Summary of Responses on Clubhouse Education Programs

A request for responses on the design of Clubhouse education programs was sent by the ICCD to training bases, the faculty, and the Advisory Council. Responses were received from over twenty Clubhouses. The various points of view expressed in these responses are summarized below. It should be noted and appreciated that, despite some controversy currently, the development of Clubhouse education programs has come a long way in fifteen years. In 1991, there was a presentation at a plenary session of that year's International Seminar on Clubhouse Supported education, and then such a program was a novelty.

There was unanimous agreement in the responses that a Clubhouse program promoting educational advancement for members is a necessary and vital Clubhouse service.

There was unanimous agreement that the objective of a Clubhouse education program should be to assist members in accessing and successfully utilizing adult community education facilities appropriate to each member's needs and aspirations, including literacy services, GED programs, disability services, schools, colleges, graduate schools, and other available resources.

There was unanimous agreement that clubhouses should provide an array of supports that give encouragement and recognition for educational efforts and achievements and that serve as a liaison for members with community facilities. These supports can occur during the Work-Ordered Day (WOD) or the Evening and Weekend program, as appropriate. Supports mentioned in the responses include:

- Assisting members in selecting and applying to schools and in obtaining financial aid.
- Visiting school and colleges with members and conferring with advisors, disability counselors, and teachers, as needed and appropriate.
- Operating a mentor system where each member student selects a staff worker as a liaison with their school.
- Tutoring members in school to assist them with their studies.
- Establishing a Clubhouse library with educational materials, school catalogs, and computer tutorials.
- Keeping records on educational pursuits and accomplishments of members.
- Publishing a Clubhouse newsletter for members who are students.
- Operating an evening support group for members in schools.
- Conducting educational dinner meetings.
- Having celebrations of graduations and educational achievements.
- Centering educational supports in a Clubhouse unit where members and staff work together to provide the above services.

Disagreement and differing views were expressed in the responses on the validity and function of educational classes within the Clubhouse. Mostly these differences pertain to

the affect of such classes on the WOD and on their relationship to the use of community facilities. A summary of these differences follows:

Views favorable to in-house classes:
- In-house classes build self-confidence in handling studies and managing in a classroom setting which boosts the likelihood that members will undertake and succeed at studies in community facilities.
- Some members who find studies at community facilities too stressful will participate in Clubhouse classes where there is less stress and where teaching and learning is nourished by Clubhouse relationships. This participation can then serve as a stepping stone to undertaking studies at community facilities.
- In rural areas where there is minimal availability of community facilities, in-house classes provide the only educational resource for some members.
- Classes in computer literacy are particularly significant for members in today's world and particularly relevant to the WOD as much Clubhouse work entails using computers.
- In-house classes strengthen the WOD by boosting the need to engage new and less involved members in order to replace those in classes.
- In Clubhouses where the WOD is well developed and also in large Clubhouses, classes can be held without damaging the WOD.
- For some members, classes are the prime reason for attending the Clubhouse and thereby gaining the support of Clubhouse relationships.
- Classes can be held during the Evening and Weekend program without affecting the WOD.

Views against in-house classes:
- In-house classes retard the use of community facilities by giving the message that members lack the capacity for undertaking community studies.
- In-house classes promote stigma by placing members in settings that are segregated from and inferior to normal schools.
- Clubhouses are not qualified to be schools.
- In-house classes provide sheltered education that is tantamount to sheltered workshops or to paying members for working in the Clubhouse.
- Especially in new Clubhouses, small Clubhouses, and Clubhouses with a poorly developed WOD, in-house classes damage the WOD by removing members from the work setting.
- Training bases need to gear their training so as to differentiate between classes in their own Clubhouse and the impact of classes on the WOD in the Clubhouses being trained.
- Some Clubhouses, particularly new Clubhouses, use classes to attract members, to obtain funding, or to provide activities that fill up the day without a focus on preparing members for community facilities.
- Some members participate in in-house classes for reasons other than preparing for studies at community facilities.

A number of responses stressed the importance of flexibility in developing the design of education programs. In-house classes could be helpful in some situations and not in others. If in-house classes are damaging the WOD, then the WOD needs to be strengthened. Each Clubhouse needs to develop the design that works best for them. Diversity in education programs is good. Training bases and ICCD faculty need to be sensitive to the differences in Clubhouse situations. The Clubhouse network should not get stuck in a debate over whether or not to have in-house classes but seek the guidance of underlying principles.

Some responses referred to the Standards or on how to develop guiding principles for education programs. Again, there were differences. There were proposals to expand the current education Standard and formulate a more prescriptive design. Clubhouses with well developed education programs could be used in standardizing a design for other Clubhouses. Rather than a prescriptive formulation, there could be a statement of value. Rather than an expansion of the Standards, there could be the development of Education Guidelines.