



## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE COMPEER PROGRAM

### **WHAT IS THE COMPEER PROGRAM**

“Compeer” means a companion who is also a peer or equal. Loneliness, failure, fear and loss of self-esteem are universal experiences of those who suffer from a mental illness. A caring friend can help restore joy and hope to a life that is often empty of both. Compeer is a non-profit program which matches caring, sensitive, and trained volunteers with mental health service recipients in one-to-one friendship relationships, as well as groups of persons in residential or outpatient settings..

### **WHO ARE COMPEER VOLUNTEERS**

Compeer volunteers are individuals of all ages, walks of life, races, and religions who enjoy companionship and helping people. Many of them have had experiences with loneliness and difficult times in their own lives, which enables them to bring a special understanding to the Compeer relationship. They are screened, trained, and matched by Compeer and the referring therapists. The volunteers must also submit references to help assure reliability and consistency.

### **WHAT DO THE VOLUNTEERS AND FRIENDS DO TOGETHER**

They agree to get together for four hours a month, for at least one year, to participate in activities they both enjoy doing. Some possibilities include:

eating out      movies      shopping      museums      visiting at each other's homes  
plays      walking      concerts      playing cards!      games  
sporting events

In addition to having fun together, the volunteer may be able to advocate on behalf of their friend concerning housing, disabilities, etc. The volunteer is not a therapist but a friend who becomes a helpful part of the mental health team.

### **HOW DO I GET A COMPEER VOLUNTEER**

Anyone currently involved in mental health therapy (in a hospital, day treatment program, mental health clinic, rehabilitation program or with a private practitioner) can request a referral to Compeer from his/ her mental health professional. Compeer will then make every effort to arrange a volunteer as quickly as possible. For more information, please call Compeer Helena: 406-457-7319