

# SUPPORT GROUPS

## What can I do in my area to make a difference?

**We hear this question over and over again. One of the things you may want to consider is starting a support group, or hosting a family meeting.**

Outreach, education, support, hope...all of these things, and many more are accomplished through local support group meetings. We need our CVSA members to take a more pro-active approach in assisting ourselves, the medical community, and the countless people suffering from CVS. One way to do this is to host a support meeting in your area, a meeting where other sufferers and families of a sufferer can come and learn from each other, and offer comfort to each other.

It may seem overwhelming when you first make that commitment to take on hosting a support meeting, but it is not as hard as it may seem. With the following steps as a guideline, we think you will find the payoff is worth all you put into it! Anyone can host a meeting!



Cyclic Vomiting Syndrome Association  
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- **Step one:** If you are even contemplating having a meeting in your area, please contact Judy Babiasz, Program Director at the CVSA Milwaukee home office. We will provide the information and support you will need to put on a successful meeting.
- **Step two:** If your group is small, (many are small in the beginning stages), and your home can accommodate it, by all means have it in your home. If your group is larger, you will need to locate a reasonable meeting place. Contact your local school, hotels, restaurants, churches, or civic groups (Moose, Elk's, YMCA, etc.). See if they would be willing to donate the use of a room for the event. Most of the time you will find that such requests, along with the information that CVSA is a non-profit support group, are met with very favorable responses and you may receive a reduced rental fee, or possibly even a room free-of-charge! Approach your local bakeries, coffee houses, bagel shops, or area restaurants for a donation of snack items and beverages. Home baked snacks work well also!
- **Step three:** The invitations: Contact Judy Babiasz once you have obtained your meeting locations and times. She can assist you by helping to compose a postcard or flyer to send to the membership in your area. Judy will assist with mailing lists, labeling, and postage for the mailings.
- **Step four:** Once the invitations have been sent, time moves rather quickly. Below are some things you will want to take care of as the meeting date approaches. It all goes quickly, but it is amazingly easy to host a local support meeting!
  - If you are renting or "borrowing" a meeting place other than your home, double check that the room you requested for the meeting is on reserve for you and anything you requested from them is being honored.
  - As RSVP's come in, keep track of how many are attending.
  - Have directions readily available to give over the phone or mail to attendees if requested.
  - Double check on food and beverage promises.
  - Make sure you have received general information handouts from CVSA to have for your attendees. (CVSA will provide brochures along with other general information handouts for your meeting.)

- Have a sign in sheet ready when attendees walk in the door: Ask for their name, mailing address, phone, and an e-mail address. This will make it easier for future contact!
- And have fun!! The rewards of these meetings are unimaginable. To be able to sit in a room with another CVS family or patient is so overwhelming at times it is hard to put that feeling into words.

Hosting a meeting is one of the most positive and satisfying things we can do to help those suffering. Whether it is our child, spouse, friend, or even ourselves. We constantly hear how isolated one feels in dealing with this monster.... we hear about the fear and anger that the parents or the spouse sometimes feel in our inability to control this “thing” that has taken over our lives. This is one small, but gratifying, way for us to take back some measure of control – networking with others going through what you are is paramount to this quest. And you may even make some new friends!

If you are interested in hosting a meeting – large or small – contact CVSA today. Just think how much it would mean to share your ways of coping, as well as your fears with others going through exactly what you are.

## Some tips for a successful support group meeting

- Name tags that are color coordinated. For example: red for CVS sufferers, blue for caregivers/family/friends. It will help identify “who is who”.
- Medium sized notepads/pens. You will be surprised at how many will forget to bring paper and a pen!
- Folders with all of the handouts. Have some folders made up for those who have not received any official information from CVSA yet, along with having some additional handouts for attendees to take.
- 3x5 card for collecting information and guest book for sign-in near the door. Have a sign-in table so each person can sign the guest book, as well as fill in a card for future contact.
- Volunteer babysitters- What a life saver! They can make the difference in a parent being able to take an active part in the meeting itself.
- Start a support group database. This will make it easier to manage your group as the numbers grow. When collecting contact information, be sure to ask for an email address.

## Get Started...

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