



C O A S T

MENTAL HEALTH

# Volunteering

## **Volunteer Mission:**

*To provide opportunities for volunteers to contribute to our cooperative community and support the work of Coast Mental Health*

As a Coast Volunteer, you will be working as part of our team in promoting the recovery of clients with a mental illness. Each client is an individual, with their own unique qualities and challenges. The majority of our clients are working on goals that relate to their own individualized recovery plans. We work with clients using the Psychosocial Rehabilitation model to help clients create and meet their own social, psychological, physical, recreational and spiritual goals. Here is a little of what you can expect or might experience as a Coast Volunteer:

## **In Community Homes:**

Our Community Homes program houses people with a mental illness in a community-based, 24-hour, 7 day a week residential care facility. These homes are in various communities around Vancouver. The clients in our homes come from a variety of backgrounds and face a variety of challenges. You will work with clients with mood, thought and/or behavioural disorders.

Volunteers either run a weekly program, such as a walking group, a games group, a craft group or a cooking group – but it certainly is not limited to those activities – or they work with one client, addressing that client's needs. Some group volunteers run different groups each week.

A number of these clients come from an institutional background, they are learning or relearning activities for daily living, a major part of the work can be getting clients motivated to be involved. You may find that you need a few weeks of volunteering to build relationships and a level of trust before you are able to get them interested in what you are doing.

At most homes, there will only be one or two staff there while you are volunteering. They will orient you to the home and the clients, but volunteers usually work with light supervision.

You will check in and out with staff each shift you volunteer.

Volunteers usually work one 1-3 hour shift per week, on a fixed day and time. The minimum commitment is six months.

## **In Supported Housing:**

Coast runs several blocks of apartments and facilitates supported independent living situations in market housing units. These clients live in their own apartments, and have access to a Mental Health Worker on-site or through Coast. They have varying degrees of mental health issues, and function at a variety of levels.

Volunteers in these programs usually work one-on-one with a client, facilitating their use of community amenities and programs or spending time as a companion. You may help a client with their weekly shopping, visit a gallery or museum with a client, play cards or help make a meal. Some one-on-one volunteers help clients with life-skills issues, like helping them learn to prepare a budget, how to menu plan and comparison shop, or how to schedule chores that need to be done.

## **At the Mental Health Resource Centre:**

Our downtown Mental Health Resource Centre offers meals, laundry and shower facilities and a number of support, recreational and art programs. A number of people come through here each day, many for the meals, but also for the sense of community and companionship. A number of clients that use the Centre are dealing with addiction issues, unstable living conditions and/or economic challenges.

Volunteers at the Resource Centre may help in the kitchen, help with an existing program, or possibly run a program on their own; many volunteers come to simply talk or play cards with a client. Staff are quite busy at the Resource Centre – volunteers need to be self directed and confident working with this type of client base.

Coast promotes recovery of persons with mental illness.

Our vision is a society where possibilities become reality

Since 1972, Coast has helped thousands of individuals in their recovery from mental illness. We have seen clients move from unemployment, homelessness, being hungry and alone, to finding jobs, homes, food and a community of people who care.

## Forensics:

Our Coast Cottages program in Coquitlam assists people with a mental illness who have had previous involvement with the criminal justice system. The goal of the program is to maximize each person's potential and level of independence. Coast's services and methodology are designed to equip residents to transition into the community so they are at a low risk of re-offending.

Residents have a level of time flexibility depending on their needs as identified in assessments and progress towards achieving rehabilitation goals. Coast staff work closely with treatment teams from Forensics Psychiatric Hospital and Forensics Regional Community and with other care providers in all aspects of case management. Forensics Psychiatric Hospital staff, clinicians, Coast staff, residents, and community case workers developing a partnership to work toward individualized consumer-identified goals (In keeping with Custody Disposition or Conditional Discharge).

Volunteers in this program will either work with a small group or a single client, providing assistance with either life skills related learning tasks, or in a social-recreational capacity.

## Other:

We also use volunteers at a variety of sites that are able to share a special skill with a group. Some volunteers teach Tai Chi, Self-Esteem classes or other wellness related classes. Some share their expertise in computers, writing or gardening. We are always looking for volunteers with special skills they can share with our clients.

## Expectations for Volunteers:

Volunteers at Coast will be able to take advantage of orientation and training opportunities while volunteering. Support is given to volunteers to help enhance their skills, with the goal being to be able to:

- Listen effectively without resorting to offering personal advice.
- Motivate the client to learn new ways to look at things.
- Look for what interests the person and help to reconnect with those things that they enjoy, or have enjoyed in the past.
- Help clients work toward "SMART" goals: specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely

- Offer a positive outlook.
- Encourage a healthy stigma-free outlook on mental illness - no victims or "awefulizing."
- Normalize interactions.
- Maximize successes.
- Demonstrate an ability to interact and provide support in a non-judgemental way.
- Report or debrief with the person's Community Mental Health Worker on a regular basis, either by phone, e-mail or in writing.
- Be willing to have fun.
- Demonstrate ability to set personal boundaries and limits.
- Demonstrate the ability to recognize when you need to step away from the volunteer position in order to give the person served the best service possible.
- Maintain self-awareness and allow for personal growth.
- Demonstrate ability to be flexible - especially when the person who is being served changes his or her mind about anything that you are doing.
- Demonstrate patience.
- Demonstrate a healthy sense of humour without sarcasm.
- Recognize the limits of the person being served without limiting them to too simple an activity.

## More Information

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To view opportunities please visit  
<http://www.coastmentalhealth.com>