



Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance

Growing Your DBSA Chapter ~A system for continual growth~

Whether your DBSA chapter is just starting or it has been around for 20 or more years, your chapter needs two basic things to exist:

Two Keys to DBSA Chapter Existence:

- 1. *PARTICIPANTS* for support groups and other chapter activities.**
- 2. Focused *SERVICES* provided to the participants and the community.**

Without Key 1, participants, your chapter is just *you* sitting around with an idea. Without Key 2, focused services for the participants and the community, your chapter is nothing more than a group of acquaintances. So, with these two Keys to Existence, your group of acquaintances becomes a DBSA chapter.

This may seem obvious to many, but often chapter leaders forget the basic nature of their organization. Many chapter leaders get caught up in the daily work, the policies, the challenges, the drama and the minutia of leading a chapter. But the real necessities are two basic things – Participants and Services.

While other resources, guides and tools provided by DBSA cover the services that a chapter provides, this is a guide that focuses on the participants – why we want them and how to get them.

Why we want them...

Recruiting participants may seem like a major pain to many chapter leaders. It takes a lot of work, and often the work put into getting more chapter participants yields minimal results. Some of you have put up posters until you were blue in the face, and maybe if you were lucky one or two more participants showed up. It can be frustrating, so many chapter leaders just give up and hope that new participants “hear through the grapevine” about their chapter’s activities.

Develop your motivation to grow!

In order to stay MOTIVATED to recruit more chapter participants, a chapter leader should start with WHY they might want to recruit more participants in the first place. Answer these questions to start building your motivation.

How would our chapter be better if we had more participants?

Answer: _____

How could active recruitment help more people with mood disorders?

Answer: _____

How would my life as a chapter leader be easier if we had more participants?

Answer: _____

What could our chapter DO because of having more participants?

Answer: _____

What could our chapter HAVE because of our extra participants?

Answer: _____

What could our chapter BECOME because of our plethora of participants?

Answer: _____

Imagine... What if?

How to get them...

About 10% of U.S. adults are directly affected by a mood disorder in any given year (NIMH). When you consider that large population, and all of their loved ones, you realize there is a high probability that many of the people you talk with in your community could benefit from the services that DBSA chapters provide.

With this high probability of need in your community, paired with the DBSA mission, DBSA chapters should *actively* pursue new patients, family members and friends to take part in chapter activities. *Actively* pursuing people with an offer of support and education is directly in line with DBSA's core values and purpose, and can bring new energy, ideas and resources to your chapter.

So how is it done? First it is important to differentiate between *active* and *passive* approaches to growing your chapter. Passive approaches are the status quo for most chapters, and they have worked just well enough for most. Passive growth methods include: advertisements, fliers, signage, and web sites. Chapters that just announce their existence through some media, and then wait and hope that people show up are using passive approaches to growth.

There is another way: *actively* seeking individuals, and personally inviting them to join you for support groups, educational programs, or any other chapter events. This requires knowing *who* you're looking to invite into your organization, *what* value your chapter offers to potential participants, and *how* to find those potential participants and convince them to try out your chapter's services.

This guide to growing your chapter will focus on both passive and active approaches, as every chapter should incorporate a healthy mix of both approaches for their long-term health and success.

Two areas for growth: participants and support groups...

The size and scope of DBSA chapters can be measured in various ways. Two of the most common quantifiable measurements are the *number of participants* and the *number of support groups offered*. Of course, some chapters focus their energy on other chapter functions besides support groups (i.e. Advocacy, Community Outreach, Education), but these are two common measurements, and as such, two areas in which a chapter can grow.

Growing the number of participants will be the focus of much of this guide, but increasing the number of support groups that a chapter offers can be an exciting measure of success, a great way to impact more people, and an important step to attracting new participants.

New support groups can be offered:

- At different times
- On different days/evenings
- In different locations
- For specific audiences (family/friends, teens, men only, etc.)
- Via web-based media (chat rooms, discussion boards, etc.)
- For multiple diagnoses (dual diagnosis, co-morbid disorders, etc.)
- ...and the list goes on.

Many DBSA chapters have customized their support group services to the needs and availability of their specific community. While some chapters offer only one support group that is open to anyone – which is GREAT – a lot of DBSA chapters have found that over time the need for DBSA services and information is so great that they eventually have to expand the number of support groups that they offer to keep up with the demand. Some DBSA chapters offer well over 20 different support groups.

Obviously there are many specialized support groups that your chapter can offer. The most common of these are for young adults or for family and friends of a person diagnosed with either depression or bipolar disorder. Included in the appendix section of this guide are resources pertaining to three types of specialized support groups:

1. Family and Friends
2. Adolescents and Young Adults
3. Dual Diagnosis

These resources are provided because of their nature as popular choices for a chapter to expand their services. Other specialized support group offerings could target:

- Older adults
- College students
- Women only
- Men only
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transsexual, Questioning
- Co-morbid disorders
- Co-occurring disorders
- Survivors of suicide attempts
- Parents of children diagnosed with a mood disorder
- Parents diagnosed with depression or bipolar disorder
- Etc.

Increasing the number of chapter participants...

Increasing the number of support groups that a chapter offers is one way to measure chapter growth. A more common way to measure growth, however, is the number of participants attending chapter events or assisting with chapter efforts. This could mean more support group attendees, but it could also mean more volunteers helping move your chapter toward its mission in many ways.

Increasing the number of chapter participants that attend chapter events can be done in many ways. Most commonly, chapters engage in mass marketing efforts such as newspaper advertisements, direct mail campaigns or hanging posters around the community. The other most common tactic that chapters use to grow their number of participants is by getting referrals from their doctors, counselors, therapists, and professional advisors.

One other way to grow a DBSA chapter is often overlooked, or at least not fully leveraged. That is the use of personal references to drive attendance at chapter activities. "Personal references" means individual chapter members going into their communities and sharing the benefits of DBSA chapter activities and support groups with their friends, family members, acquaintances, people in the grocery store, colleagues, etc.

"But I don't know anyone else with a mood disorder..."

The biggest reason that personal references are not fully leveraged is because chapter participants, and even chapter leaders, often suggest that they "don't know anyone else with a mood disorder." While this is a major roadblock to recruiting support group participants, often the individuals that report this have never had the opportunity to truly think about 1) The amount of people that they *really are* acquainted with, or 2) The chance that many of the people they are acquainted with actually would benefit from a DBSA support group or chapter activity.

Take, for example, a fictional town of 5,000 residents. This is smaller than most communities with a DBSA chapter, but it will serve as a good example to determine the amount of people in your (probably larger) community that could benefit from your chapter's services.

If the town (we'll call it Moodsville, USA) has 5,000 people, and we know that about 22.1% of Americans ages 18 and older (1 in 5 adults) have a diagnosable mental disorder in a given year (NIMH), then what is the size of the population in Moodsville that probably *has* a mental disorder?

Moodsville Math

5,000	Total Population
<u>-26.8%</u>	Children (U.S. Census)
3,660	Adults
3,660	Adults
<u>x .21 (21%)</u>	NIMH Statistic
808	People w/ Mental Disorder

If the statistics played out in this fictional example, then approximately **808** adults with a diagnosable mental disorder live in Moodsville, USA.

If we guessed that even 10% of those with a mental disorder actually have either depression or bipolar disorder (though that number is probably much higher), then approximately 80 people in Moodsville could benefit from DBSA's services.

Further, if we assume that those 80 people have at least 2 family members or friends that are helping to support them, then that would equal **at least 240 people in Moodsville who could benefit from DBSA's services – and that doesn't include the people that would just like to volunteer for a great cause!**

By looking at the fictional example shown above in the "Moodsville Math" box, you will see that even in small towns there is a high potential for DBSA chapters to thrive. Even if a chapter got only 10% of those 240 people in need, the chapter would have 24 participants – that's enough for two full support groups. That's right, even a 90% failure rate can equal success!

Now try with your own numbers:

Your Town/City/Region Population = _____

-28.8% (Children) = _____ **adults**

x 21% = _____ **people with a mental disorder.**

-90% (non mood disorder) = _____ **(approximate) people with mood disorder.**

x 3 (themselves + 2 family/friends) = _____ **people in need.**

Finding chapter participants

Doing the math above makes it all sound very easy. If you lived in Moodsville, you might expect all of these potential participants to just show up at your door. But chapter leaders know that it takes significant effort to even get four or five participants at chapter events. The tactics for recruiting these people to chapter activities that are successful for chapter leaders around the country include those listed in “Chapter Participant Recruitment Tactics,” and explained further below.

Chapter Participant Recruitment Tactics

- 1. Personal References**
 - a. Names List Building**
 - b. “5 for 5”**
- 2. Professional’s References**
- 3. Mass Marketing**

These tactics, when used together, can provide the outline for an overall chapter growth system. If all of the tactics are used well, then the majority of people in need within your community should be aware of the benefits of your chapter’s services, and should be contacting you to learn more.

Personal References

To begin growing your chapter, start with who you know. Literally. The first tactic for recruiting more chapter participants is to identify all of the personal connections that each of your chapter participants (or at least the leaders) know. Many people balk at this idea because they think that they do not know many people, and the people that they do know would not be interested in the chapter's services. This section will challenge those hesitations, and help you and your chapter get to know more prospective chapter participants.

Building your Names List

The first step toward identifying the vast network of prospective chapter participants that already exists within your chapter's current relationships is to simply write down EVERYONE that you know.

It is important to start this list without any hesitations or pre-judgments. Do not think about whether or not each person you know is, in your opinion, interested in what your DBSA chapter is doing. Let them decide for themselves, and even if they aren't interested, they might know someone who is. You might be surprised at the amount of people that would be interested in volunteering for a good cause – like your DBSA chapter. Remember, people do not have to be diagnosed or even experiencing a mood disorder to serve the DBSA mission.

Sit down for ten minutes and complete the following exercise. Use the list of "Mind Joggers" on the next page to help you think about all of the people that you are even just acquainted with. Remember, this is not a list of people who *will* join your group; it is a list of people that are prospects for helping out your DBSA chapter in some way.

If you can't remember a person's name, just write down a description of that person. You can always find them and learn their name later.

When you get stuck, push yourself for at least 10-15 more names. You will be surprised at what you can come up with.

Good luck!

Mind Joggers

Think of people who...

- you see at work
- you see at the gym
- know your children
- live near you
- you went to school with
- you see at church/temple/mosque, etc.
- you bump into at the grocery
- are in your "address book"
- send you e-mails
- you send holiday cards to
- whose name starts with A, B, C, etc.
- whose last name is Smith, Johnson, Walters, Moore, Dawson etc. (look in the phone book for last names)
- know a lot of people
- stay to themselves
- have children/grandchildren
- are young and energetic
- you've seen in the last few weeks
- are kind and caring
- work as an accountant, a banker, a financial planner
- are retired
- work in the media or in advertising/public relations
- live nearby
- you knew well when you were younger
- could use a friend

Think of your own mind joggers to add to the list!

The next page has 75 blanks for you to start your own names list. Fill in each blank with as much information as you know about a person (name, phone #, E-mail, interests, etc.) Before filling it in, you may want to make copies of the next page to share with all of your chapter participants so that you can lead them through the same exercise you are doing right now. Just imagine how many prospects you will have once everyone in your chapter (or even just your key leaders) fills out their names list completely!

“5 for 5”

Some people are not able to fill up all 75 blanks in their Names List (while others need two or three times that amount of space). If you had a hard time filling out *your* Names List, or if you would just like to maximize your chapter’s growth potential, consider posing this challenge to yourself and other chapter participants, and just watch your prospective chapter participants grow exponentially.

Would you be willing to commit to simply meeting 5 new people a day for the next 5 days?			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>YES</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<u>NO</u>

The “5 for 5” challenge is one that can dramatically increase:

- The number of prospects for your chapter
- Your personal network
- The amount of friends you have
- Your confidence with interpersonal interactions

The “5 for 5” challenge does not ask you to go out and personally *recruit* 5 people per day into your chapter – it simply asks that you meet (say hello, ask their name, have a short conversation, and maybe learn how to contact them again) 5 people per day for just 5 days. You can do this at the grocery store, at work, on public transportation, and in your other daily activities. You would need to do nothing out of the ordinary except introduce yourself to the people you see and smile at every day anyway.

Here’s what “5 for 5” does for your chapter:

1. If your chapter has 30 members, and they commit to “5 for 5,” then...
30 members
x 5 new prospects a day
x 5 days
= 750 new prospects
2. Just wait, it gets better...
If your chapter continued this pattern for 30 days (1 month), then...
30 members
x 5 new prospects a day
x 30 days
= 4500 new prospects in 1 month

Engaging Participants

Once you have developed your names list, and taken the “5 for 5” challenge, you and your fellow chapter participants will need to take all of those people that you have identified, and find a way to get their help with your chapter activities.

Remember, you are not just asking them to personally participate in your support groups, but you are looking to grow your chapter by asking your personal references to:

- Participate in support groups if needed/desired
- Refer people in need to your chapter
- Talk about mood disorders with their family/friends
- Donate financial resources
- Facilitate support group meetings
- Volunteer with your chapter to help with:
 - Accounting
 - Web Development
 - Media Relations
 - Envelope Stuffing
 - Phone calls to people in need or other prospects
 - Placing posters around town
 - Identifying educational resources/speakers
 - Fundraising efforts
 - Identifying community relationships
 - Advocacy efforts
 - Training your chapter members on their expertise
- Etc.

The question still remains, however, “How do I ask them to participate?”

Here is a seven-step process for effectively asking your prospects to participate in DBSA chapter activities...

1. Know what your chapter offers.

First and foremost, it is important that you and all of your chapter participants can effectively express what it is that your chapter offers. Many people go into a conversation with a prospective chapter participant without being able to really explain how valuable a DBSA chapter is.

Imagine you are heading down to the lobby of a tall building on an elevator, and

7 Steps to Engaging New Participants

- 1. Know what your chapter offers.**
- 2. Bring DBSA information along.**
- 3. Be personal.**
- 4. Ask about *their* needs and talents.**
- 5. Don't push too hard.**
- 6. Ask for specific help.**
- 7. Recognize their efforts.**

someone asks you to explain your DBSA chapter to them (but you must finish before you reach the bottom floor). Could you do it?

In the marketing profession, many companies develop a 30 second “Elevator Pitch,” or a short description of their product that can be shared with anyone who asks. Try to create your chapter’s “Elevator Pitch” so that every person in your chapter is confident about sharing the benefits and value of DBSA with the people that they meet everyday.

As you approach your prospects about potentially participating in your chapter’s activities, be prepared to share with them how important of an organization your chapter is, and how it has benefited so many people. Consider visiting the DBSA Website for information on the organization nationally.

2. Bring DBSA information along.

The second of the Seven Steps is an easy one. Prospects like to have something tangible to help them consider what you’re asking of them. Most prospects will want some written information to take home with them, share with their families, or at least learn more about your chapter.

DBSA offers free brochures to chapters, and all DBSA brochures can be downloaded from DBSA’s Website, www.DBSAAlliance.org. You may consider creating your own informational brochure or flier that has specific information about your chapter, its activities, its needs, its strengths and your contact information.

3. Be personal.

The third of the Seven Steps to Engaging New Participants explains the importance of personal interaction. People do not normally join organizations or volunteer for causes because of posters they see, or because of brochures they read. The reality is that most people join groups and volunteer for activities like those offered by DBSA chapters because of personal connections. This step suggests that you and your chapter members should ask your prospective participants in a personal manner to take part in chapter activities.

While mass marketing (which will be discussed later) can generate some good results, it is not the best way to engage new chapter participants. Once you have developed your long Names List, and the Names Lists of your other chapter participants, try to talk with those prospects personally – either face to face or over the phone. People need a personal connection to make a commitment like helping your chapter. People need to trust the organization, and the only way to do that is to trust the people that make up the organization. That means that you must be very personal in your approach.

Try the following activities to PERSONALLY interact with your prospective chapter participants:

- Talk about the chapter over coffee, breakfast, lunch or dinner
- Have a conversation at their home (or yours!)
- Don't rely only on E-mail, letters, fliers or "cold" phone calls
- Discuss DBSA during other activities (at work, while volunteering, before/after worship services, at the park)
- Any other activities, as long as they are face-to-face and comfortable

4. Ask about *their* needs and talents.

The fourth of the Seven Steps asks you and your chapter participants to not "sell" your chapter to prospective participants. A person who effectively engages a new participant probably doesn't do it by going on and on about how great their chapter is. Instead, you and your fellow chapter participants should spend most your personal conversations with prospects ASKING THEM about themselves.

You will want to learn what it is that *they* need. You will want to learn what it is that *they* can offer your chapter. You will want to learn what it is that *they* really are looking for out of a volunteer or support experience.

Once you have learned all of these things, you will see that it is easy to pair up their needs and talents with some currently existing aspect (or future aspect) of your chapter's operations.

5. Don't push too hard.

The fifth step is a friendly reminder to not push your prospective participants too hard into taking part in your chapter activities. Remember that prospective participants may need to build up a significant amount of trust before they choose to take part in your chapter. Keep this in mind while you are talking with potential participants.

You may want to consider asking prospects to take part in some of the more fun, lighthearted chapter activities. Perhaps your chapter is having a social gathering sometime soon, or a fun service activity. These types of activities can be a non-threatening way to engage these new participants, and can help build trust.

6. Ask for specific help.

One reason that many people choose not to participate in DBSA activities is because they aren't really sure what is wanted from them. If they are diagnosed with a mood disorder, but have been feeling healthy for a while they may not see a reason to take part in DBSA activities. Of course there are countless reasons for individuals with or without depression or bipolar disorder to take part in DBSA

chapter activities, but they need to be offered specific roles and tasks to feel like they are contributing.

Consider asking for very specific things from your prospects. Some examples might include:

- “We could really use some help managing our finances, could you use your accounting expertise to help us balance our books?”
- “We need examples of people in healthy recovery in our support groups, could you join us to GIVE support?”
- “We have wanted to improve our chapter’s website for a while now, could you help us with that?”
- “We could use some volunteers to visit with some of our local politicians to advance the cause of people with mental disorders, you have all the perfect talents and connections to assist us – would that be something you would be interested in doing?”

7. Recognize their efforts.

Finally, this seven-step process asks you to simply recognize and appreciate the efforts of all of your volunteers and chapter participants. Your hard work to get your prospects involved with chapter activities could be lost if their contributions are not appropriately recognized.

Thank-you cards, public appreciation, certificates, or just a lot of “Thanks” can go a long way toward keeping your chapter participants and getting them to find their own prospects. By recognizing your chapter participants’ efforts, you can grow your DBSA chapter year after year.

Professional’s References

One of the best ways that chapters have found over the years to build a continual flow of new participants into their support groups and other activities is to have such a good reputation that many of the M.D.’s, psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists and counselors in their area refer their patients to DBSA.

What better reference could you have than medical professionals? It is important to actively work toward building good relationships and providing information to all of the medical professionals in your area so that they understand the value of your chapter’s services, and they refer their patients with depression or bipolar disorder to your group.

Some suggestions for building relationships with these medical professionals include:

- Share DBSA brochures and resources with all of the medical professionals in your area.
- Send short letters through the mail explaining your chapter's services and introducing yourself (Sample found in the appendix section).
- Provide information sheets to all of your chapter participants to share with their medical professionals.
- Send complimentary copies of your chapter's newsletter to your local medical professionals.
- Ask your chapter participants to give personal testimonials to their medical professionals about how important DBSA is in their lives.
- Refer all medical professionals to DBSA's Website: www.DBSAAlliance.org
- Host programs that honor the medical professionals in your area, and publicize these programs through the media.
- Send thank you notes to any medical professional that provides a referral to your chapter.

Mass Marketing

As mentioned earlier, mass marketing efforts are not normally considered the best way to actually engage new chapter participants, but below are some low-cost, effective tactics to complement your more personal efforts.

Fliers: describing the chapter and its services in...

(Sample found in Appendix Section)

- community mental health centers
- doctors' offices
- libraries
- religious meeting places
- grocery stores

Don't forget to ask for their permission before posting or distributing a flier. The appendix has a great example of a flier that might work for you.

Letters: describing the chapter and its services to...

(Sample found in Appendix Section)

- local mental health agencies
- psychiatrists
- therapists
- Chamber of Commerce
- United Way

Consider including a DBSA brochure, like: [DBSA Support Groups: An Important Step on the Road To Wellness.](#)

Advertising: in newspapers, radio, TV, etc.

- purchase low-cost advertising space in local papers
- utilize the free "community calendars" of many local radio stations, TV stations and newspapers
- ask local organizations for advertising space in their membership newsletters

Remember to Get Referrals

One final piece of the chapter growth puzzle can help your chapter have a continually full list of prospects to talk with.

Very simply, every time you are able to get a new participant into your chapter, ask them if they could provide some references that they know that might be able to participate in some way. The Names List exercise with the Mind Joggers is a great way to help your newest chapter participants to identify the people that they know.

Start the Process Again

The “Continual Growth Diagram” on the next page of this guide to growing your DBSA chapter is a visual representation of the growth process. Use this diagram to map out your own chapter growth efforts.

The process starts with recognizing that there are many people in your community that can either directly benefit from your chapter’s services, or that would be very willing to volunteer for this important cause.

Once you have recognized this need for your chapter to grow within your community, there are three main tactics that will drive prospective members to your chapter:

1. Personal References
2. Professional References
3. Mass Media

By using the ideas and system that is outlined in this guide, your chapter will experience growth in the number of support groups you offer, and the number of people that participate in your chapter’s activities.

A Final Word about Mood Disorders

Throughout the process, always remember the fact that the majority of our chapter participants are living with a mood disorder. Be sure not to push too hard, and only ask of your participants what they can give in a healthy manner. Never forget the mission of our organization – *to improve the lives of people living with mood disorders*. Be sure that all of your chapter’s activities – including seeking prospects – actually work to IMPROVE the lives of the people in your chapter and in your community.

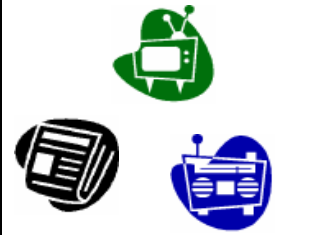
YOUR COMMUNITY



Personal References



Doctor's References



Mass Marketing Efforts

Invitation

Support Group



Start the process again with the new participants!

Ask for Referrals

Continual Growth Diagram for DBSA Chapters



Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance

Appendices

Appendix 1: Starting a Family and Friends Support Group

**Appendix 2: Thirteen Suggestions for Working with
Adolescents and Young Adults**

Appendix 3: Starting DBSA Dual Diagnosis Support Groups

**Appendix 4: Sample letter describing chapter services for
medical professionals and other community
networks**

Appendix 5: Sample flier for publicizing chapter services

Starting a Family and Friends Support Group

Mood disorders affect millions of people each year. The millions diagnosed and living with the symptoms of depression and bipolar disorder are not the only ones affected, however. Their family members and friends are affected too.

Many people who have a close friend or a loved one diagnosed or experiencing the sometimes harsh symptoms of a mood disorder focus their energy, attention and nearly all of their effort on helping that friend or loved one. Others are frightened away, and remain distant from the person experiencing the illness. Still others report feeling hurt, helpless, overwhelmed, confused, sad, guilty and ashamed because of their loved one's illness. No matter the reaction, these family members and friends need support and comfort as they walk the often challenging road to wellness along side their loved one.

To start a support group specifically for family and friends, it is best to look to the family and friends already involved with the chapter first.

DBSA chapters are well known for offering support and comfort to people living with mood disorders. All chapters offer at least one peer-led, self-help support group. Many chapters have found great benefit to offering specific separate support groups solely for the family members and friends of those with the illness. With support groups for not only the people with the illness, but also for their support system, DBSA chapters can help build understanding and support for everyone touched by these disorders.

The support group(s) specifically for family members and friends should be run with the same guidelines, structure and framework that all other support groups are run.

To start a support group specifically for family and friends, it is best to look to the family and friends already involved with the chapter first. Ask any of them if they would be willing to lead simple discussions with other family members and friends on a trial and interim basis. Many chapters have found offering this option on a trial basis is a good

way to determine whether the family and friend participants will be fulfilled with this technique.

To further assist the family member or friend that volunteers to lead this new group, consider connecting them with one of DBSA's Resource Chapters that has successfully implemented specialized support groups, like those for family members and friends. Also, provide the volunteer with resource materials that can assist with facilitation skills, conflict management techniques, and overall group dynamics. This information can be retrieved from the Chapter Leadership Guide or the Chapter Management Website (www.DBSAAlliance.org/ChapMgtEntrance.html).

To grow your family and friend support group, try promoting it through the patients in your chapter. Suggest that everyone bring a family member or friend to participate. For many, friends are easier to approach at first than family members are, and this is a good way to begin building that support structure that is so important to living well with a mood disorder.

The support group(s) specifically for family members and friends should be run with the same guidelines, structure and framework that all other support groups are run. The content of the discussion that takes place in this family and friends group may be different, but the value and set-up are the same. Family members and friends that serve as support systems need time to discuss ways to best help their loved one. They also need to discuss ways to keep themselves healthy. Many chapters report that family and friend participants find they can use the experience and wisdom of others in the group to stay well, and to learn how best to assist their loved one down the path wellness.

A Step-By-Step Guide to Starting a Family/Friends Support Group

1. Recruit a volunteer to lead a new family/friends support group from the current participants' supporters.
2. Ask each chapter participant to promote the new group to their family and friends (provide written information for participants to take home).
3. Provide facilitation and resource materials to the volunteer who will serve as facilitator of the new group.
4. Secure space for the new family/friends support group to meet.
5. Host the family/friends support groups using the same guidelines that are used for other DBSA support groups.
6. Orient other family/friend participants to serve as facilitators of the support groups.
7. Continue to promote the new family/friends support group through the community, health care providers, newsletters and other publicity efforts.
8. Be sure to let DBSA's national office know about your new group!

Thirteen Suggestions for Working with Adolescents and Young Adults

Edited and adapted from an original document provided by DBSA Metro Detroit – Bob Dillaber

1. Have a parent or guardian sign a “permission to participate” slip for support group participants who are under age 18.
2. Explain to parents that the support group participation is limited to adolescents and young adults.
3. Schedule support group meetings in the evening (a weekday evening, possibly from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m.)
4. Define “Adolescents and Young Adults” as those between 13 and 25.
5. If people that are outside of that age-range attend, suggest after the meeting, in a polite manner, that this may not be the best support group for them to attend. Suggest an alternative if possible.
6. Based on some chapters’ experiences, support groups have not been appropriate for participants under 13.
7. Be aware that a significant percentage of those who will attend will have substance abuse problems (current or past).
8. The facilitator should be non-confrontational and non-judgmental. Young people pick up on this quickly.
9. Be aware that a significant percentage of those attending will be unhappy about their need to medicate, and may have a history of starting and stopping their treatments.
10. Be aware that a certain percentage of those attending will be trying to manage a crisis at their first meeting.
11. If the support group facilitator is older, consider the possibility of a co-facilitator who is within the group’s targeted age range.
12. Be aware that it will take a significant amount of time to get this group established and do not be discouraged if some of the meetings are not well attended.
13. Be aware that most participants are unlikely to participate in a group consistently over an extended period of time.

Starting DBSA Dual Diagnosis Support Groups

Many DBSA chapters have found that providing support groups specifically for individuals working to recover from an intoxicating drug or chemical dependency and a mood disorder at the same time (or “Dual Diagnosis”) is a service that is highly valued in their community.

While many organizations besides DBSA provide support through a “Twelve-Step” model, DBSA support groups, no matter their specific focus, are facilitated in the traditional peer-led, self-help model (peer-to-peer discussion following DBSA Support Group Guidelines). These dual diagnosis specific support groups can be important aspects of a person’s overall recovery plan.

An October 2000 study outlined in PubMed at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov:80/entrez/quer...> said this about treatment for dual diagnosis:

"Recovery from substance abuse and mental health disorders (dual-diagnosis) requires time, hard work and a broad array of coping skills. Empirical evidence has demonstrated the buffering role of social support in stressful situations. This paper investigates the associations among social support (including dual-recovery mutual aid), recovery status and personal well being in dually diagnosed individuals (N = 310) using cross-sectional self-report data. Persons with higher levels of support and greater participation in dual-recovery mutual aid reported less substance use and mental health distress and higher levels of well being. Participation in mutual aid was indirectly associated with recovery through perceived levels of support. The association between mutual aid and recovery held for dual-recovery groups but not for traditional, single-focus self-help groups."

Indeed, peer provided, mutual support can significantly enhance a dually diagnosed patient’s journey on their road to wellness.

Information for potential dual diagnosis support group participants...

What is dual diagnosis?

Dual diagnosis is the term used when a person has a mood disorder such as depression or bipolar disorder and a problem with alcohol or drugs. A person who has a dual diagnosis has two separate illnesses, and each illness needs its own treatment plan.

There is help and hope.

Mood disorders and alcohol/drug problems are both treatable illnesses. They are not moral weaknesses or character flaws. They can affect anyone, regardless of

age, ethnicity or economic background. Studies have shown that more than half of the people who have depression or bipolar disorder also use alcohol and/or drugs.

What is self-medication?

Sometimes people may use alcohol or drugs to help cover up or mask symptoms of a mood disorder. For example, if a person's mind is racing because of mania, a drink of alcohol may slow it down. If a person has intense sadness or hopelessness because of depression, a drug may help him or her feel happy or hopeful for a period of time. This "self-medication" may appear to help, but it actually makes things worse. After the temporary effects of the alcohol or drugs wear off, a person's symptoms are often worse than ever. Self-medication can cause a person's mood disorder to stay undiagnosed for a long time.

Other topics and questions will come up amongst the group members. You may not know the answer but that is okay. Hopefully you or another group member will know how to direct people to resources that can help. Some questions and topics that may emerge are

- Why is it important to treat both the mood disorder and the alcohol/drug use?
- Why is it important to stay clean and sober when getting treatment?
- Am I still clean and sober if I take medication?
- What are some signs of problem drinking/using?
- How do I know if I have a problem with alcohol or drugs?
- How can I stop drinking/using?
- How do alcohol/drug recovery groups work?
- What if I relapse?
- What else can I do to improve my health?

Many support group leaders provide passive resources or a listing of places to access more information. The following organizations may provide additional help. DBSA assumes no responsibility for the content or accuracy of the material/information they provide.

- Alcoholics Anonymous (212) 870-3400, www.aa.org
- Al-Anon and Alateen Family Groups, (888) 4 AL-ANON, www.al-anon.org
- Double Trouble in Recovery (DTR), (866) 836-7251, www.doubletroubleinrecovery.org
- Narcotics Anonymous, (818) 773-9999, www.na.org
- National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, www.ncadd.org
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, www.niaaa.nih.gov
- National Institute on Drug Abuse, www.nida.nih.gov
- Recovery, Inc., (312) 337-5661, www.recovery-inc.org
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, (800) 662-HELP, findtreatment.samhsa.gov



Depression and Bipolar
Support Alliance

DBSA Anytown

P O Box 1234
Anytown, ST 12345
(555) 555-5555

Appendix 4

Mission: To improve the lives of people living with mood disorders

May 18, 2005

Mr. Network Person
12345 Community Way
City, ST 98765

Dear Mr. Person,

Kindness is probably the most important thing that our depression and bipolar support group members are looking for when they come seeking our services. And it is kindness that guarantees our services remain available to this community.

“If it was not for the support that I received ... I probably would not be here today.” Words like these may remind you of how someone you care about was helped by a support group — or maybe how a close circle of supporters helped pull you through a difficult time in your life.

At DBSA Anytown, we know the services we provide, like our support groups, do more than provide comfort and guidance. *They save lives.*

As we have been providing kindness and support services to people affected by mood disorders in the Anytown community for 6 years, we are now asking for your support and kindness.

Often when you are asked for support, the requestor is looking for money. However, today we are hoping we can count on you to refer members of the community to our chapter.

Here are some of the services that we provide, that some of your contacts might find valuable:

- Weekly peer-led support groups for patients & family/friends of patients with depression or bipolar disorder.
- Educational programs twice per month on issues surrounding mood disorders.
- Regular social gatherings with patients and supporters associated with our chapter.
- Active advocacy efforts in our community and state that make a difference in the lives of constituents.
- A social network which plays a vital role in our wellness.

People you know can contact us through the information listed on this letterhead. Please share our information with them, and if possible, we would greatly appreciate it if you could share any referrals with us – so that we can reach out to them ourselves.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe, Chapter President



Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

“The members of my DBSA support group reached out to me, and made me realize that I was not alone. If not for the support that I received from this organization, I probably wouldn’t be here...”

--DBSA support group participant

Our Mission: *To improve the lives of people living with mood disorders.*

What is a DBSA Support Group?

- A caring, supportive group of peers
- An open, free, voluntary meeting
- An important step on the road to wellness

Who should attend a DBSA Support Group?

- People diagnosed with depression or bipolar disorder
- People who think they may have a mood disorder
- Supporters of a person with a mood disorder

You're Invited
to a local DBSA support group:

Day/Time: _____

Location: _____

Contact: _____

www.DBSAlliance.org

We've been there. We can help.