Core Values & Organizational Commitments

The principles that guide how we serve, grow, and remain accountable.

I CHOOSE LIFE, INC.
Mathews, Virginia

Grounded Strength.
Hopeful Growth.

Our Values in Practice

Our core values define the beliefs that guide how I Choose Life understands people, recovery, well-being, growth, relationships, and community. Our organizational commitments translate those beliefs into standards for ethical practice, accountability, stewardship, evidence-informed work, and continuous improvement.

Together, they provide a shared foundation for the way we serve people, build partnerships, make decisions, manage resources, and grow.

1. Complete Acceptance

We believe every person deserves to be welcomed, respected, and valued as a whole person without judgment, shame, or reduction to their past. Each person brings a unique history, identity, set of strengths, experiences, challenges, hopes, and possibilities. A person's history may be part of their story, but it does not define their worth or determine the limits of their future.

Complete acceptance means meeting people as they are while continuing to recognize and respect the person they have said they want to become. It does not require avoiding difficult conversations, overlooking harmful patterns, or affirming explanations, choices, or behaviors that may conflict with a person's own goals and values. Meaningful support may sometimes be gentle and encouraging; at other times, it may require honesty, directness, accountability, and a willingness to help someone examine difficult realities.

I Choose Life seeks to understand how each person best receives support and to respond in ways appropriate to their individual needs, strengths, circumstances, goals, and stage of recovery. Honest feedback and accountability should be grounded in trust, compassion, respect, and a genuine commitment to the person's growth—not in punishment, shame, stigma, or judgment.

I Choose Life commits to:

- welcoming each person with dignity and recognizing their inherent worth;
- creating relationships in which people can be honest about where they are and feel safe seeking support;
- seeing and supporting the whole person rather than defining anyone by addiction, diagnosis, past choices, circumstances, or challenges;
- listening with empathy while remaining willing to engage in honest and difficult conversations;
- providing support responsive to the individual, recognizing that effective support may involve compassion, encouragement, direct feedback, accountability, or respectful challenge;
- helping people examine patterns, choices, consequences, and barriers that may conflict with the goals and values they have identified for themselves;
- reducing stigma and unnecessary shame while supporting personal responsibility and meaningful change;
- honoring each person's worth and potential at every stage of recovery and growth.

2. Choice and Personal Agency

We believe people should have a meaningful voice in defining the lives they want and the goals, supports, and pathways that are right for them.

The name I Choose Life reflects the belief that lasting growth cannot be imposed. People are more likely to build meaningful and sustainable lives when their choices, strengths, goals, experiences, and priorities are respected. Support should expand opportunities and help people make informed decisions—not replace their voice or prescribe a single definition of success.

Our Commitments

respecting each person's right to make informed choices about their life and recovery;

involving people meaningfully in decisions affecting their goals, services, and support;

listening to what each person identifies as important rather than assuming what their priorities should be;

providing information, encouragement, resources, and opportunities without coercion;

supporting self-determination while being honest about risks, responsibilities, and available options;

recognizing that progress and success may look different for different people;

supporting people in building lives that are meaningful to them.

3. Individualized Recovery

We believe recovery is personal and that no single pathway, pace, service, or definition of progress is right for everyone.

Every person enters recovery with different experiences, needs, strengths, goals, resources, relationships, barriers, and circumstances. Effective support begins by meeting people where they are and responding to the individual rather than asking the individual to fit a predetermined model. I Choose Life values evidence-based support while recognizing that meaningful recovery is shaped by personal choice and lived experience.

Our Commitments

meeting people where they are without requiring them to follow one prescribed pathway;

providing individualized, evidence-based support responsive to each person's needs, strengths, goals, experiences, and circumstances;

recognizing multiple pathways to recovery;

adapting support as needs, goals, and circumstances change;

respecting each person's pace while encouraging continued progress;

connecting people with services, resources, and opportunities appropriate to their individual needs;

recognizing progress, resilience, and growth in forms meaningful to the individual.

4. Whole-Person Well-Being

We believe recovery and well-being involve the whole person and are strengthened through health, stability, connection, purpose, joy, opportunity, and quality of life.

Recovery is more than the absence of substance use. Sustainable recovery may involve strengthening physical and emotional health, rebuilding relationships, increasing stability, developing confidence, discovering purpose, experiencing joy, forming meaningful connections, and creating a life that feels worth choosing. Opportunities for wellness and personal growth can also strengthen individuals, families, and community members whose lives are affected by addiction or who seek healthier, more connected, and fulfilling lives.

Our Commitments

considering the physical, emotional, social, practical, and personal dimensions of well-being;

supporting recovery as part of a fuller life rather than as an isolated outcome;

creating and connecting people with opportunities for wellness, learning, connection, purpose, and personal growth;

recognizing the importance of relationships, housing, transportation, employment, family, community, and other conditions affecting well-being;

supporting individuals and families affected by addiction;

welcoming broader community participation in appropriate wellness, connection, and growth opportunities;

promoting health and quality of life without imposing a single definition of wellness or fulfillment.

5. Hope and Continued Growth

We believe every life holds possibility and that meaningful growth can occur at every stage.

Hope does not require denying hardship or promising easy outcomes. It means recognizing that a person's present circumstances and past experiences do not determine everything their future can become. Growth may be gradual, nonlinear, difficult, joyful, or expressed through small changes that carry significant meaning. I Choose Life seeks to support grounded strength—the stability and resilience needed to continue moving forward—with hopeful growth toward greater health, connection, purpose, joy, and fulfillment.

Our Commitments

holding hope while remaining honest about challenges;

recognizing strengths, resilience, progress, and possibility;

celebrating meaningful growth without demanding perfection;

understanding that progress is not always linear;

responding to setbacks with compassion, encouragement, and continued support;

creating opportunities for people to learn, grow, reconnect, and discover new possibilities;

communicating hope without minimizing pain, hardship, loss, or lived experience.

6. Connection and Community

We believe meaningful human connection strengthens recovery, supports well-being, reduces isolation, and helps individuals, families, and communities thrive.

People are not meant to face recovery, hardship, or growth alone. Supportive relationships can create belonging, strengthen resilience, increase access to resources, reduce stigma, and make hope more tangible. I Choose Life seeks to foster connection among individuals, families, peers, providers, partners, and the broader community while contributing to a community where recovery is understood, supported, and accessible.

Our Commitments

Building relationships grounded in trust, respect, compassion, and authenticity;

creating opportunities for belonging, mutual support, and meaningful participation;

reducing isolation among people in recovery and families affected by addiction;

strengthening connections to services, resources, supportive relationships, and community opportunities;

collaborating with community organizations, providers, partners, and residents;

supporting families while respecting the choices, privacy, and autonomy of each individual; and

promoting greater understanding of recovery and challenging stigma within the community.

Organizational Commitments

Living our values requires responsible, ethical, and accountable action. These commitments establish the standards I Choose Life seeks to uphold across services, operations, partnerships, and future growth.

I Choose Life recognizes that living its values requires more than expressing what the organization believes. It requires responsible, ethical, and accountable action in the way services are provided, relationships are built, decisions are made, partnerships are developed, and organizational resources are managed.

These commitments establish the standards I Choose Life seeks to uphold across its recovery services, wellness and community activities, organizational operations, partnerships, and future growth. They are intended to guide both daily practice and long-term decision-making while supporting the organization's mission and advancing its vision.

Integrity and Ethical Practice

We commit to acting honestly, ethically, consistently, and in the best interests of the people and communities we serve.

I Choose Life recognizes that trust is built through actions. The organization seeks to align its decisions and practices with its mission, values, professional responsibilities, legal obligations, and commitments to participants, families, partners, funders, donors, and the broader community.

I Choose Life commits to:

- acting with honesty, fairness, professionalism, and integrity;
- protecting privacy and confidentiality in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, professional standards, and organizational policies;
- communicating truthfully about the organization's services, qualifications, capacity, outcomes, needs, and limitations;
- following through on commitments and addressing concerns openly and responsibly;
- identifying, disclosing, and appropriately managing actual or potential conflicts of interest;
- making decisions consistent with the organization's mission, values, responsibilities, and the well-being of the people it serves;
- acknowledging mistakes, taking responsibility, and making reasonable efforts to correct problems and prevent their recurrence.

Accountability and Responsible Stewardship

We commit to being accountable for our decisions, actions, and the integrity of our work while using the resources entrusted to our organization responsibly, transparently, and in ways that advance our mission.

Accountability requires more than meeting external requirements. It includes establishing clear responsibilities, evaluating whether activities are achieving their intended purposes, communicating accurately, and remaining willing to improve when results, feedback, or changing circumstances indicate that a different approach is needed. The financial support and organizational resources entrusted to us carry responsibilities. I Choose Life

seeks to maintain accountability for our practices and manage our resources carefully, directing them toward meaningful, sustainable benefit.

I Choose Life commits to:

- maintaining accurate, complete, and timely financial, programmatic, and organizational records;
- establishing clear roles, responsibilities, expectations, and appropriate oversight;
- evaluating programs and activities to understand their reach, quality, effectiveness, and impact;
- using data, experience, feedback, and outcomes to guide decisions and improvements;
- responding responsibly to concerns, complaints, identified risks, and unmet needs;
- recognizing limitations and avoiding promises or representations beyond the organization's authority, expertise, resources, or capacity;
- being transparent about significant challenges while protecting individual privacy and confidential information.
- considering effectiveness, sustainability, accessibility, and community benefit when allocating resources;
- avoiding unnecessary duplication and making thoughtful use of existing community strengths and resources;
- using grant funds, donations, and other restricted resources for their intended and authorized purposes;
- complying with applicable grant requirements, funding conditions, laws, regulations, and reporting obligations;
- planning for the continuation of effective services and supports beyond individual funding periods whenever possible.

Evidence-Based and Responsive Practice

We commit to using credible evidence, professional knowledge, lived experience, individual needs, and community understanding to guide our work.

Evidence-based practice is strongest when research and established knowledge are integrated with professional judgment, lived experience, individual preferences, cultural and community context, and the realities affecting a person's life. I Choose Life does not view evidence-based support as a rigid model applied identically to everyone. The organization seeks to use reliable knowledge while remaining responsive to the individual.

I Choose Life commits to:

- using evidence-based, evidence-informed, and promising practices appropriate to the services and supports being provided;
- monitoring emerging evidence, guidance, and effective practices relevant to the organization's work;
- combining research, professional expertise, lived experience, individual preferences, and local community knowledge in providing support;
- avoiding unsupported claims, guarantees, or oversimplified promises about recovery, wellness, or outcomes;
- evaluating whether approaches are effective and making changes when evidence, outcomes, experience, or feedback indicate improvement is needed.
- identifying barriers to participation and making reasonable efforts to reduce or address them;
- being honest when a need falls outside the organization's expertise, authority, resources, or capacity and helping connect people with appropriate support when possible.

Continuous Learning and Improvement

We commit to remaining curious, reflective, responsive, and willing to grow as individuals, practitioners, and an organization.

The needs of individuals, families, and communities change over time. Research develops, recovery practices evolve, new resources become available, and experience reveals opportunities to improve. I Choose Life seeks to remain grounded in its mission and values while being flexible enough to learn and adapt.

I Choose Life commits to:

- seeking and considering feedback from participants, families, staff, contractors, volunteers, partners, and community members;
- using data, outcomes, lived experience, professional knowledge, and community input to identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities for improvement;
- supporting appropriate education, training, professional development, and skill-building;
- reviewing services, programs, materials, policies, and practices periodically;
- making thoughtful changes when evidence, feedback, experience, or community needs indicate that improvement is necessary;
- approaching organizational growth intentionally so that expansion does not compromise quality, relationships, values, or mission.

Closing Commitment

Across all of its work, I Choose Life commits to aligning its actions with its mission, vision, and core values. The organization will seek to combine compassion with honesty, acceptance with accountability, evidence with individual responsiveness, hope with practical support, and growth with responsible stewardship.

I Choose Life recognizes that trust must be earned and sustained through consistent action. As the organization grows, it will remain grounded in respect for the whole person, committed to meaningful recovery and well-being, responsive to the community it serves, and accountable for using its relationships, opportunities, and resources to create lasting benefit.

Grounded Strength. Hopeful Growth.