

## **Volunteer Connection**

During 2005 and 2006 the Task Group Inukshuk on Volunteer Standards and Best Practices, with the support of CHPCA and its Volunteer Issues Committee, has been holding regional Consultation Workshops to give practitioners a chance to identify areas of practice that need attention.

Volunteer Support is one of the significant issues that are raised in all parts of the country. Volunteer Managers want to know how best to make the volunteers' working conditions supportive and nourishing. Volunteers want to know why their needs for support are sometimes overlooked, leaving them to sort things out themselves.

Using its emerging Model, the Task Group has begun to look at these questions in the following Framework:

- 1 *What are the goals of care established for patient, family and team?*

**Examples:** Continuity of care. Understanding the roles of each team member. Clear, honest and timely communication.

Notice that patient/family goals are often similar to those of the care team members themselves.

- 2 *What are the outcomes desired for the volunteers*

**Examples:** They understand their roles and those of other team members. They understand the care system. They are active and informed. They have on-going educational opportunities. They feel and are part of the larger team.

There are many other desired volunteer outcomes.

- 3 *What are the barriers to achieving desired outcomes?*

**Examples:** Lack of funding. Lack of support from the Board. Other team members do not know about volunteer roles and competencies. Some

programs and team don't want volunteers at all. Communication is indirect, unclear.

A common understanding among board members, volunteers and paid staff is required, and this takes direction, time and commitment.

4 What processes may help move through the barriers?

**Examples:** All-round team education starting with hospice palliative care values and principles. A culture of sharing and learning: this requires leadership commitment. Assure support when support is needed, not when it is convenient for the organization. Timely and continuous support, learning, debriefing and appreciation.

When volunteers experience the need for support as a result of their work with patients and family members, they need that support without delay. The "Support Meeting: Third Thursday..." offering will not be relevant! Staff and other volunteers must be available at those times in an easy way.

This is a much abbreviated summary of the material the task Group is working on in the area of support. For updates and to become more involved, please contact [taskgroupinukshuk@comcast.net](mailto:taskgroupinukshuk@comcast.net).

Jerry Rothstein

Chair, Task Group Inukshuk

Chair, National Volunteer Interest Group

Member, CHPCA Volunteer Issues Committee