



# EMPOWERMENT REPORT

(The Newsletter of the Empowerment Council)

Volume 1, No. 1

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## THE EMPOWERMENT COUNCIL – WHAT DO WE DO?

By Jennifer Chambers

The Empowerment Council is here to be a voice for the people on the receiving end of mental health or addiction services at CAMH. Our work is to make that voice count. We seek to make the world reflect what “clients” (psychiatric consumer/survivors and people with addictions) identify as needed and wanted. We don’t do advocacy for people one by one – for individual help there is the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office and CAMH Client Relations. Instead we advocate for change on a broader level that will affect many clients. Primarily this means expressing the client voice at CAMH. But it can also mean working to try to change the law, or get people the essentials of life, either through governmental bodies or the justice system.

We are funded by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health as an independent member run organization. Anyone who has received mental health or addiction services (and does not work for CAMH) can become a member, and elect Board members to represent you. EC staff carry out the work that makes the purpose of the organization real. The entire EC – members, Board, and staff – have all been clients of the mental health and/or addiction system at some point. While we are funded by CAMH we do our utmost to be purely a client voice, not to alter or modify that voice out of concern for maintaining funding. It is to CAMH’s credit that they have never forced us to do so, though no doubt we chafe at times. As a result, the EC has been able to get some important things done.



## Question Corner

*Have you been able to get the kind of support you need?*

We'd love to hear about your experiences. Leave us a message at 416-535-8501, Ext. 6837 or send an email to [beth\\_jacob@camh.net](mailto:beth_jacob@camh.net).

We will print a selection of your replies in the next newsletter.

# BILL OF CLIENT RIGHTS DVD

## Lights, Camera, Action!

By Lucy Costa



Three years ago, CAMH passed the Bill of Client Rights. The Bill of Client Rights was adopted to promote the worth and dignity of all clients and acknowledges that clients are first and foremost citizens with the same rights as every Canadian.

The Empowerment Council (EC) and CAMH have been involved in promotion of the Bill – first, by introducing staff and clients to the Bill and more recently through the distribution of the *Client Information Packages*. The *Client Information Packages* include a copy of the Bill of Client Rights and other pertinent information to all new clients receiving services at CAMH.

The Empowerment Council and CAMH have now completed working on the next important phase of education about the Bill for clients – the development of a **Bill of Client Rights DVD**.

The development of this multimedia presentation will go a long way towards not only **speaking about** but also **showing** clients' experiences of rights through the use of filmed scenarios.

The Bill of Rights DVD tells a story for clients from a client's point of view, using art and music as a means to present a creative perspective on what clients should expect when receiving services at CAMH. The goal has been to produce an engaging and informative video, allowing clients to see themselves through the lens of the main character, Claire Walker, while learning about their rights at the same time.



Photo taken by CAMH client

The project aims for a release date and rollout in early fall 2008.

For more information contact: Empowerment Council, Ext. 3013

## Stay Tuned: *Upcoming Projects of the EC*

- Follow up on the Brentcliffe survey – did the supports and qualities clients most valued at Brentcliffe make the trip to Queen Street?
- Advocacy issue – addressing the problem of people being told that if they do not take medication, they may not have other supports.
- Clients on CAMH committees – working on what needs to happen to ensure the client voice has an impact on decision making.
- Judicial proceedings – EC will try to intervene in court cases addressing discrimination in the work place and accommodation when appealing for disability supports. EC will seek standing at the inquest into the death of a man who had been in restraints
- Screening of the Bill of Client Rights DVD.
- The next edition of our newsletter!



*The Empowerment Council is now on the Web. Come check us out at [www.empowermentcouncil.ca](http://www.empowermentcouncil.ca). Learn more about our mission and organizational goals. Read some of the papers the EC has submitted to the Kirby Commission and other government bodies. Fill out a membership application or simply stay up-to-date with our activities.*

## Recovery Project

*By Lucy Costa*

The Empowerment Council took part in a project with Ryerson University about “**Mental Health Recovery**”, funded by the Wellesley Institute. The Wellesley Institute is a ten-year-old organization in Toronto that helps advance the social determinants of health through community-based research, capacity building, and the informing of public policy. (See [www.wellesleyinstitute.com](http://www.wellesleyinstitute.com).)

The goal of the project was to find out what Toronto psychiatric survivors think of the “recovery vision” in mental health. EC staff member Lucy Costa, along with a group of other community partners and psychiatric survivors worked as part of an advisory committee on the project. Recovery has become a very popular idea in the mental health system so it is important to find out what psychiatric survivors feel and think about “recovery”.

The advisory committee had several in-depth discussions about which organizations would be appropriate for the project and for the focus groups. The committee also discussed the best way to invite participants to the groups, and how the research committee would be involved in the focus groups, the questions that should be asked of the groups, and how

to handle the “official research procedures” so that participants would be comfortable.

The advisory committee’s discussions about what to ask in the focus groups explored the idea of “recovery” as a specific topic currently used in the mental health system, mostly with professionals, compared to the ideas of “recovery” that might be more common or intuitive to the psychiatric survivors in the study. In the end, the committee came up with a few key questions:

- Have you heard about the recovery vision for mental health?
- Where are you hearing about it?
- What do you think about it? What would it take for you to participate in this vision?
- What does ‘recovery’ mean to you? If I say ‘recover’ what would you say?
- Do you think people can recover?
- What would it take for you to recover? What would you need?

The results of this project will be released in the fall. For more information on this project contact Lucy Costa at Extension 3013.

## Some Empowerment Council Accomplishments:

- Bill of Client Rights was adopted at CAMH following 3½ years of EC advocating for client wishes with CAMH. Educating CAMH clients and staff about the Bill. Now working with CAMH on educational DVD about Bill.
- Strengthened client rights in CAMH policies.
- Consulted clients at CAMH about: choice of advocacy services at CAMH, what “recovery” means to you, people’s experience with community treatment orders...
- Surveyed Donwood clients about what is valued at Brentcliffe that should be offered at the new addiction site.
- Successfully negotiated ongoing client input into redevelopment plans.
- Fighting for rights in the justice system: The Supreme Court agreed with EC that the human rights code must apply to tribunals; an inquest jury agreed with all the recommendations by EC including a standing committee for communication with police about our community’s concerns; a human rights tribunal agreed that there should be public examination (an inquest) when people die in psychiatric custody.
- Giving the client perspectives to parliamentary and senate committees, such as the need to respect our rights. One example of our success was the mental disorder provisions of Criminal Code, where a change was made, citing the EC.
- Successful negotiation to have clients on CAMH committees, and honouraria paid to clients.
- Numerous focus groups and educational sessions for clients.
- Education of CAMH staff, students, and others about myths and realities of people who have been in the mental health and/or addiction system.

*Jennifer Chambers*

### EMPOWERMENT COUNCIL GENERAL MEMBERSHIP FORM

*EC Statement of Purpose: To conduct system wide advocacy on behalf of clients.*

*CONTACT INFORMATION: (Please Print Clearly)*

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_ **Postal code** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email address** \_\_\_\_\_

I have used mental health and/or addiction services, and the support the purpose of the Empowerment Council:

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

Send to: Empowerment Council, 250 College St., Room 1262, Toronto, ON M5T 1R8

*You can also fill out a membership form online at our website: [www.empowermentcouncil.ca](http://www.empowermentcouncil.ca)*