

The SUDA Declaration of Independence

We the people that suffer the fate of people that use substances that become addicted, declare that we have the autonomy to pursue life, liberty, and the pursuit of recovery in our lives. SUDA is a solidarity movement for people with Substance Use Disorder (SUD) that validates **individual autonomy and self-definition in recovery above all else**. We do not wish to recreate the stigma or labels of traditional recovery models, believing that **recovery is a personal journey defined by the individual, not by external beliefs or any single “disease” concept**. We declare that we do not have to identify with society's or other people's definitions of who we are. We declare that we do not have to accept treatment which does not include our individual beliefs, or is designed around parameters to meet what others want for people with SUD, whether that is a professional, peer, family, or foe.

We declare independence from terms like "alcoholic" or "addict," and from the idea that Substance Use Disorder diminishes one's humanity. We can be liberated from using clinical oppression as treatment. We declare independence from the concept that addiction is a disease of the soul, but rather a neurological condition that can be changed.

Every decision in individual recovery needs to be made in conjunction with a person living with SUD, rather than those who do not include the person in decision making for treatment or peer recovery. SUDA believes in **person-centered recovery and life**, supporting whatever path an individual chooses, including safest use possible, partial abstinence, or complete abstinence. We are **substance-neutral**, recognizing SUD as a complex mental disorder affecting all substances and walks of life.

Our goal is to empower individuals to **mitigate addiction on their own terms**, fostering a community built on **non-judgment, acceptance, and open communication**. We believe that self-accountability is paramount and that true empowerment comes from within. SUDA promotes **recovery without borders**, where everyone has the right to define their own path and say "no" to anything that doesn't align with their well-being and perspectives on recovery.

The **SUDA Bill of Rights for People living with Substance Use Disorder** guides our community, ensuring that we empower each other by acknowledging all forms of change and recovery. We also believe that boundaries are paramount to prevent people imposing values on each other. We believe that when individuals take care of themselves, it creates a ripple effect of empowerment throughout our community. We believe that boundaries with substances and people in our lives will work well, and that those decisions are made by the individual person with SUD, and not others.

The SUDA Bill of Rights

1. All people with Substance Use have the right to **confidentiality** regarding their attendance and what they say in a SUDA meeting.
2. All people with Substance Use are **equal**, regardless of their recovery path or how long they've been in recovery.
3. All people with Substance Use have the right to **define their own recovery**.

4. All people with Substance Use have the right to **define their own healthy boundaries with substances**.
5. All people with Substance Use in SUDA commit to **not exploiting** each other for emotional, financial, or sexual gain.
6. All people with Substance Use have the right to **create and set boundaries** with any other member without needing to explain why.
7. All people with Substance Use agree to **respect and abide by** any boundary set by another SUDA member.
8. All people with Substance Use have the right to **disclose to their group** if a boundary has been broken within SUDA.
9. All people with Substance Use have the right to **due process** and can explain any alleged boundary violation to their group. Regardless of the discussion's outcome, the boundary set by any member will always stand. This process is an act of reconciliation with no winners, and thereby no losers, not a determination of who is right or wrong.
10. All people with Substance Use have the right to help **end stigma** and **advocate for human rights** for all people with Substance Use Disorder in peer recovery, treatment, and drug policy.

SUDA validates **all forms of recovery from addiction**, recognizing that many individuals forge their own paths outside traditional models. We affirm that practices like reducing personal harm, using less harmful substances, or employing safer substance use practices are all **equally valid forms of recovery**. In fact, we hold that there are forms of recovery that exist for anyone who begins to confront their addiction.

Recovery is a state of mind long before it becomes a tangible tool for self-empowerment. This broad inclusivity benefits our entire community, including those in abstinence-focused recovery. We have solidarity with all, however with this document being our point of unity, not all may be in solidarity with us. We do not deter anyone from pursuing complete abstinence, even extending to substances like caffeine and nicotine.

By offering a safe space that embraces **diverse recovery experiences**, SUDA can positively impact traditional recovery spaces. Individuals using medical or recreational cannabis, or those on Medication for Addiction Treatment (MAT), will find support here in non-judgment, potentially making traditional settings more empowering for those who thrive with abstinence only approaches. SUDA aims to **eliminate biases** and foster an environment of **free thought and liberation**, where discussions about medications, current substance use, mental illness, trauma, and addiction can occur without restrictive thinking. For us, having no single "path" means that **everything is possible in recovery**.