

The ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS PAGE

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Music: "Peg of My Heart" furnished by [Heart and Soul Music](#) "Providing Quality Music for Nursing Homes"

SUPPORT GROUPS

Many facilities are seeing the need for support groups. There are many reasons to have a support group not only for the residents, but for family and care givers. There are two kinds of support groups in a facility. In-house support groups that are geared for residents and family members. The second kind, are support groups that utilize the space of the facility but are for the community only.

The support groups for the community are a great source of referrals for your building and we encourage you to look into beginning a support group. Most important, you would be providing a needed service for your community. Some ideas would be Care Giver Support Group, Alzheimer's Support Group and Bereavement Support Group. A huge Support Group industry that is growing is Gastric By Pass. Many of the patients are in their 40's to 50's age group and that is the generation caring for their parents and grandparents. So, you may wish to look into starting that type of support group or host one in your building. Many of the Gastric Support Groups are an average size of 50 to 100 people and growing.

Some suggestions for In House Support Groups might be, Adjusting to Nursing Home Placement, Alzheimer's Units Family Support Group, Reminisce Groups, Homeward Bound-for those residents leaving Rehabilitation, Bereavement and Loss, Death and Dying, Spirituality.

Support Groups offer residents and their family, information and referral information. Acceptance, when they discover they are not alone in how they feel. Anonymity because they know that what they say in this group is confidential and it may be the only place they feel comfortable expressing how they feel. Its a place to help others and bring ideas on how to cope.

Most newspapers and radio stations allow you to advertise at no cost to you. Again, another way to promote your facility and at the same time provide community service. We advise you to look at the age group of who you are trying to attract to the group. If its the senior population, we recommend that you have the meeting in the early afternoon and provide lunch. Many seniors don't want to drive at night. If its for the 40-50 year old group, provide it in the early evening and again provide a light supper. They may be rushing from work or home and a light supper would be a welcome attraction for your support group. Don't forget to post flyers, place in facility newspaper and local TV channel. If you start a new group for the community, make sure you are listed in all the referral sources such as Hospitals, Nursing Homes, Adult Day Care, Geriatric Care Managers, Office on Aging, Self Help Clearing House, Non Profit Associations, AARP and the Library.

The support group should be run by a leader and a co-leader or co-facilitator. No one person can run a support group alone. The support group leader generally has other responsibilities and needs someone to share the workload of running a support group. Once you make the commitment to have a support group, you cannot easily cancel it. People are counting on you. There are many responsibilities to running a support group from providing information, setting up the group, mailing reminders, keeping a database of your participants, obtaining speakers and so on. You also need a co-leader who can fill in when there are vacations, emergencies or sick days. The co-leader cannot only fill in on these dates but share the responsibilities of the group.

There is information available through the Self Help Clearing House web site on many aspects of Support Groups. For New Jersey please go to www.njshc.org or call 1800 367 6274. The national web site is www.selfhelp.org and the phone number is 212-817-1822. At this time they do not have an 800 number for the National Office.



ABOUT SANDRA

Sandra Stimson has experience as a corporate consultant, Corporate Trainer and National Speaker. Her experience is in long term care, as Activity Director, Director of Alzheimer's Units and Assistant Administrator of a 550 bed long term care county home. She is Co-founder of Pet Express Pet Therapy Club, is a Life Replay Specialist. Sandra implements dementia units nationwide. Sandra has written several books, Volunteer Management Essentials for Long Term Care and Pet Express Pet Therapy Program. Sandra has been a facilitator for Alzheimer's support groups and is the Awards Chair for the NJ Association of Activity Professionals. Sandra is the Executive Director of **National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners**
<http://www.nccdp.org>.

[Alternative Solutions in Long Term Care](#) offers resources for health care professionals in many areas of dementia care, care plans, Snoezelen products, dementia activity calendars, adult day care calendars, sensory calendars, reminisce videos for dementia, activity books, and dates to remember, party supplies, resources and links.



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