

Download&Discuss  
June, 2007

This month's Download&Discuss addresses the issue of having members driving the Clubhouse vehicles.

Clubhouses everywhere, and especially in areas without good public transportation, need vehicles for various aspects of Clubhouse operations. Often, only staff are able to use the Clubhouse vehicles, taking staff out of the Clubhouses for long stretches when they could be working with members in the work-ordered day. Many Clubhouses, in fact, are not able to provide a vibrant work day, employment coverage, assistance with community supports, housing support, etc., because they simply do not have enough staff to cover all of these and all of the Clubhouse driving as well.

For this month's edition of Download&Discuss, we canvassed a group of Clubhouses that have successfully incorporated a member driver function into the Clubhouse day. The following are quotes from some of the responses we received to our query.

- *I don't know how we would run the work-ordered day without member drivers.*
- *75% of all of our driving is done by members.*
- *Driving for Clubhouse business is urgent, bottom-line work of the Clubhouse.*
- *The Standards say that all work of the Clubhouse is done by members and staff together. Driving is definitely the work of the Clubhouse.*

All of the Clubhouses we canvassed relied heavily on the role of member driver to accomplish the work of the house. Although there were some unique aspects to each Clubhouse's practice and policy regarding member drivers, there was a great deal of agreement about the basics. These include:

- Member drivers need to go through the same screening process as staff drivers do. This usually includes a review of the person's driving record, and possibly a criminal check to see if there has been a history of driving under the influence or injuring anyone in an accident.
- For group policies, insurance companies do not ask if any of the drivers has a mental illness. They are only interested in driving records and driver's licenses. The insurance companies did not ask the Clubhouses to distinguish between members and staff for the purpose of coverage. We have found that many Clubhouses operated through an auspice agency cite liability concerns as the primary reason why members can't drive Clubhouse vehicles; however, the insurance companies do not make these member/staff distinctions when assigning policies.

- Some Clubhouses do a brief training for members and staff who are being signed onto the insurance policy, to make sure they are familiar with all of the functions of the Clubhouse's vehicles.
- Most Clubhouses have clear policies that the Clubhouse vehicles are only to be used for Clubhouse business. This would include transportation to TE jobs; reach out visits; conferences and coalition meetings; helping members move into a new home; etc.
- Most Clubhouses agree that Clubhouse transportation should not create dependency. If there is public transportation available, it is generally preferable. However, if the public transportation options are limited and contribute to *preventing* members to participate in Clubhouse activities, then the Clubhouse does have a responsibility to help bridge these gaps and provide transportation support.
- Most Clubhouses keep logs to record Clubhouse vehicles' destination; time in and out; any incidents or comments; gas level; etc.
- Clubhouses agree that they use common sense about letting a member drive if he or she is very unwell or very symptomatic at the time.

Only one Clubhouse reported having had a negative incident involving a member driver, and this was a case of the Clubhouse not applying its own policies.

All of the Clubhouses that responded to our questionnaire were very clear that the role of member drivers in their Clubhouses is an essential function of the house. The work that these members do to contribute to the community is invaluable, and the members who do this work feel that the work is rewarding and meaningful. All of the responding Clubhouses agreed that this is not a function that should become a paid job, as it is simply one of the important tasks that are shared by the Clubhouse community during the course of the work-ordered day.