

Mental Health Literacy Principles

Organizations that are effective in delivering mental health services, advocating for persons in recovery and their families, and advancing public policy achieve this degree of proficiency due in part to their high levels of mental health literacy. Competency in mental health literacy helps organizations best meet the needs of the populations they serve by increasing knowledge and expertise, improving symptom recognition and management, fostering positive attitudes towards help-seeking behaviors, and promoting acceptance. An organization that possesses high mental health literacy meets the principles listed below.

Organizational Principles:

1. Recognizing the common humanity shared by clients, families, and practitioners alike.

   A. Employees recognize that one out of every four Americans, and one out of every two American families, will experience a mental health condition during their lifetime. Employees understand that these conditions, like other health conditions, happen to people regardless of their culture, race, ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, level of intelligence, or relative moral standing in their community. Employees who have yet to experience a mental health condition personally appreciate how fortunate they have been and that this could change at any time, also realizing how likely it is that mental illness has affected people they care about.

   B. Employees know that seeking help for a mental health concern may be both a courageous and a terrifying act on the part of the person or family seeking help. As a result, employees welcome people to the organization, congratulate them on reaching out under difficult circumstances, and ensure that they feel respected and as safe and comfortable as possible as they undertake the hard work of recovery.

   C. Management does not tolerate prejudicial attitudes toward persons with mental health conditions or their family members. Management seeks to address instances of discrimination constructively whenever and wherever they are identified.

2. Being knowledgeable and resourceful in educating and supporting clients and families.

   A. Employees have basic knowledge of the signs and symptoms of the mental health conditions likely to be experienced by the people they serve. They also have an empathic appreciation for what it is like for these persons to experience the signs and symptoms of these conditions and how these experiences are likely to impact on the person and his or her loved ones.

   B. Employees are aware that most mental health conditions are caused by a combination of biological and environmental factors. As a result, employees are aware that mental health conditions can also be exacerbated or alleviated through both biological and/or environmental interventions.
C. Employees understand the importance of educating the persons they serve and their families about how they can best manage and recover from the conditions they are experiencing. Employees recognize the value of personal wellness strategies and encourage people to develop and utilize these as complements to clinical care.

D. Employees can identify credible sources of mental health information and community resources and can readily access that information for their own use or for sharing with clients and family members.

3. Offering competent, compassionate, responsive, and proactive care.

A. Employees are able to recognize when a person or family is in crisis and render competent, timely, and responsive assistance. Employees understand that crises represent opportunities for change as well as distress, and help the persons they serve and their families to make the most of these opportunities.

B. Employees encourage the people they serve and their families to plan ahead in anticipating potential difficulties and in deciding ahead of time on how they would like such difficulties to be addressed, should they arise.

C. Employees know how to seek consultation or supervision when needed, and encourage and advise others to do so as well.

**Actionable Steps:**

Here are several tangible ways by which an organization can demonstrate its fulfillment of these principles: incorporate them within its governance; embed them within its human resource policies; and create educational materials for the workplace that cover all three categories listed above.