

INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY

Because you know and care about your ill family member, you can help with their treatment and recovery by being involved in a positive way.

- Find out as much as you can about schizophrenia, and how symptoms are treated
- Join a support group to learn about how other families have dealt with issues
- **Identify** specific problems or obstacles
- **Develop** a plan for how to deal with the issue, and then
- Put that plan into **action** (e.g., call or write a letter, make an appointment to speak with a person in charge)

The BC Schizophrenia Society has branches in most communities and many resources to help support and educate families.

SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY

“Never underestimate the power of a small group of committed people to change the world. Indeed, that is all that ever has.” — Margaret Mead

As the term implies, systemic advocacy works at many levels of “the system” for changes, that will improve care for people with schizophrenia.

When there is so much to be done, taking on “the system” may seem overwhelming. But when people get together, the work can be divided into specific “doable” tasks.

Advocacy is making an important difference at every level of government, professional associations, media and other organizations across Canada.

THINK ABOUT IT...

Is it important for you as an individual to feel you are somehow contributing to “the bigger picture”? If so, you can start by:

- Considering what might be most interesting to you. Education, public awareness, access to treatment, housing, rehabilitation, and raising funds for these activities are all areas that can use your help
- Evaluating your personal skills and how much time you have to offer
- Deciding if you would like to work at the local, provincial or national level — or all three

Remember — there’s no need to reinvent the wheel. The Schizophrenia Society can help put you in touch with existing groups who will welcome your unique ideas, talents and energy.

Finally, every contribution is valuable. If you want to advocate for change but don’t have time to get personally involved — consider making a donation to support the work of the BC Schizophrenia Society.

WHERE CAN WE GET MORE HELP?

The British Columbia Schizophrenia Society (BCSS) is a family-based organization. We understand what it’s like to live with schizophrenia.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

British Columbia Schizophrenia Society

201 - 6011 Westminster Hwy.
Richmond, BC V7C 4V4
Tel: 604-270-7841 Fax: 604-270-9861
Toll Free: 1-888-888-0029
bcss.prov@telus.net www.bcss.org



DISCRIMINATION: WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

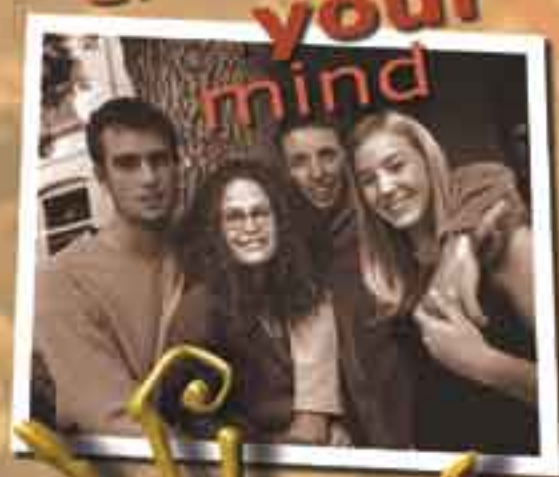
OUR MISSION:

“To alleviate the suffering caused by schizophrenia”

OUR MANDATE:

- Family support and education
- Public education, awareness and understanding
- Advocacy for better services for people with schizophrenia and their families
- Promote research into the treatment and cure for schizophrenia

We'd like to change your mind



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This information not to be substituted for the advice of a professional. Always consult a physician regarding individual circumstances.



DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PEOPLE WITH SCHIZOPHRENIA

Individuals with schizophrenia may face many challenges because of their illness. But the attitudes of other people can also create barriers. Understanding this social aspect of disability is essential. Respect for the dignity of persons with schizophrenia is the key to preventing and removing barriers.

More than two-thirds (68%) of people with schizophrenia believe they have faced discrimination because of their illness. Of those, 38% said they have been laid off, unable to apply for, or had difficulty finding a job due to their illness. (SSC study 2001)

People with schizophrenia, through no fault of their own, find themselves denied housing, education, employment, income, criminal justice, parenting and other basic rights that all of us take for granted.

Discrimination also results in a shortage of critical resources such as hospital beds, appropriate housing, and rehabilitation programs for people with mental illness.

Schizophrenia is nothing to be afraid of. Like many physical illnesses, it's treatable. But in addition to good treatment, there's something else that will help too — a change of community attitude.

People with schizophrenia need support and acceptance. Without that acceptance, many people with schizophrenia and their families try to hide the illness from their relatives, friends and community. The result is that

families feel very isolated and can make the illness worse. Discrimination results in a lowered quality of life.

We can all help to change attitudes towards schizophrenia by:

- Learning to see schizophrenia like any other illness and accept that if a person acts strangely it may be a symptom of the illness, just as a cough can be a symptom of the flu. Try to learn more about the illness so you can understand why the person behaves strangely.
- Showing support to friends, relatives, neighbours or colleagues at work who are affected by schizophrenia and encouraging other people to do the same.
- Speaking up when someone uses languages that belittles a person with schizophrenia or perpetuates myths about the illness.
- Encouraging a person who shows signs of schizophrenia or psychosis, or their families, to seek help.

FILING A DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT

The BC Human Rights Tribunal is an independent, quasi-judicial body created by the BC Human Rights Code.

The Tribunal is responsible for accepting and resolving human rights complaints in a way that is fair to the parties involved. The Tribunal deals only with human rights complaints that arise in British Columbia and are covered by the Human Rights Code.

You can contact the Tribunal at:

Email address is:
BCHumanRightsTribunal@gems9.gov.bc.ca

1170 - 605 Robson Street
Vancouver, BC V6B 5J3
(604) 775-2000 phone
(604) 775-2020 fax
1-888-440-8844 toll free (in BC)

WHAT ELSE CAN BE DONE?

Family members and friends of people with schizophrenia can be a powerful force for change.

Getting involved in advocacy is important because many people with schizophrenia are not able to advocate for themselves.

Getting involved with the BC Schizophrenia Society will:

- Give you the information you need to be an effective advocate for your ill relative
- Give you the education and support you need to make improvements in the mental health system
- Help you to join your voice with thousands of other family members so that we can all speak more loudly!

ADVOCACY

Advocacy is the process of arguing for or supporting a cause or pleading on behalf of another person. The two most common types of advocacy are:

Individual Advocacy

- Refers to efforts by one person to support, empower or act on behalf of another individual.
- As an individual advocate, you can help someone with schizophrenia obtain medical services and other resources they need.

Systemic Advocacy

- Refers to activities aimed at making changes in the system. These efforts include changing legislation, policies, and practices with respect to schizophrenia in order to improve the lives of people with schizophrenia.

To become a successful advocate at any level, it is important to:

- Get the facts about schizophrenia
- Learn how “the system” works
- Have clear goals
- Set priorities
- Learn to communicate effectively
- Put things in writing and keep records