

Submitted by

Schizophrenia Society of
Newfoundland and Labrador



Schizophrenia Society of Newfoundland & Labrador
A Reason to Hope. The Means to Cope

The Task Force on Adverse Health Events
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On behalf of the Schizophrenia Society of Newfoundland and Labrador I would like to say thank-you for the opportunity to participate in the Provincial Forum on Adverse Health Events held on May 26th of 2008 in St. John's. It is wonderful to see government bring stakeholders together in this way, to obtain input and ideas regarding the communication and evaluation of adverse health events.

Before we can fully understand how to address and deal with an adverse health event the concept itself needs to be specifically defined. Given that deaths occur every year because of an adverse health event, it is important to define exactly what this would include so it may be identified as such, and guidelines can be established for dealing with it immediately. Any definition of an adverse health event, we believe, should be concise, easy to understand and should address gaps in services as well as the services themselves.

The Schizophrenia Society of NL believes that disclosure of an adverse health event should take place immediately. It is important that individuals in any organization feel safe to disclose to supervisors without the fear of being reprimanded. Open door policies need to be created whereby individuals at all levels of an organization can feel free to disclose important information to their supervisors, in an attempt for all to work equally together in addressing the problem. Disclosure to families should also be done as quickly as possible; Professionals need to collaborate and communicate more openly with families and individuals at the onset of the problem, by clarifying what went wrong and why or how such an event could have occurred. Regular communication and explanation of the honest facts will help create a culture of trust between the professional and individual/family that may help them move forward. Individuals have a right to information around the adverse health event at the time it happens, so they can be active participants in decreasing its' impact if this is possible. Families may also be able to provide insight as to where to go from here.

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At the point that an adverse event happens, combining resources as quickly as possible to do what is in the best interest of the patient is extremely valuable. When treating an individual, service providers need to take into account that they are part of a larger picture. More collaboration between professionals and community groups need to take place. There is a wealth of knowledge that exists in within each patient's environment that could provide insight into a potential or developed situation if it were utilized. In addition to this issues need to be addressed around educating professionals about community resources. Often there are resources that exist in the community that can help the people who are adversely affected. These resources need to be drawn upon by individuals needing them, through the guidance of the professional.

Finally, when elements align at the right place and time to create an adverse health event, the individual closest to the event tends to be blamed by the affected parties. It is of critical importance that responsibility for an apology, reside with all involved and not be limited to the front line worker or the supervisor. Accountability is important if we are to change routine practices and behaviors that contribute to the problem. When accountability is not upheld then there is little incentive for change. Steps need to be taken to assess all possible causes or alignment of causes so that these may be addressed accordingly and changed where possible. Through, complete and accurate knowledge of the truth, professionals, individuals, families and community groups can work together to help decrease critical incidents and more properly address the needs of an individual who has been affected by one.

The Schizophrenia Society of NL would like to thank you for allowing us the opportunity to put forward our ideas for consideration.

Sincerely,
Christina McGrath
Executive Director, SSNL

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Task Force on Adverse Health Events

Background Documents
Volume I: Public Submissions

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