


**The Drop In**



**ACCM**

**User Guide**

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## **ACCM Drop In User Guide \***

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***\* dedicated to all of the members of ACCM who have allowed us to be a part of their lives and a part of our family.***

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## ACCM DROP IN CENTRE USER GUIDE

The ACCM Drop In Centre serves as a pivotal point of service for the clients (persons infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS) of ACCM. ACCM has made a concerted effort to concentrate programs and services for our clients in one location, so that clients don't have to shuttle between our head office (which focuses on the business of running the organization) and the Drop In Centre, which focuses on programs and support for clients. While the Drop In Centre has its own programs and activities, the Case Management and Social Services departments also operate from the Centre and are responsible for a different set of programs. In order to paint a picture of the Centre as a whole, descriptions of these departments are included in the guide.

For the purpose of understanding ACCM's and the User Guide's terminology, the word "member" generally refers to all persons formally associated with ACCM (client, volunteer or staff). At times, people ask, "*is he/she a member?*" meaning, "*are they HIV+?*" The only way to know is to ask the person and see what they say. Confidentiality dictates that staff, volunteers and clients are not at liberty to discuss the sero-status of members, even if they are aware of said person's sero-status. Finally, another term you will hear is "member in good standing," or a voting member. This is a member who has paid his or her \$1.00 fee and is then eligible to vote at Annual General Meetings (AGM).

Elsewhere in the User Guide, the abbreviations PHA and AFF are used to describe Persons Living with HIV/AIDS (PHA) and Affected individuals (AFF).

### The History of the Drop In Centre

In the early nineties, ACCM offered its clients a service called the Depot. The Depot was located on Montcalm street in a large gutted garage that contained clothing, small appliances, dishes, jewelry, knick-knacks and other sundries that cash-strapped clients could access by appointment or by dropping by. Members of ACCM would gather at the Depot to sort, clean and organize donations (many came from ACCM clients that had passed away) and receive members in need of useful household items. In mid-1995, after having noticed the decline in demand for this service, it was decided that the Depot service be discontinued. By this time, however, many had become used to having a place to go to meet other members and enjoyed the coffee that was always brewing at the Depot.

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ACCM recognized the value of having a place for members to congregate in a safe, non-judgmental space, that having a place for PHAs to go helped break the isolation that many members felt and by August 1995, the Drop In was born. In November 1995, the ACCM head office, previously located on St. Jacques St., moved into what had been the other half of the Depot. The Drop In and the office shared the space until April 1996, when the cost of heating the old garage became impossible and terrifically expensive. Luckily, the City of Montreal was offering space to community groups at vastly reduced prices just up the street, at 1301 Sherbrooke East.

In May 1996, ACCM moved to the Drop In Centre's current location, in the building behind 1301 Sherbrooke East. The Drop In itself was confined to the living room area, as what is now the smoking lounge, quiet room, kitchen and back office was occupied by other ACCM departments. At this time, the Drop In received no funding, aside from a small amount of petty cash with which to buy coffee and treats. Thus, the Drop In began a tradition of Garage Sale fundraisers in order to fund a small amount of groceries and be able "fix up the house". By December 1996, space had become available in the main building and the office moved again, freeing up all but the back office space for the use of the Drop In. As well, the Farha Foundation began providing \$60.00 per month for food at the Centre. By 1997 it became clear that the Centre desperately needed a kitchen. The Centre had no kitchen facilities whatsoever, and for the first two and a half years, dishes were washed in the tub or in a bucket! With the growing popularity of the Drop In and a real need for food resources, ACCM applied to what was then Glaxo-Wellcome Pharmaceuticals for money to build a kitchen in what had been the Social Services office. Over the course of almost two years, after installing both plumbing and electricity, combing the city for donations of cupboards, sinks, and appliances, the kitchen was built and then launched in May 1999. Earlier on, in October 1998, another milestone occurred: for the first time, the Drop In Director became paid staff, with two days a week funding provided from the Volunteer Coordination budget. It was during this time that ACCM recognized the growing importance of the work that was being done at the Drop In Centre, with many clients expressing the feeling that the Centre had become a "home away from home" for them. The City of Montreal, having rented out 1301 Sherbrooke East to Public Health, asked the community groups to relocate to 2075 Plessis. ACCM faced a big decision: leave the Drop In Centre where it was or move it into the basement of 2075 Plessis, to once again co-exist alongside the office. Clients and volunteers of the Drop In came together to express their desire to stay where they were, despite concerns about the

separation of the head office and the Centre and what problems might follow. The feelings and commitment of the members of the Centre were respected and the head office moved to 2075 Plessis in the spring of 1999, solo. In that same year, after having applied to Health Canada, the Drop In Centre began being funded on a regular basis through the ACAP (AIDS Community Action Program) Health Promotion budget. Along with private donations and M.A.C. Cosmetics, ACAP funding continues to be the core funding of the Drop In Centre today.

### **What is the mission of the Drop In Centre?**

The Drop In is a safe, welcoming and friendly environment for PHAs to drop by for coffee, social activities, health promotion workshops, cooking demonstrations, and access to written materials pertaining to HIV/AIDS and the community. As well, it is a space where they can access resources and get referrals to other services, both inside ACCM and in the general community that may more specific to their needs (i.e. social workers, hospices, clinics or counseling). By providing a space for people to congregate, it offers peer support, with an emphasis on combating isolation. The Drop In provides a place to socialize without discrimination, relax without judgment and provide and receive mutual support in times of need. The general philosophy is based on the principles of mutual respect, harm reduction and most importantly, self-empowerment. Clients who visit the Centre are responsible for doing as much for themselves as they are physically and emotionally able. This includes cleaning up after oneself, but also contributing to the whole of the Centre by “pitching in”. Each client, volunteer and staff member is responsible in helping to maintain a caring, supportive and confidential environment. Good communication and effective problem solving are essential to maintaining an enjoyable and healthy space at the Drop In Centre.

### **The role of The Drop In Centre:**

- To provide clients with both practical and psycho-social support
- To provide a safe, confidential environment where people infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS can interact with others
- To provide a “gateway” to other ACCM services and programs
- To provide a place where clients can come to locate resources and referrals they may need

## **LIST OF SERVICES AND PROGRAMS PROVIDED BY THE DROP IN CENTRE:**

- The Drop In offers a space where people can connect with others who are living in similar situations. Clients can maintain friendships and contacts through the use of the client message board.
- An on site kitchen for food and beverages. By becoming part of the Cooking Team, clients can participate by preparing food for the week and providing a good meal for users of the Drop In. Remember: food prepared at the Drop In is FOR the Drop In. Occasionally, donations of foodstuffs are available for taking home and are always labeled as such.
- A small recreational reading library in the living room as well as a resource library in the quiet room, where there is access to the latest community and HIV/AIDS information. Members are trusted to bring back borrowed leisure books but resource material (videos, books etc.) must be signed out with a volunteer.
- Social events and activities such as the Halloween Party, the Holiday Open House, summer BBQs and art classes. All members are encouraged to participate and help organize these events to ensure their continuation.
- Fundraising and access to useful items like clothing, small appliances, knick knacks, etc. with our on-going garage sale in the storage space (take whatever and however much you'd like for only \$2.00, except for the "price as marked" table).
- Small scale health promotion activities or information sessions on subjects from Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM), monthly cooking demos, and the Living Skills series.
- Saturday afternoon bowling league for which clients pay a minimal fee (\$0.50 per week) to participate. Volunteers are also invited to play, if space permits.
- Free access to condoms and lubricant to encourage safer sex and a healthy lifestyle
- Free access to a public phone for short calls; another way to maintain connections that members have made at the Drop In Centre or to call medical and social service professionals.
- Access to games (Scrabble, Tuck, cards etc.) which allow for more social interaction with others.
- Similar to the recreational reading library, the Centre offers videos on a loan basis. Again, members are trusted to bring videos back but are still signed

- out with a volunteer so we can track where they are.
- Access to the ACCM newsletter as well as other information on ACCM activities and programs.
  - Information boards containing up-to-date information on health issues, community programs and resources, as well as a board for job opportunities. Members are encouraged to post information regarding any topic of concern for other members, including events, resources, or ads for things to buy, sell or trade.
  - Limited access to a computer and technical support when available.
  - On occasion, free tickets to events such as movie premieres, theater shows, etc.
  - Access to basic first aid care.
  - Volunteers who engage in active listening and help to locate referrals inside and outside ACCM.
  - Supportive counseling and crisis intervention provided by the Drop In Director, Director of Case Management and Director of Social Services
  - Site to access client services through the Case Manager or Social Services Director.

### **Other Departments located at the Drop In Centre**

**Case Management:** PHAs who wish to access ACCM services and programs must first become a member of the organization. To become a member, PHAs must have an "intake" with the Director of Case Management. An intake is the interview in which the Case Manager assesses the needs of the client and then matches their needs with the services and programs that ACCM provides or locates community resources with the client for programs that ACCM does not provide. The intake is usually the first contact clients will have with ACCM and the Case Manager will continue to maintain contact with over time. The Case Manager can also give referrals (at any time) to other services and organizations in the community that can help clients meet their needs, like food banks, clinics, hospices, legal help, so think of your Case Manager as a resource person! Clients' needs usually change over time; if your needs have changed or evolved, don't be shy about letting your Case Manager know. Often programs and services change because the needs of clients as well as the disease itself, changes. So we always appreciate your letting us know how we can help! The main program the Director of Case Management coordinates is the Buddy Program; this involves matching appropriate clients with buddy volunteers in

order to provide specific individual support. The Case Manager works with the Director of volunteers to select and aid in the training of new volunteers who would like to become buddies. The Director also supervises the buddies' support teams and provides follow-up for the programs' clients and volunteers. Additionally, the Director of Case Management distributes bus tickets and taxi coupons as part of ACCM's emergency transportation service. Finally, the Director of Case Management works closely with the Drop In and Social Services Directors to assess client needs, strengthen existing programs and implement new services. These three departments comprise the Coordinated Case Management Team at ACCM, which oversees all client files and is responsible for client services and programs.

**Social Services:** while also responsible for the general needs of PHAs, particularly when it comes to support groups for PHAs, the Social Services Director, as of March 2001, has taken on the responsibility of the needs of those clients who are "affected" or "AFFs", by HIV/AIDS. One of the main services provided for AFFs is the PFF support group (Partners, Family and Friends). The Director of Social Services is responsible for the support group program, which offers groups for AFFs and PHAs alike. Currently, ACCM has three groups for people living with HIV/AIDS, a Spirituality group, and PFF. These groups meet once or twice a month and are lead by trained volunteer animators. Topics of discussion in the groups reflect members' interests and new groups can be formed to address specific needs. Once again, client feedback is very important for the Director of Social Services to be able to create groups that reflect your needs! Individuals interested in joining one of these groups must be a member of ACCM and have a brief interview with the Director of Social Services to assess their support group needs. As is the case with the Director of Case Management and the Drop In Director, the Social Services Director also gives community referrals, intervenes in crisis situations and is responsible for the emergency transportation service. The Social Services Director is part of the Coordinated Case Management Team.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **The roles of the volunteers:**

- To participate in active listening with clients
- To give referrals to ACCM programs and services
- To help maintain a safe emotional and physical environment
- When necessary, to act as liaisons when a client is having a 'bad day'
- To enforce the House Rules and to be active in crisis interventions
- To help initiate social interaction, group discussions when needed
- To welcome newcomers and give a guided tour of the Drop In and its services
- To uphold confidentiality by screening calls and visitors and also by trying to make sure that gossip does not turn into harassment within the Drop In Centre
- Responsible for general housekeeping duties (opening and closing the Centre) and the mechanical running of the Drop In Centre throughout the day, for example, answering the phone and door
- To actively participate in the General Drop In meetings and offer support to clients, volunteers and staff
- To promote problem solving and empowerment within the Drop In as well as their own self-empowerment by trying to problem solve as a group
- To be sensitive to language and reading abilities by providing contracts and other material in an accessible manner (i.e. going over information verbally with the client) particularly those with learning disabilities or language issues
- To wear their identification tags so they are identifiable and accessible to clients and other volunteers
- To be available to clients throughout the course of their shift at the Centre, but to respect the limit of not involving themselves in clients' lives outside the Centre.

### **The roles of the clients:**

- To help create and maintain a warm, inviting and respectful environment by sharing the responsibilities of the Drop In, (i.e. tidying up after oneself, pitching in with opening and closing) and to welcome new members with courtesy and kindness

- To respect differences in opinions and address inappropriate behaviour by referring to the House Rules. If this should prove to be a difficult task, clients may count on the direction and guidance of other clients, volunteers and the Director to help with a given situation
- To follow and respect the House Rules as well as the authority of the Drop In volunteers and the Director
- To participate in the General Drop In meetings. These meetings are designed to give a forum for everyone to have their opinions, concerns or questions heard
- To abstain from gossiping and interfering in inter-personal matters with other clients both inside and outside the Drop In
- To support the volunteers and the Director during moments of crisis or abuse
- To take care of one another
- To be clear with other clients and volunteers regarding one's needs, moods or concerns
- To be active in their empowerment and to be responsible for their conduct while at the Centre or at Drop In activities

#### **The role of the Director of the Drop In:**

- Administrative duties (accounting, statistic recordings, grant applications, fundraising etc.)
- To develop working partnerships with community resources outside ACCM in order to better refer ACCM clients to other groups that provide help for non-HIV/AIDS needs
- To train, supervise and support volunteers
- To develop workshops and programs as stipulated by our funders
- Delegate duties and oversee the running of the Drop In Centre and its programs and services
- Participate in Management Team meetings and help plan, evaluate and implement programs and services offered by the Drop In and ACCM
- To enforce the House Rules, including disciplinary measures
- To be available to all clients, volunteers and colleagues for support and guidance
- To mediate problems or disagreements between all members, particularly ones where the grievance procedure may not apply or be useful

- To schedule volunteers at the Centre and to fill in when volunteers are unavailable
- To be responsible for the transportation service when the Directors of Case Management and Social Services are unavailable
- To give clients appropriate community referrals
- To be active in crisis interventions
- To be a member of the Coordinated Case Management Team, in conjunction with the Directors of Case Management and Social Services

**Things clients can do to help:**

- Donate books, art materials, music, games, movie videos, extra food, etc.
- Prepare a meal for the week (join the Cooking Team!)
- Volunteer for fundraising, social events, and other ACCM activities
- Help out with the newsletter production (join our fabulous Drop In Mailing Crew!)
- Help a new member learn the ropes
- Use the suggestion box when the need arises to pose a question or voice a concern
- Share one's experiences with others; be active in providing peer support to others
- Make a point of participating in workshops on topics of interest
- Express one's needs when asked, especially through needs assessment questionnaires – these shape future programs!
- Be active in your role as a client; let us know when your needs change or evolve

## **When problems get out of hand**

### **What can you do?**

Clients are encouraged to try to work out issues that occur at the Centre among themselves, when possible. Be aware that ACCM will not intervene in situations among members that do not occur within the context of the organization. If you feel resolution is not possible, the next step is to rely on the volunteers for support or intervention.

If the issue or dilemma cannot be worked out after the primary measures have been taken, the Director will intervene in order to diffuse the situation in a manner that will benefit the greater good of the Drop In Centre and all its members.

### **When nothing else works**

When a situation arises where there are no viable solutions, disciplinary action will be taken. The disciplinary actions will follow a '3 strikes you're out' policy:

1<sup>st</sup> = verbal warning

2<sup>nd</sup> = written suspension for a short period.

3<sup>rd</sup> = written suspension for a longer period.

4<sup>th</sup> = Removed from the service for x period of time. May come back pending a discernible change in behaviour or attitude.

The Drop In Director will take all disciplinary actions appropriate to the situation. Members who repeatedly break the House Rules may be asked to leave indefinitely. It should be noted that all Directors of an ACCM service or program, in conjunction with the Executive Director, have the right and responsibility to ban an individual from a service if their behaviour warrants it (i.e. repeated abusive behaviour, repeated breaking of the House Rules, etc.). This is a rarity, but has been used in the past. In severe cases (i.e. threats against individuals or the organization) the ACCM Board of Directors may ban an individual from ACCM altogether.

## **DECLARATION AGAINST ABUSE**

The Drop In Centre, in conjunction with the outcomes of the General Drop In meetings held on March 28 and April 12, 2000, has provided the members, volunteers and staff with a clear and direct statement against harassment, abuse and violence. It is the role of all members of the Centre and ACCM to ensure that the declaration is respected.

**Here is our declaration:**

**All persons should be treated with respect, have their dignity safeguarded and have their physical and psychological integrity protected.**

**ACCM will not tolerate any form of harassment, abuse or violence, and will take all dissuasive measures necessary to avoid violation of the above rights and will implement, when appropriate, corrective measures.**

**Commitment:**

**Create and maintain, within our walls, an environment free of harassment, abuse and violence of any kind.**

## **Respect and the Centre...**

Like any place where people gather, there are all kinds of people with all kinds of attitudes, experiences, ways of communicating, etc. The Drop In is a microcosm of the world; you're not going to like everyone, and not everyone is going to like you! But we all exist within the space. You don't have to like someone to be polite or respectful.

How do we all get along? Tension or arguments at the Centre are almost always the result of a lack of respect for others. Therefore, we emphasize communication and respect within the Centre. Respectful communication is the key to ensuring that we get what we need to from the Drop In, and ACCM. Keep this in mind when discussing contentious issues like language, culture, religion or politics. When you disagree with someone at the Centre, are you still respecting their voice, no matter how different from yours? Does what you're saying help that person understand your point of view? Does your approach make that person *want* to understand?

Aside for being respectful of the *people* at the Drop In, all members need to be respectful of the physical space. The Drop In has always had the difficult challenge of being an informal, welcoming space, while making sure that rules and boundaries are respected at the same time. This is why all volunteers, clients and staff are expected to be familiar with and to follow the Drop Ins' House Rules. However, there are other rules and protocol that are not included in them. You will see, for example, that the kitchen has its own set of guidelines, prominently displayed throughout. Because the Centre is run similarly to a home situation, it's important to be clear about how the home works. There may seem to be a lot of rules around the Centre; these things are posted so that everyone is aware of how to conduct themselves. The rules are posted so that everyone knows them. Here's a tip: the easiest way to think of yourself in the Centre is to pretend you're in the home of a very good friend. You can go into your friend's fridge any time you like (heck, you don't even have to ask!) but that doesn't mean you can eat all your friend's groceries or that you don't have to clean up after yourself!

Maintaining the physical space of the Drop In Centre is another issue that comes up on a daily basis. While Drop In volunteers take the lead in opening and

closing procedures, some clients still assume that that means the volunteers are responsible for all of the housecleaning aspects of the Centre. In fact, everyone who comes to the Centre on any given day is responsible! This is a group effort! Clients are encouraged and expected to help out with the opening and closing procedures, as well as the housecleaning that needs to be done throughout the course of the day. Just think: no one likes a friend who comes over, makes a mess and then leaves! Therefore, here's a list of things we need clients to help out with:

- emptying the ashtrays in the smoking lounge
- making more coffee or juice when the pot or pitcher is finished
- washing the dishes when the sink is full (or drying)
- collecting and taking out the garbage at the end of the day
- help prepare the veggie plate at the start of the day
- vacuum at the end of the day
- closing windows, tuning off the lights at the end of the day

These are small things that everyone should be doing to encourage a sense of teamwork and respect for the Centre and what we get from it. Remember: the more you give, the more you get!

Another issue that comes up from time to time at the Drop In deals with language. ACCM is an organization that has a mandate to provide services in English in Montreal. You will notice that the language and literature at the Centre is predominantly in English. Members think of the Centre and ACCM as a "haven" for PHAs who speak English. We ask that you respect the language of the Centre.

### **A last word...**

This guide was created for all of the members of ACCM who frequent, work at or volunteer at the Drop In Centre. It is a document that will change and grow over time, much like the Centre, itself. The impetus for the User Guide came from our clients, volunteers and staff, as a way to address issues and concerns in the Drop In Centre, and to make clear what we get from the Centre and how. Please read it thoroughly and give us your feedback. Thank you for being part of ACCM and the Drop In Centre!