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THE UAB SUPPORT TEAM ORIENTATION HANDOUT

“How to Work Together to Share the Care!”

The UAB Support Team Network
WP-125, 615 18th ST S
Birmingham, AL 35249-6555

Rev. Malcolm L. Marler, D.Min.
Phone: 205-934-3936
Fax: 205-934-4286
E-Mail: mmarler@uab.edu
Web Site: <http://SupportTeams.org>

Frequently Asked Questions about Support Teams

1. WHAT IS A SUPPORT TEAM?

A Support Team is a group of persons organized to provide practical, emotional, and spiritual support to persons with health concerns or other special needs.

Team activities may include a ride to the doctor or grocery store, or help with household or yard chores.

Other Team Members may run errands, cook or deliver meals, visit, call, or offer caregivers a brief break. A Support Team Member can share a prayer or communion but is always based on the needs of the person being visited.

The most important thing to ask Team Members is, "What do you love to do for others?" It's different for everyone, and a Team approach allows that flexibility.

A Support Team generally has three major boundaries: money, medicine, and medical care advice. The Team does not loan or give money to the Team's Friend (recipient, patient), dispense prescription medications, or offer medical care or advice.

A Support Team is like extended family for people when they need it most.

2. WHAT DOES A SUPPORT TEAM DO?

A team's activities may include transportation to the doctor or grocery store, household or yard chores, errands, meals, social outings, visits, phone calls, or a time for caregivers to have a respite or break. Team members simply do what they can, when they can, but in an organized approach. Each person makes a one-year commitment to the team.

3. WHY ARE SUPPORT TEAMS NEEDED?

The number of persons with health care needs at home is increasing due to persons living longer with fewer resources. Improved medical treatments help people live longer but not necessarily with the quality of life desired. At the same time fewer caregivers are available due to family members living further apart. One-on-one volunteers can easily get "burned out" without needed support, and many community groups focus primarily on short-term crises.

4. WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF A TEAM APPROACH?

A team approach provides volunteers with maximum time flexibility, a built-in support system, and the opportunity to offer a variety of skills.

ced on a Team. Each Team Member's monthly time involvement is flexible, and a one year commitment is made at a time.

5. WHAT ARE DIFFERENT WAYS TO ORGANIZE A SUPPORT TEAM?

There are three Support Team models that allow a Team to organize in different ways depending on the need(s):

- A.** Basic model--Focuses on one person/family and meets a variety of needs;
- B.** Mission model-- Focuses on the common need of several persons;
- C.** Facility model--Focuses on one place (i.e. nursing home, hospital unit, clinic, etc.) and meets some of the needs of persons at that site.

Each team designates a Leader to coordinate the work and a Coach to use community resources. Please contact Malcolm Marler, 205-934-3936, or mmarler@uab.edu for support.

6. WHAT TRAINING IS NEEDED?

Support Team Orientation is approximately a 1 and 1/2 to 3 hour initial training that all Support Team Members attend to learn the basics of the Support Team Model, how to set healthy boundaries and limits, and how to offer emotional support. Continuing education is built into regular team meetings.

Support Team Leadership Development training will be offered in Greater Birmingham in 2013 to teach persons how to develop Support Teams in their own communities. Visit <http://SupportTeams.org> for more information.

7. CAN SUPPORT TEAMS WORK WITHIN PROGRAMS OR MINISTRIES ALREADY IN PLACE?

Yes, a team approach can be integrated into any program or ministry such as homebound ministry, pastoral care, crisis ministry, youth programs, Stephen Ministry, deacon or outreach ministry, women's or men's ministry, employee assistance programs, and many more.

8. HOW IS A TEAM SUPPORTED?

Bringing people together is our common mission. A critical part of coming together is the team itself, and Support Teams are built and sustained by proper training and ongoing support. Through Partner relationships with congregations and other organizations, the Support Team Network seeks to enable this training and support. Anyone can become a STN Partner.

9. WHAT IS THE UAB SUPPORT TEAM NETWORK?

The UAB Support Team Network teaches congregations, organizations, or individuals to catch the vision of how the Support Team model can be used as an effective way to care for persons with health care concerns and other special needs.

UAB Medicine is not responsible for each team, the persons on the team are responsible for their own work and actions with the patient or Support Team Friend.

The Support Team Network has trained hundreds of Support Teams since it began in 1994, originally formed for persons with HIV disease. The Network expanded in 1997 to include teams for persons with any health care concern or other special needs.

We are proud to be associated with UAB Medicine, a world-class university and medical center.

Advantages of the Support Team Model

Advantages to a *team approach* to caring for an individual or family with long-term health care needs:

1) Time flexibility for volunteers

Each Support Team Member can decide from month to month how much time he or she has to offer on the Support Team. Some persons give four or five hours per week, while others may offer a couple of hours per month. When the work is coordinated on a Team, the assistance does not depend on one person.

2) A built-in-support system

The Team approach is the opposite of the lone ranger approach due to Team accountability. The Team meets monthly for approximately fifty-nine minutes to:

- reflect on their experience together, and share joys as well as frustrations;
- learn something new in continuing education that will help them be more effective in their work; and
- coordinate the upcoming month's duties by sharing the Support among many persons.

3) A way to offer what you most enjoy doing

Everyone does not have to do the same thing on the Team. Some persons are better at preparing meals, cutting the grass, providing transportation, being a good listener, writing notes, or holding a hand. Each person does what he or she enjoys and is most comfortable doing.

4) A proven model

The Support Team model has been used successfully throughout the United States to Care for persons primarily with HIV disease. The Support Team Network has expanded this model to multiple longer term need (chronic or terminal illness, disability, frail elderly, etc.) and on average begins a new Support Team every week in Birmingham, Alabama. The model is flexible to meet almost any long term need.

Support Team Member Covenant

As a member of my Support Team, I will be committed to the following statements for as long as I want to serve:

- **Attend the Support Team Orientation.**
I will attend an orientation session when my team is forming or prior to joining an existing team. Or, I will watch all Orientation videos online at <http://SupportTeams.org>.
- **Be committed to a team concept.**
I will be present at our monthly Support Team meeting. I will do my best to communicate openly with team members and our Support Team Friend(s)* and work through any problems that may arise. I will learn about our Support Team Friend's health needs in order to better care for him or her. I will keep all information regarding our Support Team Friend(s) confidential within the team unless I have permission from him or her to share such information outside the team. I will be accountable to my team regarding my Support Team involvement.
- **Avoid direct financial involvement with our Support Team Friend(s).**
I will not pay bills, loan, or give money to our Support Team Friend(s). If the Support Team Friend has financial needs, I understand we will decide as a team how to respond by helping him/her find community resources.
- **Avoid offering medical advice or managing medication for our Support Team Friend(s).**
I will not dispense medications or off medical advice. I will refer such needs to qualified family members and/or health care professionals.
- **Be responsible with closure issues.**
If for any reason, I want to stop serving on the Support Team, I will share this directly with my team through email or in our monthly meeting. I will also contact the Support Team Friend or Family and let him/her know in order to build team trust and have closure with the team process for everyone.

*Support Team Friend (STF) refers to the patient assigned to, or selected by, a Support Team. A Support Team may also relate to the primary caregiver(s) of a patient.

Signed

Date

Support Team Leader Role

Role: The Team Leader coordinates the work of the Support Team, promotes good communication between the team and the Friend, and facilitates team meetings. The Team Leader is essential to planning meaningful team meetings (to communicate, to educate, and to coordinate.) A Support Team may choose to have co-leaders. The time one person serves as a leader can be negotiated within the team.

General Responsibilities:

- **Coordinate the work of the Support Team.**
Given the specific ways the team has agreed to offer caring for the Friend, the leader helps the team in scheduling and completing assignments, based on what each member is able/willing to do.
- **Promote good communication between the Support Team and Friend.**
Typically, the leader is involved in the initial visit with the Friend, listening to ways the team may be helpful; then, after consultation with the team, informing the Friend what the team will be able to do. Prior to each monthly meeting of the team, the leader will be in touch with the Friend, or delegate the contact to another team member, to confirm dates and services for the coming month.
- **Organize and facilitate Support Team meetings.**
The purpose of the team's monthly meeting is to communicate about the work of the team and offer support to the members of the team; to educate members on relevant topics; and to coordinate the care for the Support Team Friend for the following month. The Team Leader confirms details of the meeting and facilitates the agenda.
- **Seek input and assistance from other resources as needed.**
The Support Team Leader encourages the team to have ownership over their role and to use additional resources as needed. The Leader should be aware of these resources or how to access them. The Leader may also facilitate learning between teams.
- **Update Support Team on news from the Support Team Network's website.**
STN News is shared primarily through email and the website at <http://SupportTeams.org>.

Any of the above roles can be shared (i.e. Co-Leaders) or delegated to members who wish to help in those areas.

The Support Team Meeting

You cannot work together effectively unless you know and learn to trust your fellow team members. Our experience has taught us the best way for you to do this is by getting together on a monthly basis in a team meeting for approximately fifty-nine minutes. *There are three main purposes to your meeting*, though certain sections may be emphasized more or less depending on need. There should be a couple of minutes also for news from Network Team regarding new developments with the overall program, etc.

Support Team meetings are critical to **communicate, educate, and coordinate** the work of the team. This is your agenda each month.

Here are a few suggestions for having a successful Support Team meeting:

- **Have a well planned agenda** and mail out one week prior to the meeting as a reminder. (Team Leaders can delegate this monthly task to another Team Member.)
- **The meeting should start on time and end on time** and not last more than fifty-nine minutes. Setting a regular time and place for the meeting may help Team Members to remember better. However, make it fun, interesting, and a little different each time.
- **The Support Team Friend should not attend the meeting** unless specific feedback is being requested. If he or she does attend once or twice a year, ask him or her to come at the beginning or end of the meeting so the team can feel free to discuss other matters.
- **Consider a social time a couple of times a year for Team Members to have fun together.** This will help team work and cohesiveness throughout the year to see one another in different contexts.

One of the most effective ways for a Support Team to function smoothly is through a monthly, fifty-nine minute meeting.

There are three main goals of each Support Team meeting:

1. **Communicate**--Reflect on your experience together;
2. **Educate**--Learn something new that will help you be more effective;
3. **Coordinate**--the time and tasks (or work) of the team.

Sample Time and Task Calendar
for the dates of June 28 - July 10
Working Together to Share the Care!

Captains of the Week	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
Pete and Janice	30 Give ride to church- Wade	31	June 1 Dinner- Janice	2	3 Dinner- Pete	4	5 Grocery store- Pete Yard Work Pete, Janice
Wade and Alesia	6	7	8 Dinner- Wade	9 Doctor 2 p.m.- Alesia	10 Pharmacy, pick up medicine- Alesia Dinner- Patricia	11	12 Grocery store- Wade Yard Work- Alesia, Nancy
Carol and Kaye	13 Give ride to church- Carol	14	15 Dinner- Kaye	16	17 Dinner- Carol	18	19 Grocery store- Kaye Yard Work- Carol, Randy
Rosemary and Nancy	20	21	22 Dinner- Rosemary	23	24 Dinner- Nancy	25	26 Grocery store- Nancy Yard Work- Rosemary
Randy and Patricia	27 Give ride to church- Randy	28	29 Doctor 11 a.m.- Patricia Dinner- Randy	30 Pharmacy, pick up medicine- Patricia	July 1 Dinner- Patricia	2	3 Grocery store- Patricia Yard Work- Randy
Judy and Greg	4 Give ride to church and Trip to Botannical Gardens- Judy, Greg	5	6 Dinner- Judy	7	8 Dinner- Judy, Greg	9	10 Grocery store- Judy Yard Work- Greg

Co-Captains: Your role is to stay in touch with our Support Team Friend during your week. This may include a call, visit, meeting a specific need on the calendar, or sending a note or card. Please call the Captain(s) for the next week and update them on any new information. If you need additional help during your week to meet various needs, please call our Support Team Leader, or inform him or her after you invite others to participate so that we can share the care!

Support Team Member Inventory

Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____ Fax _____

Cell Phone _____ E-mail Address _____

Availability -- What are the best days, times for you to help with our Support Team Friend?

Day/Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Mornings							
Afternoons							
Evening							
Varies							

Identifying My Strengths -- Where do you fit in when it comes to the following areas? Remember it's ok not to like something. Add your own strengths at the bottom of the table. This is a team approach!

In Dealing with	I'm terrific	I'm good	I'm fair	Don't call on me
Automotive maintenance				
Cooking				
Cleaning house				
Delegating tasks to others				
Finding solutions to problems				
Fixing things				
Organizing				
Friendly visitor				
Hospital visitor				
Listening				
Running errands				
Shopping (grocery)				
Social outings				
Talking on the phone				
Transportation				
Writing notes				
Yard Work				

Support Team Scenarios

“Friend” = Support Team Friend

Scenario One

You have been with your Friend for almost a year. Several times in the past, your Friend has called team members insisting on an immediate response to some need. Though team members have usually responded, some have expressed frustration, even anger, over her demands. The Friend calls you one morning at 6:30 and says that she needs to go to the emergency room. You say that you will be glad to call an ambulance and visit her later in the day. She says she's afraid of ambulances and would prefer you to take her to the hospital. You are also willing to see if you can find someone else to go with her. She says more desperately that she can't wait for all the phone calls. She says if you send an ambulance she will refuse to go. What do you do?

Scenario Two

You have known your Friend for only a month. You meet the Friend's mother on your second visit. His mother tells you how glad she is to have you help out and has a prepared a list of things for you to do each time you visit. She says, “You know I can't do everything that needs to be done and I really need you.” The list includes things like changing and washing bed sheets, taking out the garbage, sorting and giving medications to her son, and going to the grocery store for him twice a week. How do you respond to her requests?

Scenario Three

You are a part of a team that does small home repairs for persons, mostly disabled and elderly, in the community. On several occasions, the team has done work for a man paralyzed in an automobile accident. He has talked with team members about his financial struggles. You are at his home repairing a leaking faucet, and he tells you he is \$40 short on his rent, due to increased cost of medications. He asks you to loan him the money, and promises to repay you when his next check arrives. What do you do? What are your options?

Scenario Four

Your team was organized as an AIDS Support Team, and is presently serving a person living with the disease. She has not wanted others to know she is HIV+, believing they would shun her. A few days after you take her to the grocery store, a member of the church says he saw the two of you there, and he asks about her? What do you say? He presses harder and says, “Is she your AIDS person?” How do you respond?

Scenario Five

The team has been related to your Friend for a few months. She has responded well to two or three members of the team, and regularly calls on them for help. When other members of the team offer help, she puts them off, saying she doesn't need anything at the moment. Some members of the team are getting discouraged. How does the team address this concern?

Scenario Six

Your team is related to twelve persons living on one wing of a nursing home. Your plan of caring involves a visit to each person twice a month. There is a particular focus on reading to these Friends. In addition, something special is done on each person's birthday. Those living in other sections of the home have learned of your caring, and have inquired about being included. A staff member of the home asks you about the possibility of extending your work beyond the twelve persons you've been serving. What is your response?

Offering Emotional Support

The Three Basic Principles of Listening

1. Help persons feel what they are feeling when they are feeling it.

There is only one path through grief, and it is through it. Ask an extra question for clarification in order to understand what his or her experience is like for them. Don't assume you know what it's like for them even if you have had similar experiences.

2. Learn to walk at the same pace as your Support Team Friend.

You may be tempted to get him or her to hurry through a feeling, or ignore it altogether. Take the pressure off of yourself in thinking you have to "make them better." Your job is to be present and to care.

Honor where they are because everyone has their own pace of working through different emotions and feelings.

3. Embrace the role of the student in your relationship with your Support Team Friend, allow him or her to be your teacher.

Your Support Team Friend has much to teach you about living and what it is like to have so many losses in one's life. You may have thought that you were going to be the one teaching.

Instead, realize that this relationship is a two-way street and you may get as much or more out of it than he or she does.

The Green Bean Casserole Rule

By Malcolm Marler

It sounded like a strange request on the phone. "Malcolm, can you ask my Support Team not to bring me any more green bean casserole?" said the Support Team Friend. "Sure Mike, that's not a problem. Can you tell me why?"

"Well, the truth is," he confessed, "I hate green bean casserole. But several members of my team are really good at cooking it. I don't want to hurt their feelings, so when they bring me green bean casserole, I smile and say thanks. After they leave, I throw it away, wash the dish and return it to them next time. I don't think this is how this is supposed to work is it?"

I assured him it is not the way it is supposed to work. This experience reminded me of an important rule in Support Team work. I call it the "Green Bean Casserole Rule."

Sometimes a Support Team Member knows how to do something really well and he or she believes the Support Team Friend needs it or wants it and so they just do it. The intentions are good because he or she wants to help. But just because you are able to offer something doesn't mean it needs or should be done.

An important principle is if you have something to offer, ask the Support Team Friend if he or she wants what you have to offer.

Respect the wishes of the Friend even if you think you know what is best. The need may be there but if the Support Team Friend doesn't want you to do it, you defeat the purpose of the giving. Ask yourself the question, "Whose need am I meeting here, mine or the Support Team Friend's?"

In fact this principle applies to almost all aspects of the relationship with the Support Team Friend. You may see a need and want to fix whatever it is. But taking your cues from the Friend in regards to meeting that need is the key.

So next time you start to do something for a Support Team Friend, remember the Green Bean Casserole Rule. And respect his or her right to have choices in life. It may be all he or she has left.

We welcome your stories that can teach others. Please email stories to Malcolm Marler at mmarler@uab.edu.