

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS

Belonging Together/Programs

FOCUS	☒ Internal ☒ External
VOLUNTEER BASE	☒ General corps membership ☒ External volunteers ☐ Youth ☐ Music sections ☐ Women's ministries ☒ Seniors' ministries ☐ Social mission
TARGET POPULATION	☐ Seniors ☐ Youth ☐ People with disabilities ☒ Caregivers ☐ New Canadians ☐ Social mission ☐ Parents of babies and toddlers

Program description:

Strength for the Caregiving Soul is a five-week self-help and support group series designed for unpaid caregivers supporting loved ones who are elderly, chronically ill, disabled or palliative. Through facilitated peer connection and guest-led learning opportunities, the program aims to reduce caregiver isolation, provide encouragement and offer pathways to community support.

What are the intended program outcomes?

Goals include:

- To provide a safe space for caregivers to connect with one another.
- To offer a structured support group that reduces isolation and emotional fatigue.
- To help caregivers access practical strategies and community resources.
- To facilitate conversations about grief, resilience and finding joy in caregiving.
- To empower caregivers to prioritize self-care without guilt.
- To introduce participants to additional Salvation Army ministries and community partnerships.

How will these outcomes be evaluated?

- Participant attendance and retention over the five-week series.
- Participant feedback through simple evaluation forms.
- Informal feedback during group discussions.
- Requests to continue in ongoing caregiver support groups.
- Increased referrals to community resources or Salvation Army programs.
- Participants reporting reduced feelings of isolation or stress.



What procedures are required to set up this program?

- Recruit a facilitator from corps or community staff to coordinate the group sessions.
- Ensure all facilitators and volunteers complete The Salvation Army ministry worker screening process.
- Connect with local professionals or organizations to lead the educational components (e.g., grief counsellors, therapists, health-care agencies, respite co-ordinators).
- Select a quiet and accessible location for in-person sessions (e.g., corps fellowship room).
- Consider offering a virtual option for accessibility and caregiver convenience.
- Promote the program through corps bulletins, local service providers and social media.
- Print or prepare caregiver support materials, contact info sheets and session outlines.
- Confirm guest speakers for each themed week.

What procedure is required to operate this event?

The facilitators guide the group and moderate peer discussion in a support and self-help model:

- Guest speakers from external agencies lead educational topics during relevant sessions.
- Provide a welcoming space with refreshments and opportunity for informal connection.
- Share printed resource sheets, local contact lists and follow-up group options.
- Gather feedback at the conclusion of the program to guide future offerings.

Sample weekly themes and guest speakers:

Week 1: Self-Care for the Caregiver

Topic: Facilitated discussion on balancing personal well-being with caregiving responsibilities.

Guest speaker optional.

Week 2: Managing Stressful Situations

Topic: Recognizing signs of caregiver stress and building coping strategies.

Suggested guest speaker: registered social worker or mental health educator.

Week 3: Understanding Grief and Loss

Topic: Navigating anticipatory grief, ambiguous loss and long-term grief.

Suggested guest speaker: grief counsellor, social worker or pastor.

Week 4: Making the Most of Each Day

Topic: Meaningful engagement and creating joy in the caregiving journey

Suggested guest speaker: recreation therapist or spiritual care provider.

Week 5: What to Do When You Don't Know What to Do

Topic: Accessing community supports and planning ahead.

Suggested guest speaker: community care co-ordinator or home care agency representative.

Note: Educational content should be delivered by trained professionals. The Salvation Army's role is to facilitate support and connection, not provide therapeutic or clinical services.

Are there financial costs attached to providing this event?

- Light refreshments (coffee, tea, snacks).
- Printing of flyers, handouts and resource lists.
- Honorariums for guest speakers, if applicable.
- Optional: take-home wellness kits, journals or printed caregiver booklets.
- Optional: childcare support if offered during sessions.

You may wish to charge a small fee or collect donations to help offset expenses.

What physical resources will I require?

- A quiet, accessible meeting space with chairs and a refreshment table.
- Basic stationary (name tags, pens, notepads).
- Printed support materials and evaluation forms.
- Optional: projector or laptop for guest presentations.
- Optional: access to Zoom or Teams for hybrid delivery.

Would any additional training be necessary for volunteers with this event?

Yes. All volunteers and facilitators must:

- Complete the ministry worker screening process.
- Understand the role of a peer support facilitator, not a counsellor.
- Be trained in basic group facilitation and active listening.
- Know when and how to refer participants to professional or emergency support.

For more information:

For additional guidance, resources or support in planning your program, please contact the community mission department at territorial headquarters for sample materials, best practices and consultation on outreach strategy.