



Family Connections

Special Edition March 2015

Family Involvement & Support - Mental Health & Addiction

Edited by: Jessica Wilkins

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Your Family Involvement & Support Team

Jessica Wilkins

Coordinator, Family Involvement & Support, Community
604-736-2881
Jessica.Wilkins@vch.ca

Isabella Mori

Coordinator, Family Involvement & Support, Acute Care
604-290-3817
Isabella.Mori@vch.ca

Becky Hynes

Coordinator, Consumer & Family Involvement, Tertiary Care
604-313-1918
becky.hynes@vch.ca

Gloria Baker

Manager, Family Involvement & Support
604-736-2881
Gloria.Baker@vch.ca

Special Edition: Addiction

Welcome to another special edition of our *Family Connections* newsletter. Once again, we decided to dedicate an entire issue to a topic that we receive frequent questions from families about - addiction.

In this issue, you'll find information on addiction services in Vancouver that may be helpful to your family. You will also find family-specific support resources. One such resource is *The Coping Kit*, developed and published by a Vancouver-based non-profit organization called From Grief to Action. *The Coping Kit* is available to families for free online at www.fgta.ca.

We hope you find the information in this edition helpful. As always, we welcome your feedback. Please don't hesitate to be in touch with one of the family involvement coordinators and share your perspective!

10th Annual Family Conference

The 10th Annual Family Conference will be held May 23, 2015! This year, we are welcoming a number of speakers who will speak on topics including, medications for mental illness and addiction, a toolkit for families who have a loved one struggling with concurrent illness as well as information about access to mental health and addiction programs and services in Vancouver.

When: May 23, 2015 9:00am - 4:40 p.m.

Where: Vancouver General Hospital

Cost: \$50 per person, \$150 for a family of 4

Registration will open soon. Check back for more details!

STAR – Sisters Together Active in Recovery

STAR is an outpatient treatment program for women, offered by Vancouver Coastal Health. The program offers a variety of treatment programs, free of charge, for women having problems related to the use of drugs or alcohol.

Their treatment program includes:

- Group programming for women in the early stages of recovery
- Group treatment for women in the later stages of recovery
- Support group for women (ongoing, drop-in format)
- Acupuncture
- SMART recovery group
- Harm reduction supplies and education
- Assessment and treatment planning
- Short term (6-8 sessions) individual counselling, as needed
- Access to addictions doctors and nurses, as needed
- One-time psychiatric consult, as needed
- Referral to other programs and services

For more information about the program, call 604-266-6124

Submitted by STAR program participants . . .

“I attended the Star Program for six weeks, and I really enjoyed the classes. Everyone was very nice and patient with any of the women that had any issues they wanted to talk out, and the facilitators were wonderful, and very understanding with all the women also made the session very fun and entertaining. I’m also working on becoming a peer leader there as well. It is very enjoyable and very energetic as well. I would highly recommend going to the program it is very beneficial.”

“A pleasure and a wonderful learning experience. I feel welcome and accepted.”

“I completely enjoyed the STAR Program. Sisters Together Active in Recovery—it really was a together thing.”

“Awesome! I’m sad it’s over. A very fun and healthy addition to my recovery journey. Loved it.”

“Excellent group. Best I have ever attended. Thank you. I learned a lot about myself.”

“I cannot express how powerful these 6 weeks have been. I feel I can now walk with my head held up higher and have a real smile not only on my face but inside me.”



Addiction Drop-In Services



Addiction drop - in services are now available at some Vancouver Coastal Health sites. During the times noted below, individuals who are interested in receiving support regarding substance use or addiction can simply walk-in to their local Community Health Centre and be seen by a counsellor. No appointment is required, first come first served.

Raven Song CHC Drop-In Addiction Service Intake
Mondays and Fridays 1:30 - 4:30 p.m.
Where: 2450 Ontario Street (at Broadway)
For more information: 604-872-8441

South CHC Drop-In Addiction Service Intake
Wednesday 8:30 - 11:30 a.m.
Where: 220 - 1200 W 73rd
For more information: 604-266-6124

VGH Outpatient Psychiatry Team – Concurrent Disorders

Vancouver General Hospital (VGH) Outpatient Psychiatry Team (OPT) provides interdisciplinary and comprehensive psychiatric assessment, consultation and time limited group therapy treatment to adults dealing with depression, adjustment and personality issues, generalized anxiety, social anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder and panic disorders. The Outpatient Psychiatry Team also offers an additional stream of service to individuals who are living with a concurrent disorder. This stream is available to individuals who are interested in addressing their use of substances in addition to symptoms of mental illness. Individuals in the concurrent disorder stream have the opportunity to participate in time limited group therapy treatment as well as a comprehensive psychiatric assessment and consultation.

All referrals for the concurrent disorder stream at VGH Outpatient Psychiatry Team (OPT) go through Vancouver Adult Mental Health Intake (VAMHI). VAMHI accepts referrals from physicians, self-referrals, as well as referrals from friends and family members. If you would like to learn more about the program, or to make a referral, contact VAMHI at 604-675-3997.



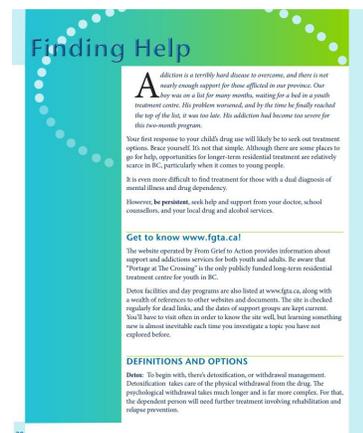
From Grief to Action – Coping Toolkit

From Grief to Action is a volunteer-based not-for-profit association in British Columbia. They are a voice and a support network for families and friends affected by drug use. FGTA developed and publishes **The Coping Kit** for families. Available for free on their website, this toolkit offers practical advice and information for families who are supporting someone living with addiction.

Topics addressed in the book include:

- Information about addiction
- Reliable information on drugs including risks, harm reduction, signs of overdose and withdrawal
- Communicating as a family
- Addiction treatment and support resource information
- How to find help
- Information about recovery

If you would like to receive a copy of this free resource, visit www.fgta.ca



GRASP – A new support group for families

GRASP (Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing) is an organization that provides sources of help, compassion, and most of all understanding for families or individuals who have had a loved one die as a result of substance abuse or addiction. GRASP offers peer-led mutual support groups for families or individuals who have had a loved one die as a result of substance abuse or addiction.

Beginning in February 2015, this new support group was launched in Burnaby by Jennifer Woodside. Jennifer and the GRASP group were recently profiled by the CBC, [click here to read the article](#).

Meetings take place the **2nd Thursday of the month from 7:00 - 9:00 p.m.** at Gilmore Community School, 50 South Gilmore Ave - Room 207, Burnaby

Jennifer requests that those interested in attending the group email to register, please contact graspvancouver@gmail.com



GRASP was founded to help provide sources of help, compassion and most of all, understanding, for families or individuals who have had a loved one die as a result of substance abuse or addiction.

Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing

Parents Forever Support Group

Submitted by Isabella Mori . . .

The following is based on an interview with Frances Kenny, founder of Parents Forever.

What is Parents Forever?

Parents Forever is a professionally supported, mutual support group for parents and family members of adult addicted persons. It receives funding from Vancouver Coastal Health and the Boys and Girls Club.



When a person goes to your group for the first time, what can they expect?

I talk to every person before they come. On the web site they also learn what to expect at the meeting. When they come to their first meeting, they are often quite emotional. They are at the end of their ropes. Most have run dry in terms of helping their loved ones change, and start to realize they need help for themselves. In the meeting, they discover that they are not alone. They feel comforted by others in the group - that happens very organically. They aren't judged. They can see they are not the only ones suffering from often crippling guilt and get feedback from others on how they dealt with it. It's very empowering to hear from other people that they've found a way through it all, and to get back control over their lives.

What are some other components of Parents Forever?

PF is not a therapy group. We quickly move over to the practical side, e.g. tips on how to cope with demands for money. Mutual support can really help there: shared experience, shared resources. There is an education component - speakers come to the group, such as recovered addicts, lawyers, people who work at a treatment center. And the humour! The smiles and the laughing over something that we know wasn't the right thing to do - but, well, we're only human and infallible. Also, no-one is expected to change when they're not ready to change. We hope people want to move forward but there is no expectation around that. We never give advice, and we never try to "fix" a group member. Some of the crises that people experience are indescribable. But they come back and feel comforted, sometimes by just being there without saying anything, and getting hugs. Many parents see counsellors outside of the group to deal with the deeper emotions.

Can you give an example of a family member who has been helped through Parents Forever?

One grandfather ("Sam") is in his late seventies**. The granddaughter ("Ellie") has been struggling with addiction for years. An exceptionally intelligent person, Ellie can behave in an abusive and threatening way when she is in her addiction. Sam and his wife have struggled with this for 20 years, paid for treatment, what have you, the whole rollercoaster. Sam used to be quite afraid of Ellie but over the years he has learned to detach. He has learned to use an "inner editor" when communicating with Ellie, to have that "second sober thought," to say things like "call me back this evening" after a crisis phone call. Now he says, "I just surround her with a white light and hope that she is doing ok." Once in a while he still feels that he has no right to strive for his own goals, and that's one of the many reasons why he still comes to PF, "to get a refill". He can imagine all the group members of PF cheering him on to keep his boundaries and look after himself.

What are your hopes and dreams for Parents Forever?

There are so many people out there that are not benefiting from this yet. People come from as far as Bowen Island. The group is getting quite big. We desperately need more groups! It would also work really well if people came earlier in their loved one's crisis.

Check out the calendar of events on the last page of our newsletter to find out when Parents Forever meets next. For more information, contact: Web: <http://parentsforever.ca/>; Ph: 604-860-4203; email: fkenny@uniserve.com

** Names and identifying characteristics have been changed in order to protect confidentiality.

Withdrawal Management

The following is an interview with Sri Pendakur who is the Manager of Withdrawal Management Services at Vancouver Coastal Health.



What is withdrawal management?

Withdrawal management services provide support to people experiencing physiological and psychological symptoms after discontinuing use of drugs and/or alcohol. At Vancouver Coastal Health these services include Detox, Daytox and the Sobering Unit. **Detox** is a medically-managed 26 bed unit staffed by nurses, physicians, social workers, counsellors and detox support workers. Individuals tend to stay at Detox for approximately 5-7 days. **Daytox** is a day-program that offers individual and group counselling around substance use and addiction. Individuals can access Detox and Daytox by calling **Access Central 1-866-658-1221**. Individuals who are intoxicated and are behaving in a way that is unsafe in the community may be brought to the **Sobering Unit** by VPD or by Saferide for brief medical monitoring while they withdraw from a substance. All withdrawal management services are open to individuals who may be experiencing concurrent disorders.

What do people experience during withdrawal?

The type of symptoms someone can experience varies based on the type of substance they are withdrawing from, the amount used and how long a person has been taking the substance. Symptoms can include nausea, vomiting, chills, pain, feelings of restlessness or fatigue, low mood, hallucinations and seizures. Sri says, “these symptoms can be very serious and in some cases can be life-threatening”. Some individuals need medical monitoring to help ensure they are safe while they withdraw from a substance.

What can families do to help someone experiencing withdrawal?

Sri emphasizes, “the most helpful things families can do is to become educated, becoming knowledgeable about what their loved one is experiencing as well as services that are available to help”. A great resource is **Access Central** - which is the centralized intake point for many addiction services at Vancouver Coastal Health, including Detox. Families are welcome to call Access Central to find out more information about services that may be available for their loved one. Sri also suggests that it can be helpful for families to support their loved ones by visiting them while they are staying at the Detox Unit. Sri emphasizes, “Detox has visiting hours daily and family and other supportive people are very welcome to come and spend time with their loved one”.

What can families do if their loved one is experiencing a crisis related to withdrawal?

As noted above, the symptoms of withdrawal can be overwhelming. If your family member is having a seizure, experiencing chest pains, becomes unconscious or is behaving bizarrely **Dial 911**. It may be necessary for someone to receive medical attention during withdrawal. Families can also call **Access Central (1-866-658-1221)** for assistance connecting someone to withdrawal management services. It’s important to know that staff at Access Central will also need to speak to the individual who is withdrawing.

What do families find most challenging about withdrawal management?

Sri says, “withdrawal can be a really difficult time for families because they are struggling with the unknown, they want to know ‘is my loved one ok?’” He also emphasizes how difficult it can be to watch someone experience the symptoms of withdrawal. Sri suggests that it can be helpful for families to connect with resources that provide support to families who have a loved one struggling with addiction or concurrent illnesses. In Vancouver, organizations like From Grief to Action and support groups like Parents Forever can be excellent resources.

For more information on Withdrawal Management services at Vancouver Coastal Health, please call Access Central at 1-866-658-1221.

SMART Recovery Groups

SMART

Self Management And Recovery Training

Abstinence-based peer support meetings for everyone. Based on the concepts of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy & Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.
Science-based and practical recovery principles and tools.

Three Bridges Addictions
1290 Hornby St, Rm 310
604-714-3480
Monday: 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Tuesday: 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Wednesday: 10:30 - 11:30 a.m.
Thursday: 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.
Friday: 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Evergreen Addiction Services
3425 Crowley Drive
604-707-3620
Tuesday: 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

Creekside Withdrawal Management
13740 94A Ave, Surrey
604-587-3755
Thursday: 7:00 - 8:00 p.m.

South Mental Health & Addiction
220- 1200 West 73rd Ave
604-266-6124
Tuesday: 3:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Pender Clinic
59 West Pender Street
604-669-9181
Tuesday: 3:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Grandview Woodlands
Robert & Lily Lee CHC
1669 E Broadway
604-675-3900
Thursday: 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.



No meetings on stat holidays.

For more information please contact Oona at 604-714-3480

What is Harm Reduction?

Written by Sara Young, Coordinator Harm Reduction Programs, Vancouver Coastal Health

We are exposed to risks every day. Today, I drove my car to work knowing that there are risks to being on the road. Thousands of Canadians are injured in traffic accidents each year. I drive carefully, but accidents still happen so I'm grateful for speed limits, seatbelts, and designated driver campaigns - things that reduce the risk that I will be harmed while driving.

Harm reduction services are like seatbelts—they aim to reduce risks. Many people use substances (like alcohol, prescription medications, and recreational or illegal drugs), which can sometimes be harmful. Many harms that do occur with substance use can be prevented using evidence-based health services.

Harm reduction programs include safer sex and safer drug use supplies, which prevent the spread of HIV, hepatitis C, and other illnesses. Supervised injection is an example of harm reduction. At Insite in Vancouver, trained staff teach clients safer injection techniques, and provide immediate medical care if someone overdoses.

At over 150 harm reduction sites in Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), people who use substances can freely access supplies, education and support. Harm reduction clients get to know and trust health care staff, so they feel comfortable asking for information about other services and supports in VCH. Last year, we provided over 40,000 brief referrals to addiction services and other health services at harm reduction sites.

Some harm reduction sites offer overdose prevention medication to people who use opioids (heroin, oxycodone, fentanyl, etc.). Naloxone is a medication that can be given by a friend or family member to reverse an opioid overdose. Since 2012, over 50 overdoses have been reversed in VCH using Take Home Naloxone.

Harm reduction is an important part of mental health, addiction and other health services. Taking a harm reduction approach to health care means being non-judgmental about substance use, which opens the door for honest conversations, realistic education, and a broad range of services that help people get where they are going as safely as possible.

For more information on naloxone, harm reduction, and to find a harm reduction site near you, visit towardtheheart.com, or search 'harm reduction' at vch.ca.

Families are also welcome to come to harm reduction sites to access information and supplies for harm reduction. Contact your local community health centre for more information.



Calendar of Events

March 2015

| Sun | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thurs | Fri | Sat |
|-----|---|--|---|--|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 VCH Eating Disorder Family Support Group | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 MDA Family Support Group (Evergreen CHC) | 10 MDA Family Support Group (MSJ Hospital) | 11 Raven Song Family Support Group | 12 New! GRASP Support Group | 13 Parents Forever Support Group | 14 Chinese Family Support Group |
| 15 | 16 | 17 VCH Eating Disorder Family Support Group | 18 Willow Pavilion Family Education Workshop | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 MDA Family Support Group (MSJ Hospital) | 25 | 26 St. Paul's Hospital Family Support Group | 27 Parents Forever Support Group | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | | | | |

Support Group Listing

Mood Disorders Association of BC – Mutual support groups for families of individuals living with a mood disorder. 2nd and 4th Tuesday each month, 7 - 9 p.m., Mount St. Joseph Hospital, 3080 Prince Edward St, Harvest Room A. NEW! 2nd Monday of each month, 6:30-8:30pm at Evergreen Community Health Centre (3425 Crowley) .Contact 604-873-0103

Raven Song Family Support Group– Support group for families who have a loved one living with mental illness. 2nd Wednesday of each month 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at Raven Song Community Health Centre, 2450 Ontario Street, Vancouver. Contact 604-290-3817 or isabella.mori@vch.ca

SPH Family Support Group- Support for families who have a loved one living with mental illness. Last Thursday of each month, 6-7:30pm. St Paul's Hospital, 1081 Burrard Street, Room 2B-169, 2nd floor, Burrard Building. To register, call Kaye 604-682-2344 local 68964

VCH Eating Disorder Program – Family Support Group – for friends and family members of individuals living with an eating disorder. 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month, 6 – 7:30 p.m., 3rd Floor, 2750 East Hastings, Vancouver. Contact Hella at 604-675-2531 ext 20689.

Parents Forever – Support group for families of adult children living with addiction. Group meets every 2nd Friday at St. Mary's Kerrisdale, 2490 W 37th Ave., Vancouver. Contact Frances Kenny, 604-524-4230 or fkenny@uniserve.com

CMHA Chinese Family Support Group – Education sessions for Chinese families who have a loved one living with mental illness. 2nd Saturday of each month. , 1 – 4:00 p.m., Room 345/50, 7000 Minoru Blvd, Richmond. Contact bessie.wang@cmha.bc.ca or 604-276-8834, ext 12.

GRASP Support Group – GRASP offers peer-led mutual support groups for families or individuals who have had a loved one die as a result of substance abuse or addiction. 2nd Thursday of each month, 7-9 p.m. at Gilmore Community School 50 South Gilmore Ave, Rm 207. Please email graspvancouver@gmail.com to register.