



MARCO

MICHIGAN ASSOCIATION OF RECOVERY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

MEMBERSHIP & CERTIFICATION STANDARDS GUIDE

PUBLISHED OCTOBER 2025

OVERVIEW

The Michigan Association of Recovery Community Organizations (MARCO) is a statewide professional association dedicated to strengthening and unifying Michigan’s network of Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs). MARCO serves as a collective voice for peer-led recovery organizations, advancing policies, practices, and partnerships that promote multiple pathways to recovery and expand access to peer-based recovery support services.

As a membership-based association, MARCO’s strength lies in the integrity, credibility, and quality of its member organizations. To maintain a consistent standard of excellence across Michigan’s recovery support network, MARCO establishes clear membership and certification standards that reflect shared values, promote accountability, and ensure that RCOs operate with the highest levels of professionalism and community trust.

A strong membership and certification structure ensures:

- **Consistency and Credibility:** Certification provides assurance to funders, partners, and policymakers that member RCOs meet recognized standards of quality and peer leadership.
- **Integrity and Accountability:** Membership and certification policies promote transparency, ethical governance, and compliance with best practices in recovery support.
- **Collective Strength:** A unified body of certified member organizations amplifies the collective advocacy power of Michigan’s recovery community and strengthens statewide collaboration.

Together, MARCO’s membership and certification systems establish a foundation for excellence, ensuring that every affiliated organization represents the values, professionalism, and lived experience at the heart of Michigan’s recovery movement.

This guide provides a comprehensive overview of MARCO’s membership categories, certification standards, and application processes. It is designed to help organizations understand eligibility requirements, prepare necessary documentation, and align their operations with MARCO’s core beliefs and quality standards. Whether an organization is newly formed or well established, this guide serves as a roadmap for achieving and maintaining recognition as a MARCO-Certified Recovery Community Organization and an active member of Michigan’s statewide recovery network.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- MEMBERSHIP.....4**
- VOTING MEMBERS4
- AFFILIATE MEMBERS.....5
- APPLICATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS5
- Application Submission.....5
- Review and Evaluation.....6
- Approval and Notification6
- Membership Renewal and Review6
- MEMBERSHIP DUES, BENEFITS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES7
- Membership Dues.....7
- Membership Benefits7
- Member Responsibilities8
- CERTIFICATION8**
- GENERAL CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS.....9
- CERTIFICATION PATHWAYS 10
- APPLICATION PROCESS..... 10
- Step 1: Application Submission..... 10
- Step 2: Application Review..... 10
- Step 3: Determination and Approval 11
- Step 4: Certification Term and Renewal..... 11
- Step 5: Ongoing Compliance and Review 12
- Step 6: Revocation and Appeals 12
- APPLICATION SECTIONS..... 12
- Section 1: Organizational Information..... 12
- Section 2: Legal and Financial Status..... 12
- Section 2A: Financial Fiduciary Information (if applicable) 13

Section 3: Mission, Values, and Governance	13
Section 4: Programs and Services.....	13
Section 5: Staffing and Peer Support Practices	14
Section 6: Community Engagement and Cultural Responsiveness.....	14
Section 7: Evaluation and Continuous Improvement.....	14
Section 8: Attestations	14
ONGOING COMPLIANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND COMPLAINTS.....	14
Ongoing Compliance.....	15
Compliance Review	15
Support and Remediation	15
Complaint and Resolution Process	16
Transparency and Continuous Improvement	16
SUMMARY	17

MEMBERSHIP

MARCO offers membership opportunities that recognize both certified RCOs and partner organizations that support the recovery movement. MARCO’s membership structure ensures that all organizations committed to advancing recovery have a place within the statewide network, while also distinguishing between voting members who meet certification standards and affiliate members who share MARCO’s mission but do not hold certification.

VOTING MEMBERS

Voting membership is reserved for RCOs that have achieved MARCO certification, confirming that they meet or exceed the standards outlined in this guide. These organizations:

- Are independent, nonprofit, peer-led entities that provide non-clinical recovery support services.

- Uphold MARCO’s Core Organizational Beliefs and demonstrate leadership by and for people in recovery.
- Have voting rights in MARCO governance, including participation in board elections, policy decisions, and committee leadership.
- Are eligible for exclusive member benefits, such as technical assistance, training, funding advocacy, and visibility within MARCO publications and events.

Voting membership signifies full recognition as a MARCO-Certified Recovery Community Organization, affirming the organization’s role as a trusted, peer-led leader in Michigan’s recovery ecosystem.

AFFILIATE MEMBERS

Affiliate membership is available to organizations, coalitions, or initiatives that share MARCO’s mission but do not meet or seek certification as an RCO. These may include:

- Emerging peer-led initiatives, treatment or prevention partners, advocacy groups, and other community-based organizations.
- Entities that support recovery through collaboration, education, or systems-level work.

Additionally, affiliate members:

- Do not hold voting rights and are not eligible for governance roles within MARCO.
- May participate in trainings, conferences, and workgroups.
- Receive limited membership benefits, including networking opportunities, access to MARCO communications, and select voting member resources.

APPLICATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS

MARCO membership is open to organizations that demonstrate alignment with MARCO’s mission and core values. The application process ensures transparency, consistency, and accountability in determining eligibility for either voting membership (certified RCOs) or affiliate membership (supporting organizations).

Application Submission

Organizations seeking membership must complete the MARCO membership application and provide supporting documentation appropriate to their membership category:

- Voting membership applicants must submit a certification application and required documentation as outlined in the MARCO Certification Standards.

- Affiliate membership applicants must submit an application describing their mission, programs, and alignment with MARCO's goals.

Applications may be submitted electronically through MARCO's website at www.certification.michiganarco.org/application.

Review and Evaluation

Voting membership applications are reviewed as part of the certification process conducted by the MARCO certification committee. The committee ensures that each organization meets all certification standards, including nonprofit status, peer-led governance, and commitment to MARCO's Core Organizational Beliefs.

Affiliate membership applications are reviewed by MARCO leadership to ensure the organization's activities and mission align with MARCO's guiding principles and statewide objectives.

Approval and Notification

All membership recommendations are submitted to the MARCO Board of Directors for final approval. Organizations will be notified via email of their membership status:

- Certified voting members will receive a MARCO Certification Letter and gain full membership rights, including voting privileges.
- Affiliate Members will receive confirmation of their membership and details regarding available engagement opportunities.

Membership Renewal and Review

Voting membership is valid for three years and must be renewed in accordance with the MARCO certification policy. Organizations are required to submit updated certification materials or proof of continued ARCO accreditation to maintain active membership and voting rights. Renewal ensures ongoing compliance with MARCO's quality standards, peer-led governance requirements, and Core Organizational Beliefs.

Affiliate memberships are reviewed on an annual basis. Affiliates may be asked to confirm continued alignment with MARCO's mission, update contact information, and verify participation in MARCO activities.

MARCO reserves the right to review membership status at any time and to request corrective actions if an organization no longer meets applicable membership or certification standards. Members are encouraged to maintain active engagement in

MARCO's initiatives, trainings, and advocacy efforts to strengthen Michigan's recovery community.

MEMBERSHIP DUES, BENEFITS, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MARCO membership represents a shared commitment to strengthening Michigan's peer-led recovery movement. This section outlines the benefits, responsibilities, and dues for membership.

Membership Dues

Currently, MARCO does not require membership dues for either voting or affiliate members, as our current focus is on building a strong, inclusive statewide network of Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs) and partners without creating financial barriers to participation.

The MARCO Board of Directors reserves the right to implement membership dues in the future to support the association's long-term sustainability, training initiatives, and member services. Should dues be established, they will be set equitably, considering organizational size, budget, and capacity, and will be communicated well in advance of implementation.

Membership Benefits

All members contribute to and benefit from MARCO's statewide recovery network. Benefits include:

- **Networking and Collaboration:** Opportunities to connect with peer-led organizations, advocates, and system partners across Michigan.
- **Training and Technical Assistance:** Access to learning opportunities, support, and organizational development resources.
- **Advocacy and Policy Representation:** Inclusion in statewide advocacy efforts and representation in policy discussions that impact Michigan's recovery community.
- **Visibility and Recognition:** Promotion through MARCO's website, communications, and events highlighting certified RCOs and engaged affiliates.

In addition, voting members (Certified RCOs) receive:

- Voting rights in MARCO governance, including board elections.
- Eligibility for leadership roles within MARCO committees and governance structures.

- Priority consideration for technical assistance, collaborative projects, and partnership opportunities facilitated by MARCO.

Member Responsibilities

All members, regardless of category, share the responsibility to:

- Uphold MARCO’s core organizational beliefs and mission in all organizational activities.
- Adhere to MARCO Policies, including but not limited to, data sharing, ethics, and governance standards.
- Maintain transparency in governance, operations, and reporting practices.
- Actively participate in MARCO events, trainings, and advocacy initiatives.
- Promote collaboration and inclusion across Michigan’s recovery ecosystem to advance peer-led, person-centered support statewide.

CERTIFICATION

Certification through MARCO establishes a shared standard of quality, accountability, and integrity among Michigan’s Recovery Community Organizations. It serves as both a recognition of excellence and a mechanism to ensure that all voting member organizations operate in alignment with MARCO’s Core Organizational Beliefs and principles of peer-led recovery.

The certification process affirms that an organization is:

- **Peer-Led and Community-Driven:** Guided and governed primarily by individuals in recovery or their family members.
- **Mission-Aligned:** Committed to promoting multiple pathways to recovery, reducing stigma, and advancing equitable, person-centered support.
- **Ethical and Transparent:** Operating in compliance with sound governance, financial, and programmatic standards.
- **Dedicated to Quality Improvement:** Engaged in ongoing reflection, evaluation, and learning to strengthen recovery support practices.

GENERAL CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

To qualify as a MARCO-Certified Recovery Community Organization, an applicant must demonstrate:

- **Nonprofit and Independent Status:** The organization holds 501(c)(3) nonprofit status with the IRS and operates independently of treatment providers and government agencies, while maintaining strong collaborative partnerships. Emerging RCOs who have not yet received 501(c)(3) nonprofit status are eligible to be granted Provisional Certification if they can reasonably demonstrate ability to secure nonprofit status in the near future.
- **Peer-Led Governance:** At least 51% of the governing board and leadership are individuals in recovery or family members. The organization’s mission, staffing, and strategic priorities reflect authentic peer leadership.
- **Commitment to MARCO’s Core Organizational Beliefs:** Activities, policies, and services must align with MARCO’s principles of inclusivity, empowerment, community connection, and respect for multiple pathways to recovery.
- **Provision of Non-Clinical Recovery Support Services:** The organization provides services such as peer mentoring, support groups, community education, and recovery events that are non-clinical, voluntary, and person-centered. Certified RCOs may not directly provide clinical or treatment services as part of their organizational operations to maintain their peer-led, community-based identity. However, collaboration with clinical and treatment providers is encouraged to ensure that individuals receive comprehensive, coordinated care that supports their recovery goals.
- **Ethical and Transparent Operations:** The organization maintains ethical standards, conflict of interest policies, and transparent governance and financial management practices.
- **Community Engagement and Advocacy:** The organization demonstrates leadership in community education, stigma reduction, and public policy advocacy supporting recovery.
- **Commitment to Continuous Improvement:** The organization collects feedback, evaluates programming, and engages in professional development and learning to enhance service quality.

These requirements form the foundation for both MARCO’s independent certification process and automatic recognition through national accreditation.

CERTIFICATION PATHWAYS

RCOs may achieve certification through one of two pathways:

- Organizations holding active accreditation from the Alliance for Recovery Centered Organizations (ARCO) through Faces & Voices of Recovery qualify for MARCO certification upon verification of their accreditation and submission of a shortened version of the full MARCO certification application.
- Organizations that are not ARCO-accredited may apply for certification through MARCO's independent application process. The MARCO certification committee will review each application and supporting materials to ensure compliance with MARCO's certification standards, governance requirements, and core beliefs.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The MARCO certification process is designed to ensure fairness, transparency, and consistency while maintaining the integrity of Michigan's peer-led recovery movement. All applications are reviewed by the MARCO certification committee, which operates under the direction of the MARCO Board of Directors and applies the standards outlined in this guide.

Step 1: Application Submission

Organizations seeking certification must complete and submit the MARCO certification application, including all required documentation specified in the application checklist. This includes verification of nonprofit status, evidence of peer-led governance, organizational policies, and proof of service delivery consistent with MARCO's standards.

- ARCO-Accredited Organizations submit proof of current national accreditation and a MARCO Membership Application for verification.
- Non-ARCO Organizations submit the full MARCO certification application and supporting materials for independent review.

Applications may be submitted electronically through MARCO's website.

Step 2: Application Review

The MARCO certification committee will review each submission to verify that the organization meets all certification standards. The committee may request additional documentation, clarification, or interviews with organizational leadership to better understand the applicant's structure and operations. The review process emphasizes

collaboration and quality improvement, allowing applicants to address minor deficiencies or provide supplementary information before a final determination is made.

Step 3: Determination and Approval

Following review, the certification committee will issue one of the following determinations:

Full Certification: Granted to organizations that meet all MARCO certification standards. Certified organizations receive a MARCO Certification Letter confirming their status as a MARCO-Certified Recovery Community Organization (RCO) and gain full voting membership rights.

Provisional Certification: Granted to organizations that substantially meet certification standards but require additional steps to achieve full compliance.

- Provisional certification provides full voting rights and membership privileges during the improvement period.
- An Action Plan will outline the specific corrective items and timeline (not to exceed 12 months).
- A progress review will occur at six months to assess advancement toward full compliance.
- Organizations that complete all required actions within 12 months will receive full certification. Failure to do so may result in extension (with cause) or revocation of provisional status.

Denial of Certification:

Organizations that do not meet the minimum standards for certification will receive written notice outlining the reasons for denial and recommendations for future eligibility.

Step 4: Certification Term and Renewal

Certification is valid for three years or until the expiration of current ARCO accreditation, whichever occurs first.

- Certified organizations must submit an updated application prior to the end of the certification term to maintain active status.
- Renewal reviews focus on continued alignment with MARCO's core organizational beliefs, governance standards, and service quality.
- Organizations are encouraged to maintain active participation in MARCO trainings, events, and peer learning opportunities throughout their certification period.

Step 5: Ongoing Compliance and Review

Certified RCOs are expected to maintain ongoing compliance with MARCO policies and ethical standards. MARCO reserves the right to conduct periodic reviews or request documentation to confirm continued compliance. Significant organizational changes, such as leadership transitions, restructuring, or service expansion, must be communicated to MARCO within 60 days.

Step 6: Revocation and Appeals

If an organization is found to be out of compliance or engages in conduct inconsistent with MARCO's standards or core organizational beliefs, certification may be subject to review and possible revocation. Written notice will be provided, and the organization will have 30 days to appeal the decision. The MARCO certification committee will review appeals and issue a final determination.

APPLICATION SECTIONS

The full MARCO certification application consists of eight sections. All sections of the application are designed to reflect the core components of a peer-led, community-based organization. MARCO recommends applicants prepare materials in advance, including governance documents, financial statements, and sample policies, to streamline the review process. Incomplete applications may delay review or result in provisional certification pending submission of missing materials.

The following guidance is intended to help applicant organizations prepare a complete and high-quality submission. Each section corresponds to the MARCO certification application and provides examples of the materials or information that meet expectations for certification.

Section 1: Organizational Information

This section establishes your identity and point of contact. Provide your legal organization name (matching your IRS determination letter), physical and mailing address, website or social media links (if applicable), and a primary contact person. This contact should be someone familiar with your organization's operations and able to answer follow-up questions if clarification is needed.

Section 2: Legal and Financial Status

To be eligible for MARCO certification, your organization must be an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Upload your IRS determination letter confirming your tax-exempt status. Also

include your Articles of Incorporation and general liability insurance documents. A Certificate of Occupancy is required if you operate out of a physical location. Submit an audited or board-reviewed financial statement from the last fiscal year and your current year budget with income and expenses. These materials demonstrate your organizational stability and transparency.

Section 2A: Financial Fiduciary Information (if applicable)

If your organization uses a fiduciary for financial administration, this must be disclosed. Upload a signed Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement that clearly outlines the relationship, roles, and responsibilities. Include the fiduciary's own IRS 501(c)(3) letter and proof of insurance. This helps MARCO understand who holds fiduciary control and ensures accountability.

Section 3: Mission, Values, and Governance

Your mission and vision should reflect a recovery-oriented, peer-led approach that embraces multiple pathways to recovery. Include an organizational chart showing staff roles and relationships. Your bylaws should show that at least 51% of your board members are individuals in recovery or family members. Upload your Conflict-of-Interest policy, and optionally, a strategic plan if available. These documents help confirm that your governance structure is rooted in community voice and ethical oversight.

Section 4: Programs and Services

Describe the core recovery supports your RCO provides. These may include peer recovery coaching, recovery meetings, mutual aid groups, community education, harm reduction services, and other supports. Upload a calendar, program flyer, or sample schedule that shows a variety of programming options. Ensure that you support multiple pathways to recovery. Provide your participant rights policy, a signed Code of Ethics (by staff and volunteers), and policies regarding confidentiality and grievance procedures.

Certified Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs) are prohibited from directly providing clinical services, which include activities that involve medical, diagnostic, or therapeutic treatment delivered by licensed healthcare professionals. This includes, but is not limited to, substance use disorder or mental health assessment, diagnosis, counseling, psychotherapy, medication management, or treatment planning. These services fall under the purview of licensed treatment providers and are outside the scope of peer-led recovery support. However, certified RCOs are encouraged to collaborate and coordinate with clinical and treatment partners to ensure individuals receive comprehensive, integrated care that addresses both their clinical and recovery support needs. Collaboration may

include referrals, warm handoffs, joint programming, and participation in care coordination efforts, provided the RCO maintains its independent, non-clinical, peer-led identity.

Section 5: Staffing and Peer Support Practices

Provide a list of staff, including names, roles, and whether they identify as peers. We are looking for evidence that your workforce reflects lived experience. Describe your staff onboarding and training processes, especially training related to ethics, boundary setting, and supervision. Upload your peer boundary policy. If you have a plan for supervision or mentorship of peer staff, include that as well.

Section 6: Community Engagement and Cultural Responsiveness

Explain how your RCO engages with and reflects the local community. This could include outreach efforts, partnerships, hosting events, or community-driven advisory boards. Indicate how you collect and respond to community or participant feedback. If you serve multilingual communities, describe how you support language access (translated materials, bilingual staff, etc.).

Section 7: Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Briefly describe how your organization tracks service delivery and outcomes. Examples might include numbers served, service types, housing stability, employment status, or connection to other services. Describe how you use that data to assess and improve services. Finally, explain how participant data is kept confidential and secure.

Section 8: Attestations

This section confirms that all information submitted is true and complete. An authorized representative of your organization (such as the Executive Director or Board Chair) must sign and date this section. Submitting this form acknowledges your understanding of and agreement with the certification requirements.

ONGOING COMPLIANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND COMPLAINTS

Certification and membership within MARCO represent a continuing commitment to uphold the principles, ethics, and standards that define Michigan's peer-led recovery movement. MARCO views compliance not as a punitive mechanism but as an opportunity for shared learning, transparency, and continuous improvement among its members.

Ongoing Compliance

All MARCO-Certified Recovery Community Organizations (RCOs) are expected to maintain adherence to the requirements outlined in this document and in MARCO's Core Organizational Beliefs Policy, Membership Policy, and Certification Policy.

To remain in good standing, certified RCOs must:

- Continue operating as an independent, nonprofit, peer-led organization.
- Maintain compliance with all applicable governance, fiscal, and ethical standards.
- Provide only non-clinical recovery support services, as defined in MARCO policy.
- Notify MARCO within 60 days of any significant organizational changes, including leadership transitions, fiscal agent changes, restructuring, or expansion of services that may affect compliance with certification standards.

Compliance Review

MARCO reserves the right to conduct periodic reviews of certified organizations to confirm continued compliance. Reviews may include:

- Verification of submitted documentation (e.g., bylaws, policies, financials).
- Virtual or on-site assessments.
- Follow-up interviews or correspondence with organizational leadership.

If a review identifies areas of concern, MARCO will provide a written notice and may request additional documentation or corrective action.

- Technical assistance or coaching will be offered whenever possible to support remediation.
- If an organization fails to address deficiencies or acts in a manner inconsistent with MARCO's standards, certification status may be suspended or revoked in accordance with MARCO's certification policy.

Support and Remediation

MARCO is committed to fostering growth and sustainability within Michigan's recovery network. When compliance concerns arise, MARCO will work collaboratively with the organization to develop a Corrective Action Plan outlining steps, timelines, and available supports. The goal is to help RCOs strengthen internal capacity, align with best practices, and sustain their peer-led mission.

Organizations demonstrating good-faith efforts to resolve identified issues will remain in good standing throughout the remediation period unless significant ethical or safety concerns are identified.

Complaint and Resolution Process

MARCO upholds the right of community members, participants, partners, and staff to raise concerns regarding the conduct or compliance of any certified or affiliate member organization. Complaints may include, but are not limited to:

- Alleged violations of MARCO’s Core Organizational Beliefs or Code of Conduct.
- Ethical breaches, discriminatory practices, or misconduct by peer staff.
- Failure to maintain nonprofit integrity, peer-led governance, or non-clinical service standards.

Complaint Submission: Complaints must be submitted in writing to MARCO via the designated online form or email. Submissions should include a description of the issue, relevant dates, and any supporting documentation.

Review: The MARCO certification committee, or a designated subcommittee, will review the complaint within 30 days of receipt. If the complaint involves a potential conflict of interest, committee members will recuse themselves as appropriate.

Resolution: MARCO may request a written response or documentation from the organization involved. The committee will determine whether corrective action, mediation, or investigation is warranted. Outcomes may include dismissal of the complaint, issuance of a corrective action plan, or initiation of certification review procedures.

Notification and Appeal: Both the complainant and the organization will receive written notice of the decision. If certification or membership is affected, the organization may appeal in writing within 30 days of notification. The appeal will be reviewed by the MARCO Board of Directors, whose decision is final.

Transparency and Continuous Improvement

MARCO will maintain a record of all certified organizations in good standing and make this list publicly available. Lessons learned from compliance reviews and complaints will inform ongoing improvements to MARCO’s policies, training, and member supports.

Through this process, MARCO reaffirms its commitment to integrity, inclusion, and accountability, ensuring that Michigan’s recovery community remains strong, trusted, and led by those with lived experience.

SUMMARY

MARCO exists to strengthen, unify, and elevate Michigan's network of peer-led RCOs. These Membership and Certification Standards establish the foundation for how MARCO and its member organizations work together to promote recovery, integrity, and inclusion across the state.

Through membership, organizations join a collaborative statewide movement that amplifies the voice of lived experience, advances recovery-oriented policy, and builds shared capacity for advocacy and service. Through certification, organizations demonstrate their alignment with MARCO's core organizational beliefs, commitment to ethical and transparent operations, and adherence to standards that define excellence in non-clinical, peer-based recovery support.

MARCO's certification process ensures that every participating organization operates with accountability, independence, and a person-centered approach while maintaining strong partnerships with clinical, governmental, and community systems.

Certified RCOs are leaders in Michigan's recovery landscape; trusted voices that uphold hope, empower communities, and model best practices in peer support.

Together, these standards define what it means to be a MARCO member and to represent Michigan's recovery community with integrity, unity, and purpose. By following them, organizations help sustain a statewide recovery movement built on trust, collaboration, and the shared belief that recovery is possible for everyone.