



Westcoast Community Resources Society

Board Orientation Folder

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Following is some information that you may find helpful if you are considering volunteering for the Westcoast Community Resources Society (WCRS) Board of Directors(BoD). Included are several appendices from our Policy Manual, the role of the WCRS BoD, general responsibilities of the Board members and an overview of our programs and services.

Application Form

All members in good standing are eligible to stand for Board membership. Directors are elected by vote for either a one or two year term, and shall retire from office at the annual general meeting when their successors shall be elected.

Any member interested in standing for Board membership must complete a Board application form, agree to and sign an Oath of Confidentiality and complete a Criminal Record Check. The application form is prefaced with the request that any member who has received counselling or residential services from the Society in the past twelve months, or whose immediate family member (spouse or child) has received services in that time frame, stand down and consider volunteering in a different capacity at this time. The application form then establishes the following:

- ✓ Availabilty for regular and committee meetings;
- ✓ Experience and skills that the member brings to the Board; and
- ✓ Experience and skills that the member wishes to acquire in his/her term in office.

Upon receipt of a completed application form, oath of confidentiality and criminal record check, the current Board will make a decision about the member's current suitability for the Board and inform the member of the decision.

Introduction to the WCRS

The WCRS was originally incorporated under the BC Society's Act as the 'Westcoast Women's Resources Society' on January 3rd, 1993. It was a grass-roots, non-profit charitable organization that formed in 1991 in response to community needs. The Society officially revised its Constitution, Purposes and Mission Statement and Name in November 2004. The mandate of the Society is to provide services and activities that promote equality, justice, and safety for all persons of the central west coast region of Vancouver Island.

The BC Society Act is the provincial Legislation that addresses activities of what is required by non-profit societies in BC. The Act provides clear parameters of what is required by non profit societies in BC, in order to be incorporated and registered with the province. The Act requires that the Society's members elect a governing body. This

governing body or the Board creates an organizational structure that identifies the roles and responsibilities of all participants.

The Society Act also provides the framework for Articles of Governance. The Board of WCRS is responsible for the development and monitoring of policy and must develop Articles of Governance; specific governing documents such as the Constitution (1-1#), Bylaws (1-2#), Mission Statement (2-3#), Statement of Principles (2-4#), and the Code of Ethics (2-5#).

WCRS is challenged to reconcile the traditional hierarchical structure of the Act with the feminist principles that offer a critical analysis and seek to address inequality, oppression, and hierarchical systems. While structuring governance within the framework of the Society Act, WCRS incorporates convictions about efficient and fair operations through the following:

- a) All member have an opportunity to contribute to the decision making process.*
- b) Authority is distributed by role responsibility and through clearly established expectations and accountabilities. Personnel are accountable for fulfilling role and task responsibilities within a framework of policy.*
- c) Policy is developed in consultation with those who are affected by it.*
- d) Leadership is carried out in a consultative and positive manner and personnel may hold both leadership and supportive roles, as situations require.*

Mission Statement

The WCRS provides responsive, safe and supportive services to individuals and families while supporting their right to explore options and make choices in all areas of their lives. We are committed to ending all forms of abuse including system power imbalances and family violence. In partnership with other services and resources we promote the equality, diversity and well being of all people in the west coast communities.

Value Statement

We equally value and support the empowerment of all women, children and youth. We believe that everybody deserves to have their basic needs met; and we define basic needs as food, safe shelter, clothing, medical and emotional care. We believe in education to promote healthy communication and the unlearning of racist, sexist and patriarchal behaviours and structures. We work towards healthy, non-violent communities, in which we honour and celebrate diversity and individuality. We believe healing is an individual process that thrives in honest, compassionate, respectful and inclusive communities.

Code of Ethics

Introduction

This Code of Ethics was developed by the Board and staff of the WCRS. It is the final element of four framework statements, and is meant to be considered in the context of the previous three elements:

- *Values Statement*
- *Mission Statement*
- *Statement of Feminism*

Purpose

This Code of Ethics is intended to provide guidance for Staff, Board and Volunteers, reflecting the Society's values and ethics as we work together and provide services.

Feminist Perspective

We operate within a feminist framework as outlined in Our Statement of Feminism.

Conduct

We conduct ourselves in a manner which addresses the physical and emotional safety concerns of women and children.

Integrity

We make a commitment to remain competent, current and aware in carrying out the responsibilities of our position.

We ensure that our own personal belief systems do not interfere with the right of women and children to make their own choices.

We ensure that the interests of other groups or individuals do not jeopardize our judgment, independence, competence, or our role as advocates.

We do not exploit relationships with people accessing our services, co-workers or the Society for personal gain of any kind, or for the gain of friends, relatives or associates.

Confidentiality

We maintain the confidentiality of all people who access our services. In cases of child abuse, children who witness violence, and potential or realized harm to self or others, only information required by law will be released. As much as possible in all other cases, we believe women and children have the right to control access to information about themselves.

We share information about clients with workers in other programs only with the client's agreement, and, optimally, with the client's participation.

Power Imbalances

Because we believe in open and inclusive processes, we are committed to addressing power imbalances in our work. We use many avenues, including:

- consensus processes;
- collective processes rather than hierarchical structures; and,
- respecting people's right to self-determination.

We recognize the inherent power imbalance in relationships between service providers and service users, and maintain clear boundaries to avoid the possibility of exploitation.

Relationships

With Service Users

Where we have overlapping relationships with service users, we take responsibility to monitor such relationships to ensure that neither party is subjected to potential harm. Sexual relationships with clients are considered harmful.

With Colleagues

We maintain respectful working relationships with colleagues, including co-workers and volunteers.

With Self

We are responsible for addressing our own needs and self-care.

We balance the need for self-care with our responsibilities to the Society and to those who access our services.

We remain self-aware and confront our own biases.

With Community

As opportunities arise, our choices and decisions reflect our commitment to a socially and economically healthy community.

Providing Service

Accessibility

We provide service without prejudice or discrimination to all women and children.

We try to be as accessible as possible, by considering factors such as:

- physical space;
- child care;
- translation into alternate languages and formats;
- using plain language;
- affordability;
- availability;
- location; and
- the needs of women and children in the isolated communities which we serve.

Client's Rights

We ensure that our clients are aware of their rights under the Society's policies and procedures and legal "Duty to Report" guidelines.

Referrals

We work within our competencies, and call on other resources to meet client and organizational needs when we do not have the necessary skills.

Our Statement of Feminism

Feminism is an evolving world view which both influences and reflects changes in society. While we all have our personal interpretation of feminism, this statement outlines and defines what feminism means to the Westcoast Women's Resources Society.

Feminism means:

1. Working to overcome systemic power imbalances and their resulting oppressions, to create a truly just and healthy world.
2. Embracing a holistic perspective that societal forces are all connected and impact on each other.
3. Valuing equality for all people, by promoting
 - women's opportunity to fully participate in society
 - women's voices, both speaking and being heard
 - women's full access to society's benefits.
4. Believing in the intrinsic worth of people.
5. Believing in the inherent rights of people
 - to have basic needs met
 - to have meaningful work
 - to grow as a person
 - to live without violence or the threat of violence.
6. Valuing diversity and every individual's experience.
7. Valuing feelings and the healthy expression of emotions.
8. Believing in the right of women to have reproductive freedom.
9. Encouraging women to define their own unique standards for a healthy body, mind and spirit.
10. Valuing women's contributions to family, home, community and society.



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Board of Directors Application Form

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Member Name _____

Home Phone _____ **Office/Cell Phone** _____

Mailing Address _____

Occupation _____

Are you able to commit a minimum of 2 hours per month to attend regular meetings? _____

Are you able to commit time as needed to participate with committees, society events and other society activities? _____

What skills do you possess which would benefit the society and the Board of Directors? _____

What skills do you hope to gain from your experience as a Westcoast Community Resources Society Director?

