

Schizophrenics Anonymous

Authored by
mohammad looti

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Schizophrenics Anonymous is a self-help group to help people who are affected by schizophrenia to cope with the disease.

History

The program was established in the Detroit area in 1985. The founder was Joanne Verbanic, who had been diagnosed with schizophrenia in 1970. Shortly before forming SA, Verbanic had publicly disclosed her diagnosis and had discussed her illness on national television programs in an effort to challenge the stigma associated with schizophrenia by educating the public. She has continued to be active as a spokesperson for persons with schizophrenia and other mental illness and was a 2006 recipient of a Lilly Reintegration Award in recognition of her lifetime contributions to the mental health community.

By 2007, there were more than 150 local SA groups in 31 U.S. states and groups in Australia, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, France, India, and Venezuela.

Technical support for Schizophrenics Anonymous had been provided by the National Schizophrenia Foundation (NSF) until 2007 when NSF ceased doing business. In response to an "outcry" at the loss of a national organization supporting people with schizophrenia and related disorders and Schizophrenics Anonymous, a committed group of consumers, family members, and mental health providers came together to form a national 501(3)c not-for-profit organization, Schizophrenia and Related Disorders Alliance of America (SARDAA).

SARDAA promotes hope and recovery for persons with schizophrenia and related disorders and envisions a future in which every person with a schizophrenia-related disorder will have the opportunity to recover and live a life free from stigma and discrimination.

SARDAA provides technical support for Schizophrenics Anonymous and its leadership.

Program principles

The SA program is based on a twelve-step model, but includes just six steps. The organization describes the program's purpose as helping participants to learn about schizophrenia, "restore dignity and sense of purpose," obtain "fellowship, positive support, and companionship," improve their attitudes about their lives and their illnesses, and take "positive steps towards recovery."