
DR. JOHN A HIGENBOTTAM, REGISTERED PSYCHOLOGIST

Consultant in Mental Health, Brain Injury and Rehabilitation

604-948-0470

john_a@dccnet.com

1290 Beach Grove Rd

Delta, BC

V4L 1N6

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To whom it may concern

Re: Moms like Us Clubhouse Initiative

I am pleased to write a letter of support for the Moms like Us initiative to establish an accredited Clubhouse in the Victoria region. This Clubhouse will be an important addition to the community services required by people living with serious mental illness.

The Clubhouse movement began with Fountain House which opened in New York City in the 1940s. Fountain House began as a drop in and social centre for people with serious mental illness. Through peer support and participation in operating the Clubhouse, members become engaged in the activities and life of the Clubhouse and often transition into vocational services provided within the Clubhouse and the community. The success of Fountain House has led to Clubhouses being opened throughout the world and there are currently over 400 in operation.

Clubhouses are now accredited by Clubhouse International to assure the quality of services.

From a member and family perspective, Clubhouses have great value in providing peer support and positive, accepting and supportive environment as well as opportunities for employment. Importantly, Clubhouse members have the personal and social supports which facilitate recovery and reduce psychiatric emergency hospitalization.

In addition to their potential for reducing the personal and social costs of serious mental illness, Clubhouses have the potential to significantly avoid the police, hospital and social service costs associated with serious mental illness.

In British Columbia there are several Clubhouses operating which are providing these key, community mental health services within their regions. The current absence of an accredited Clubhouse in the

Victoria region is a significant gap in community services and lost opportunity not only to support persons living with serious mental illness and their families but also for system cost avoidance.

To qualify myself, I have worked in the mental health field for over thirty years at all levels of the system including as Vice President, Vancouver-Richmond Health Board, responsibility for all of the community and acute care mental health services in Greater Vancouver. I have also served as an Accreditation Canada surveyor for over 15 years, am a Co-Chair, Canadian Alliance of Mental Illness and Mental health, Canada's major mental health organization and am the incoming Senior Editor for the *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*. I am also a Clinical Professor, Department of Psychiatry, UBC.

It is my sincere hope that Island health Authority will carefully consider the request from Moms like Us to establish a Clubhouse in Victoria and provide the necessary resources to make this happen. This Clubhouse will be a valuable addition to the region's services for persons living with serious mental illness and their families as well as for Island Health Authority itself.

Thanks you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



John A Higenbottam, Ph.D., R Psych