



Organizing a Meeting Care Team

“Following the operation all sense of God disappeared, and anyone who came to my bedside (and the love and visiting I received was one of the great treasures of my life) I asked to take my hand and mediate God’s love to me. In fact healing and prayer surrounded me on every hand, although I myself felt cut off in complete inner aridity except when actually held in the inner place by someone taking my hand and praying.”
Damaris Parker-Rhodes, 1905, PYM Faith and Practice
2002.

This quote illustrates how a Meeting community can have a significant role in helping a person cope with a major life event. Although every situation is different and individual needs for support will vary, it is helpful for a Meeting to have a plan in place for responding to the care needs of members and attenders.

Care Teams are a way to organize care for when a person is ill, healing physically or emotionally, or facing a major life crisis. A Care Team is different from your Meeting’s Pastoral Care or Care and Counsel Committee (referred to here as Care Committee). Although it may be organized by the Meeting Care Committee, a Care Team is created to help a specific person or family and may involve many people in the Meeting or from outside your Meeting, such as family and neighbors of the person in need.

The following strategies can help your Meeting respond to needs in your community by organizing Care Teams. The first step is to create a structure for your care teams:

Creating a Care Team Structure

- ◆ **Discern what the Meeting can reasonably provide-** For example, smaller Meetings may have limited ability to deal with a wide range of needs, may need to partner with family, friends and neighbors, or refer to outside help. Think ahead about what the Meeting can offer, how much, how often and for how long should a need arise.
- ◆ **Create a Help Bank** - Identify potential Helpers who could be called upon to serve on a Care Team and the roles they can fill. You can use the “Helper Survey” to gather information from individuals and populate the Help Bank . Not every Meeting can fill all these roles, and you may have other ideas, but following are some possibilities:

Example Helper Roles:

- ◆ **First Response/Contact Person** -makes initial contact with the person in need and/or significant others. Ideally at least two people, but not too many, should be identified who can be readily available to respond. Often this will be members of your Meeting’s Committee responsible for Pastoral Care. These people will need to be comfortable initiating conversation upholding confidentiality. They will also need to communicate with one another to avoid confusion.
- ◆ **Scheduler-** schedules care team services and coordinates with other helpers such as family or neighbors when possible.
- ◆ **Advocate-** helps to find local services (outside the Meeting)
- ◆ **Spiritual support and nurturing presence-** person to be present, listen, perhaps organize a Meeting for Worship at home or in the hospital if the person desires.
- ◆ **Cooking and/or household chores/ Outdoor chores**
- ◆ **Transportation**
- ◆ **Organize household bills**
- ◆ **Manage phone calls and other communication** for person if desired.
- ◆ **Childcare or elder care** (Caregivers get sick, too!)
- ◆ **Think multi-generationally-** a visit from a child who can show off her new reading skills, Middle School Friends to spend a morning raking leaves.



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Creating a Care Team Structure, Continued:

- ◆ **Document your “Help Bank”** –Consolidate the information you’ve gathered into a Help Bank form.
- ◆ **Keep family and friend contact information on hand for members and attenders.** In a crisis, it can be very helpful if the Meeting has on hand the names and numbers of family members, close friends or neighbors that the Meeting may contact to offer assistance or ask for help. These contacts might also be engaged as part of your care team. You may use the Quaker Aging Resources “Personal Planning Record” form the Yearly Meeting Office.
- ◆ **Know local resources, or where to find them.** Have on hand information about local organizations such as your Area Agency on Aging, County transportation, or Meals on Wheels. Friends in New York and Philadelphia Yearly Meetings are encouraged to contact your Yearly Meeting staff for help, or visit our website: www.quakeragingresources.org to find local and other resources.
- ◆ **Check your existing systems.** Make sure contact information for your Members and attenders is up to date and readily available. If your Meetinghouse has a phone, does someone check messages during the week? Do you have a way to check in with those who live alone?
- ◆ **Use the Checklist for Care Team in Action**-or your own variation to develop protocol for responding to needs..
- ◆ **Support Care Teams**- Consider ways in which the Meeting can support those in caring roles.
- ◆ **Communicate with your Meeting.** When your structure is in place, let the Meeting community know what to expect if a need arises. It is especially important that everyone know who to contact in the event that care is needed, and a back up contact person. Remind Meeting members and attenders that Clearness Committees can assist in the process of decision making surrounding a person’s care.



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Guidelines in Offering Care

- ◆ **It doesn't hurt to ask.** If you are unsure if someone wants your help, you may worry about imposing. However, it is the nature of many people that they will not ask for help. To alleviate awkwardness, be specific, such as "We would like to provide food for your family following your surgery", "Bill is available to take your children to lessons on Tuesdays", "the children are learning about the Peace Testimony and would like to visit with you".
- ◆ **Respect and Negotiate Boundaries-** the person being cared for may be uncomfortable receiving certain help. For example, some may not want anyone outside the family to clean the bathroom. If you think a person really needs help but is refusing, consider consulting with your Yearly Meeting staff.
- ◆ **Honor the person's need for privacy, for quiet, for time together with family.** Sometimes people's circles shrink when facing a major life change or a crisis. Try not to take it personally.
- ◆ **Regardless of the person's ability, their inclusion in discussions and their guidance is paramount.** The person receiving care is also a member of the care team. Their role may be practical, such as making confirmation calls or it may simply be to teach the rest of us how to help one another.
- ◆ **No one person should be expected to handle everything.** Honor the limits of the Meeting and of each helper. A little bit done lovingly goes a long way.
- ◆ **Value every contribution-** those who cannot commit to helping regularly may be able to substitute or fill in for an emergency. Those who need help may also be grateful for the opportunity to serve others. One child received piano lessons every week while her mother vacuumed a Friend's house. The Friend did not have the strength to move the vacuum around, but had time and knowledge to share.
- ◆ **Be clear in expectations-** Ask helpers to be realistic about what they can do. Try to be clear about what each job entails and communicate with one another about changes or unexpected needs.
- ◆ **Support and validate one's own and one another's fears, discomforts, and strengths.** Not everyone can participate in the same way, but you can learn from one another.
- ◆ **Express gratitude, receive gratitude.**



Care Team in Action:

Steps to take when the Meeting becomes aware of a need:

- ◆ **Gather Information-** When a need arises, identify one of the “First responders” to gather information from the individual affected first, or if they are not able to communicate, their family or friends. Here are some tips for the initial conversations:
 - ◆ The principle “nothing about me without me”, is a helpful way to remember to respect the wishes of and include the person at the center of care in all conversations and plans.
 - ◆ Offer a Clearness Committee for the individual in need and caregivers.
 - ◆ The first responder should find out what the person wishes to share about their situation, what is confidential and not to be shared, what their needs are, how much and for how long. It also helps to identify at what times and days help is most needed. Identify other resources if possible, such as neighbors who may be providing food, family that will be present, etc.
 - ◆ Offering specific help can be more productive than a vague “let us know what we can do”.
 - ◆ Find out what the person does NOT need (they may already have a freezer full of casseroles) or what they specifically do not want.
 - ◆ Though you want to be helpful, it is important not to set up unrealistic expectations so remember to honor the limits you have identified. Tell the person what your process will be with Meeting- for example others you will be contacting, or who may be in touch with the family.
- ◆ **Create a Plan for a Care Team**
 - ◆ The Meeting committee that is responsible for Pastoral Care should meet so the first responder can share information as appropriate (always upholding confidentiality) and a strategy can be formed for the Care Team.
 - ◆ If there is any question, stick to what one “Needs to Know” to care for that person).

More 



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Care Team in Action: Continued

- ◆ Out of the information gathered, identify and list needs that Meeting can help with.
- ◆ Identify a scheduler.
- ◆ Set up a Clearness Committee if requested.
- ◆ Identify who will communicate the plan back to the person in need and other caregivers.
- ◆ Contact people in your Help Bank to determine their availability- If there are many people to contact, this task can be divided among a few people who will relay this information back to the scheduler, or the scheduler can do this .
- ◆ Scheduler fills in calendar and gets back to helpers to confirm their commitment.
- ◆ Contact person in need/family/friends to relay the Meeting's plan for help. Either first responder or scheduler can make this contact. If your Meeting has decided to collaborate with other help resources, such as neighbors, include this in your conversation with the person and caregivers. Information about other local resources can also be shared at this point, or you can let them know that someone will be in touch. Provide details to the person in need/caregivers such as copy of the calendar/schedule of helpers.

◆ Maintaining the Care Team

- ◆ **Confirm times with helpers** – Set up a system to remind people of their commitment. This can be a role for the person receiving care if they are able.
- ◆ **Have a system for back up-** this may be as simple as a helper rearranging directly with the person in need or caregiver . If the Meeting is providing something such as regular meals or rides to chemotherapy treatments, a reliable backup system needs to be in place in case a helper has an emergency. The person receiving care and/or significant others should also know who to contact if a helper forgets, or if they need to make changes.
- ◆ **Use a Checklist for Care Team in Action** to keep track of the above steps.
- ◆ **Contact the PYM Care and Aging office for help.**



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Sources and Suggested Reading:

Books:

Cappy Capossela and Sheila Warnock, Share the Care, 2004, Fireside, New York, NY.

James E. Miller, When You're the Caregiver, 1995, Willowgreen Publishing, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

James E. Miller with Susan C. Cutshall, The Art of Being a Healing Presence- A Guide for Those in Caring Relationships, 2001, Willowgreen Publishing, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Edited by Patricia McBee, Grounded in God: Care and Nurture in Friends Meetings, 2002, Quaker Press of Friends General Conference, Philadelphia.

For Children, Parents, Teachers:

Marge Heegaard, to be illustrated by children, When Someone Has a Very Serious Illness- Children Can Learn to Cope With Loss and Change, 1991 Woodlands Press, Minneapolis, MN. This is a workbook for children to draw and write in; and will help the adults in their lives communicate and understand their feelings.

For resources related to Aging:

www.quakeragingresources.org

Websites where you can organize a Care Team:

<http://www.carecircle.com/>

<https://healing.lotsahelpinghands.com/caregiving/home/>



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