

SELF-HELP ONTARIO

Supporting the use of self-help/mutual aid strategies for health promotion in Ontario

Spring 2005

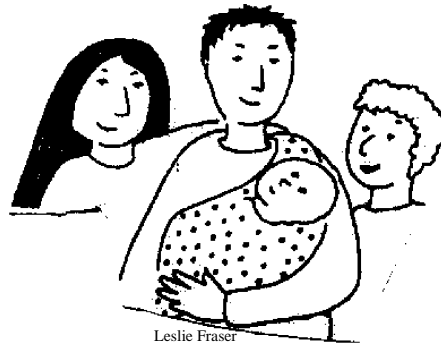
OSHNET and Best Start collaborate to develop networks & resources

Over the past year, OSHNET collaborated with the Best Start Resource Centre to develop services, resources and networks that support the efforts of health promoters using (or wanting to use) self-help and peer support strategies in areas of Maternal, Newborn and Family Health Promotion. This has been a very rewarding partnership.

In early 2004, we conducted a needs assessment surveying 40 representatives from diverse programs around the province – from public health units, to family resource centres, to member-led self-help organizations. The survey indicated a high level of interest in two particular service areas: support for networking among programs, and information on volunteer management.

The first resource we collaboratively developed to support networking is a contact list of programs using self-help/peer support in Maternal, Newborn and Family Health in Ontario. This resource is available online and in print. We anticipate updating the list annually.

Another resource now online is an article highlighting research literature. Although



Leslie Fraser

not a thorough review, the article provides lots of direction and background for anyone wanting to learn about impacts of self-help/peer support programming in this area or for those seeking references during the development phase of a program.

Various learning/networking events offered by OSHNET throughout the year (mostly in collaboration with Best Start) proved very popular. For example, a networking lunch was held after a focus group in Toronto; at OSHNET's regional conference in Kingston, a networking session on telephone peer support included several health promoters working in maternal and newborn health; at Best Start's provincial conference, our workshop on "Integrating Self-Help

Strategies in your Health Promotion Work" was filled to capacity. Forthcoming this Spring, at OSHNET's London regional conference, representatives from two programs – Breastfeeding Buddies in Kitchener and Bereaved Families in London – will speak on a panel about peer buddy programs (for more info on the London conference, contact Trix at tvaneqmond@london.cmha.ca).

Finally, to help diverse health promoters learn about and network more with existing programs and to provide more guidance around strategies for volunteer management, Best Start is publishing a new resource entitled "Self-Help/Peer Support Strategies in Maternal, Newborn and Family Health: Examples from the Provincial Landscape." This resource profiles 13 programs from across Ontario (and one in Manitoba). It presents an exciting picture of the diverse ways self-help and peer support strategies can promote health among mothers, infants and families! The resource will be available online and in print through both OSHNET and Best Start.

Continued on page 2...

From the Toolbox: "Warmups"

One of the hot topic discussions on OSHNET's listserv last year was "warm-ups". We found that ideas for these short and sweet activities are fairly easy to come by – just *google*. But finding the right one that works for you in terms of energy, timing, and content, can take time – and luck. Listserv members shared a few favorites. This one was contributed by Norma Frankoff from the Wellwood Resource Centre in Hamilton:

I like to do this one whenever I have a group gathered for an intense session (problem solving or planning) outside of work hours (e.g. early Saturday morning):

- *Depending on the size of the group (anything over 10), you may break into small clusters*
- *Ask the groups to discuss what each participant would be doing on their own if they weren't at this session*

Typically we'll get answers like, "sleeping in", "house related chores", "running", "spending time with my family" and sometimes something really unusual.

When we debrief the activity, humour may come out (some are happy to give up chores!). Overall the messages are good: folks are giving up something to be here; everyone has their own lives and feels strongly enough about the organization to be here.

I find this warmup helps to bring the group around to a common understanding before beginning the day, particularly if the topic is difficult.

For more information on the OSHNET listserv, visit <http://www.selfhelp.on.ca/oshnet/archives/00000001.html>

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...Continued from page 1

Accessing these New Resources

To find these new resources online, visit OSHNET's "online resources" database at www.selfhelp.on.ca. Choose "health promotion" as a topic or type "maternal" under the keyword search option to view the resource list.

Staying Connected

To continue building our network with those working in maternal, newborn and family health promotion, OSHNET has created a group list of practitioners using self-help strategies in this field. If you would like to be included on this list, to hear about related resources and events, email oshnet@selfhelp.on.ca.

Integrating Self-Help Strategies

Last Spring, OSHNET launched a new factsheet entitled "Integrating Self-Help Strategies in Your Health Promotion Work". This has proved a very popular topic. The factsheet presents an overview of different ways that key elements of self-help and peer support strategies can enhance health promotion initiatives. The factsheet is online at www.selfhelp.on.ca.

Although OSHNET has not yet developed more in-depth generic resources in this topic area, several pilot projects at the Self-Help Resource Centre (SHRC), which hosts OSHNET, have published manuals for integrating self-

help strategies in specific health promotion contexts.

In late 2004, culminating a one-year *Empowering Stroke Prevention Project*, SHRC published "Healthy Ways to Prevent Stroke in Your Community: A Facilitator's Guide". This resource is available through OSHNET in print and online.

Another innovative pilot project run by SHRC during the International Year of the Volunteer in collaboration with partners across Ontario, produced the resource "Using Peer Support to Create Volunteer Opportunities for New Canadians." This resource is available in print for \$5.00.

I heard wonderful things about OSHNET's regional conferences last year. With the new year, we're looking forward to gatherings in London, Thunder Bay and Toronto.

Have you seen OSHNET's revamped website? Last fall, major renovations gave us a whole new look – giving users easier access to information and resources related to self-help and peer support.



Self-Help Ontario is published semi-annually by the Ontario Self-Help Network (OSHNET) to support the use of self-help/mutual aid strategies for health promotion in Ontario. The OSHNET program also provides free networking, consultation, training and information services to enhance the quality and accessibility of self-help groups, networks, organizations and centres in Ontario. OSHNET is a program of the Self-Help Resource Centre, funded by the Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Branch of the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care as a part of the Ontario Health Promotion Resource System (www.ohprs.ca).

For more information, contact OSHNET at (416) 487-4355/1-888-283-8806
E-mail oshnet@selfhelp.on.ca Website www.selfhelp.on.ca

Self-Help Centres Across Ontario

The following organizations are affiliates of OSHNET. Part of their mandate is to promote self-help in their communities.

BARRIE-SIMCOE
CMHA Barrie-Simcoe Branch
(705) 726-5033 armstrong@cmhasim.on.ca

CAMBRIDGE
Cambridge Active Self-Help Resource Centre
(519) 623-6024
general@cambridgeactiveselfhelp.ca

DURHAM REGION
CMHA Durham Region
(905) 436-8760 chrism@cmhadurham.org

HAMILTON-WENTWORTH
(905) 528-0104
info@cishw.on.ca
Web: www.inform.city.hamilton.on.ca

VOLUNTEER HAMILTON
(905) 523-4444
monica@volunteerhamilton.on.ca

HURON-PERTH COUNTY
CMHA Huron-Perth County
(519) 273-1391 Ext.207

KINGSTON
CMHA Kingston Branch
(613) 549-7027 cmhstaff@adan.kingston.net

KITCHENER-WATERLOO
Waterloo Region Self-Help
(519) 570-4595 general@wrsh.ca

LONDON-MIDDLESEX
CMHA London-Middlesex Branch
(519) 434-9191 Ext.226
tvaneqmond@london.cmha.ca

LONDON
London Community Resource Centre
(519) 432-1801 lrcr@lrcr.on.ca

OTTAWA-CARLTON
Olde Forge Community Resource Centre
(613) 829-9777 forge@ncf.ca

OWEN SOUND
Community Network Support Team
(519) 371-4551 cnst@gbchc.org

OXFORD COUNTY
Oxford Self-Help Network
(519) 421-2980 oshn@on.aibn.com

PETERBOROUGH
Women's Health Care Centre
(705) 743-4132, Ext. 308 mjack@prhc.on.ca

SUDBURY-MANI TOULIN
CMHA Sudbury Branch
(705) 675-7252, Ext. 205
klusk@cmha.sudbury.on.ca

TORONTO
Self-Help Resource Centre
(416) 487-4355 shrc@selfhelp.on.ca
Web site: www.selfhelp.on.ca

WATERLOO REGION
The Self-Help Alliance
(519) 766-4315 Ext. 244 stronga@self-help.ca

WINDSOR-ESSEX
CMHA Windsor-Essex Branch
(519) 255-7440 rjarecsni@cmha.weeb.on.ca

YORK REGION
Self-Help Network of York Region
(905) 780-0491 Ext. 19 sweeney@look.ca