

1983

AIDS COMMITTEE
OF TORONTO



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AIDSsupport

AIDSsupport is a volunteer, community organization which began in April, 1983 and is one of the four working groups of the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT).

We work with people who have AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), PLS (Persistent Lymphadenopathy Syndrome) or ARC (AIDS Related Complex), as well as people awaiting diagnosis, people concerned about their own or another's physical and emotional well-being, and people who are grieving.

The volunteers involved are all concerned individuals. Many of us belong to affected groups, others have loved ones in such groups, a number are employed in health care, social services, etc. Many of us have undergone a personal loss and can identify directly with the experience of our clients. At the present time, AIDSsupport has approximately 50 volunteers and professional consultants.

The organization operates on a matching system. Anyone affected by AIDS and in need of peer counselling and support is matched by the AIDSsupport Coordinator with an appropriate volunteer counsellor ("buddy"). That counsellor provides direct counselling, support, advocacy, as well as assistance with meal preparation, housework, transportation, etc., as needed. To-date, 110 people have been matched under this system. As the number of individuals diagnosed with AIDS and PLS doubles every 6-8 months, so our demands for counselling and volunteers doubles as well.

AIDSsupport also has organized various support groups for those affected. At present, we coordinate support groups for those with AIDS and PLS, and will soon initiate a new group: one for significant others (family, friends and lovers). As well, there is a group for lovers of those affected that meets independently but which takes referrals from ACT. These self-help groups have proven to be a key element in AIDSsupport.

In addition to these volunteer functions, the AIDSsupport Coordinator, a salaried staff person, handles most information and counselling calls/visits into the ACT office from those directly affected by AIDS. The Coordinator is also responsible for acting as a liaison with various medical, health and social service agencies and individuals. All community resources, referrals and investigation into financial and service needs are handled through the AIDSsupport Coordinator. The Coordinator is responsible for the administration of the AIDSsupport volunteer and resource programme, for the recruitment and training of all AIDSsupport volunteers (with the Volunteer Coordinator), and for any other issues related to direct services for those with AIDS and PLS.

Theresa Dobko
AIDSsupport Coordinator

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