



Schizophrenia Society of Alberta, Calgary Chapter

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PEER SUPPORT OUTREACH PROGRAM

“People with Schizophrenia helping People with Schizophrenia!”

People with schizophrenia are employed as Outreach Workers to provide peer support to others in difficulty due to the disorder. Weekly outreach visits and phone calls are provided by Outreach Workers to recipients in hospital and those in isolation in the community.

TRAINING PROGRAM

Outreach Workers participate in a 12-week training program that further develops their expertise concerning schizophrenia and builds their self-esteem. Topics covered range from self care to suicide intervention and include sessions facilitated by community mental health professionals.

TEAM MEETINGS

The Peer Support Outreach Program is truly team led. Outreach Workers participate in monthly team meetings where they determine the direction of the program by making decisions that affect program processes and outcomes.

PEER SUPPORT VISITS AND PHONE CALLS

- Visits take place in the hospital and in the community, but not in the recipient's home.
- Recipients determine the time and location of community visits.
- Two Outreach Workers attend each visit.
- Over time, each recipient is introduced to many different Outreach Workers, thereby broadening his/her base of support.

During visits Outreach Workers provide:

- information about schizophrenia.
- information about the Schizophrenia Society.
- information about many other community resources.
- suggestions for coping with symptoms and stigma.
- normalization of the disorder by sharing experiences.
- understanding, acceptance and friendship.
- most importantly, HOPE!!!

BENEFITS OF THE OUTREACH PROGRAM

Outreach Workers:

- have an opportunity for employment within a supportive environment.
- participate in meaningful activities.
- contribute a valuable service to society.
- realize an increase in their self-esteem.
- experience improved mental and physical health.

Recipients:

- develop an understanding that they are not alone and feel a sense of belonging.
- improve their social skills.
- acquire increased insight into their disorder.
- realize an increase in their self-esteem.
- increase their participation in community life.
- experience improved mental and physical health.

During the 3 year project phase of the Outreach Program, the project was evaluated by independent third party evaluators. They compared project participants' health before & after their involvement with the project. The findings clearly demonstrated that project participants realized a 70% reduction in inpatient hospital days due to their involvement in the Outreach Project.

“Thank you for providing me with two wonderful Outreach Workers every week. The Outreach Workers' caring genuine support is tremendous. I wouldn't know where to begin to look for someone to build positive relationships with. I want to greatly send my thanks to each Outreach Worker for meeting with me and for their hard work. I look forward to and enjoy meeting every week.”

Outreach Recipient