



## Accreditation is Your Friend!

### TRANSFORMING LIVES, TRANSFORMING CLUBHOUSES: The Power Of Accreditation!

**Robby Vorspan, Clubhouse International**

Clubhouses have been around for a long time. Fountain House, the first Clubhouse, started all the way back in 1948. But somehow – in spite of all of those years - we continue to be startling. New. Radical. Cutting edge. An innovation in the world of mental health.

Even after all these years, the Clubhouse understanding of people living with mental illness is unique, and remains way outside of the 'box' of mental health treatment programs. Our simple, but radically profound understanding is that—despite having a devastating and life-changing illness – people with mental illness are still, first and foremost, whole people with talents, passions, hopes, families, friends and futures that are very much worth pursuing.

This may sound humdrum and obvious to most of us here; and we can easily begin to take it for granted. Living in our Clubhouse communities, we can lose sight of the fact that the vast majority of people living with mental illness around the world are *not* greeted every day by a community that believes in them and is glad to see them. They are *not* greeted with a sense of high expectation about their potential to succeed and to have full and satisfying lives. Instead, those who are fortunate enough to have access to *any* mental health treatment programs, are most often greeted by a team of clinicians whose primary purpose is to identify and assess their disabilities and their pathologies.

Clubhouses are, unfortunately, still a small minority among all of the many, many mental health programs that exist in the world.

But although we are very small, we have a clear, true, precious and potent message that *actually* has the power to change the world for people who are living with mental illness. In order to do that, though, each of our individual Clubhouses have to be strong, true, powerful Clubhouse communities. Only when each of our Clubhouses truly and loudly proclaims our core values – as they are so clearly laid out in our Standards – will the international Clubhouse message of dignity, hope, and high expectation be heard by the rest of the world.

Clubhouse International Accreditation is our best hope of making this happen.

Accreditation is ***the most powerful and effective way*** for Clubhouses to help each other grow, evolve, develop and share our best ideas about how we can help provide the opportunities that will make members lives better and better and better.

Clubhouse International Accreditation is essential if we are going to do what we need to do, and what we truly believe we can do. And that is to remold the world in a way that creates opportunities for people with mental illness to *belong* - as contributing members of their families, their work places, and their communities.

Accreditation is essential because it is the way we keep pushing ourselves to do more, better, faster. Having a team of Clubhouse peers coming into our Clubhouses and sharing ideas, celebrating our great successes, helping us see where we can get stronger – is the most powerful way that each of our Clubhouses can push itself to give its members the opportunities that they need and deserve.

And there is another reason that Accreditation is essential.

Our united Clubhouse International VOICE is only as strong and clear and vital as each of its individual member voices is. Our new Clubhouse International policy is that all Clubhouses that are members of Clubhouse International have to be Accredited, or working towards becoming Accredited. And there is a very good reason for this. It is because we need to know that our international voice is comprised of real, Standards-infused, vibrant Clubhouse communities. Our international community has a louder, clearer, truer voice when we are composed entirely of Clubhouses that have committed themselves to a process that ensures that they are really holding fast to the values and ideals of our Standards.

If we want to be a chorus of voices that will be world renowned; recognized by those in power; listened to with eager interest – a chorus that has the capacity to change the world – then each of our individual Clubhouse voices has to be trained, tuned, strong, and singing the same song.

Clubhouse International Accreditation is how we can sing strong, together, and know that we will be heard.

Some of you in the audience are thinking: We know, we know. But we would never get Accredited; we don't follow all of the Standards; we are afraid of being 'inspected.'

So: You need to know that our Accreditation process is FRIENDLY!

Our process continues to evolve and develop, and respond to the needs and feedback of Clubhouses. While we are passionate about ensuring that all of our member Clubhouses carry the tune of the core ideals of the Standards, we are also passionate about being accessible to any Clubhouse, anywhere, that is committed to the values of our Standards, and our collegial way of working. And – we understand that even though a strong chorus is made of strong voices singing the same song, we also understand that the beauty of the chorus is that each Clubhouse has a unique voice, with its very own sound and personality.

If you are anxious about Clubhouse International Accreditation, here are a few things you should know.

1. Our Faculty Accreditation teams are – *YOU!*  
Each Accreditation team is made up of one Clubhouse member and one Clubhouse staff. They are from strong Accredited Clubhouses and they have gone through an intensive Faculty training. And, they are just Clubhouse people who love Clubhouse and want to volunteer their time to help other Clubhouses be the best they can be. Your Clubhouse community will LIKE them and they will LIKE you! They are your friends, and your allies.
2. If your Clubhouse is committed to having a Clubhouse that is based on the International Standards for Clubhouse Programs, you WILL be Accredited. The only times a program has NOT been Accredited were early on in our process, when we had programs applying for Accreditation that were not really Clubhouses and were not attempting to follow the Standards. But this has not happened in many years, since these kinds of programs have figured out by now that Clubhouse International Accreditation is only for Clubhouses!
3. One of the most important parts of the Accreditation process is the self-study. This is the part where YOUR whole Clubhouse community comes together over a period of time and looks at how well you are doing at providing your members with all of the great opportunities that the Standards say that Clubhouses should offer. You will discuss, argue, explore, review, and dig deep into all of the aspects of your community – and as a result,

you will come closer to each other as colleagues and co-workers, and you will make decisions – together - to do an even better job of building the strongest Clubhouse community you can have.

We need every Clubhouse in this room to join our spectacular, talented, powerful chorus of Clubhouse voices. If your Clubhouse isn't Accredited yet, we need you! Ask for an Accreditation application, -- and start warming up your voice.

***Yours*** is the voice our international chorus is missing!

**WE NEED YOU!**