

Developing and Sustaining the Voice of the Client Core of Santa Cruz

- First group met in Spring 2010: About forty consumers met to discuss the grant application beginnings. We were asked for input about what a potential Respite House should look like. The grant writer, Yana Jacobs, is Program Manager of Adult Mental Health Services in Santa Cruz.
- Next meeting was in Fall 2010: We got the grant, discussed its basic functions, and spoke about the formation of the Client Core, which is an advisory Client board made of 100% consumers. A list of 33 Core members was established. The meeting was held on camera by Community Television. Here's the link:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbSHO14575k>
- The Client Core was formed to establish the House rules, location, name, and all else related to how the house will exist. The Client Core was also created to develop and strengthen the Consumer voice in Santa Cruz.
- For the past six months the Client Core has met weekly. On average there are 13 present at these meetings.
- The Client Core is slowly transitioning into expanded advocacy. Members have attended Local Mental Health Board meetings, Board of Supervisor meetings, and Mental Health Client Action Network (MHCAN), Santa Cruz's drop in center, board meetings. Client Core members have also joined the MHCAN board to shape its process.
- With Respite House coming to Santa Cruz, Clients have found a voice and the community is excited about House outreach. The country is watching. There is new life burgeoning in Santa Cruz.