



## **Sandra McQueen-Baker**

CEO,  
Fresh Start

Sandra McQueen-Baker is the Executive Director of Fresh Start of Miami-Dade, Inc. She has been an advocate for mental health since 1996, when she became employed as a peer counselor at Lock Towns Community Mental Health Center in Miami, Florida. Through her advocacy efforts, she was instrumental in determining the need for and helping to develop the independently peer-run organization known as Fresh Start of Miami-Dade, Incorporated, located in the northern part of Miami-Dade County. There she oversees a Drop-In Center Outreach program and Peers On the Move Project targeting the needs of diverse populations. Through her advocacy efforts in making the VOICE of individuals with Behavioral Health Challenges heard, she has been at the forefront of the Peer Recovery movement in Miami-Dade. More recently, with the support from Thriving Mind South Florida dba, South Florida Behavioral Health Network, Fresh Start of Miami Dade provides Peer support services for individuals being released from the State Treatment Facilities through Peers on the Move project.

Through her time, Sandra has been involved in a variety of community organizations and initiatives that empower and educate communities on stigma reduction and recovery orientation. For example, she was a peer representative for the Eleventh Judicial Criminal Mental Health Project Jail Diversion Program. She was also part of the first FACT team in Miami-Dade, and a board member of NAMI Miami.

Currently, she serves as a board member of Thriving Mind dba South Florida Behavioral Health Network, and the Alliance for Change and Empowerment coordinator. Fresh Start of Miami-Dade, Inc. is a Provider Educator under the Florida Certification Board and through grant supported opportunities offers trainings at no-cost. As a Certified Recovery peer Specialist and one of the First Advanced WRAP Facilitators in Florida, Sandra McQueen-Baker shares the message of RECOVERY and works to instill HOPE in the many lives of individuals, families, and communities at large.

She has been honored with several awards including the 2006 Voice Award from SAMHSA, the 2007 Heroes in the Fight Award from the Mental Health Association and was named the 2007 Consumer Advocate of the Year by the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court, Miami-Dade County. She received the 2014 EPIC award from Broward County MHA and a plaque from Disability Rights Florida in 2015. Most recently she received a very heartfelt gift, The 2024 Pioneer Award for her years of commitment and dedication to peer service.

But above all, Sandra's favorite roles are being a caregiver, mother, and grandmother.