

# Ruby Rogers Center

*A social club and support center run for  
and by people in mental health recovery*

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## Summary

The Ruby Rogers Center is a pioneering program established in 1985 by a group of people led by Judi Chamberlain and Dr. Dan Fisher who were dissatisfied with existing options for psychiatric care and support. Their vision was to create a cooperative center separate from existing mental health services where people could come and offer each other support. The center was also conceived as a base for a variety of advocacy activities.

Later, the center was named after Ruby Rogers, the woman who's court case against the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health (DMH) established the legal right of "people in recovery" to refuse treatment. The Rogers Decision helped establish the principle of each person's right to control his or her own psychiatric destiny.

Since 1999, administrative and management support for the Ruby Rogers Center has been provided by the Center House Division of Bay Cove Human Services. This support has included administration of the DMH contract that provides the primary financial support for the Ruby Rogers Center, but the Center remains self-governing with its own corporation and board of directors. The Center has only one full-time staff member (its Program Director) and utilizes flexible part-time staffing provided by members of the Center.

## Services Provided

Today the Ruby Rogers Center is located in an attractive store-front space at 71 Union Square, Somerville. It is open every day of the year and provides a variety of support, personal development and recreational activities.



*The Ruby Rogers Center is located in a street level storefront near public transportation in the Union Square section of Somerville.*

Specifically, the program offers the following services to its members:

- A food pantry and open kitchen where members can prepare meals
- Personal support and advocacy assistance
- Social and recreational activities, such as parties and outings
- An active group program, with groups chosen by members, with the following sample offerings:

*Support Groups* – The Center tries to have at least three to four groups per week.

*Recovery Group* – Meets every Sunday upstairs in the loft.

*Swim group* – Takes place at the local indoor pool.

*General Meeting* – Occurs every Wednesday at 1:00pm.

*Activity meeting* – Takes place at least three times per month on different times and days.

*Game groups* – Happens on any given day.

*Women's group* – Held every Sunday.

## Homeless Empowerment Advisory Project

The Homeless Empowerment Advisory Project (HEAP) was developed by the Ruby Rogers Center in 1993, and is supported by the same DMH contract that supports the Center. HEAP is based on the belief that people who are homeless and psychiatrically labeled can control their own destiny. The project is made up of

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“people in recovery” from programs overseen by the Homeless Services Unit of the Metro Boston office of the DMH, and People in Recovery from the Ruby Rogers Center.

HEAP represents the residents of Metro Boston Area transitional housing programs and those served by the Homeless Outreach Team, all of whom have shared in the experience of homelessness and mental illness. The mission of HEAP is to be a strong voice for the aforementioned residents, developing policies and advocating for resources that truly meet their needs. HEAP advisory board members meet weekly, and engage in a variety of education and advocacy activities at Transitional Housing Programs. Board members train and support residents to be informed self-advocates, and help them transition to permanent community housing. HEAP also organizes recreational activities and outings open to all transitional housing residents. *To contact the HEAP program, telephone: (617) 929-5255.*

### **Accessing Services**

The Ruby Rogers Center is a member-run organization. The Center is open to anyone in recovery who could benefit from the Center's services. Members establish their own standards of behavior.

People are encouraged to apply directly to the Program Director, but referrals are also accepted from others outside the Center. The Director at Ruby Rogers and other members consider applications based upon each person's ability to utilize the Center's services. Members are encouraged to maintain other supports (such as therapy or medication) which will enable them to fully participate in the Center.

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*For more information about the Ruby Rogers Center, please contact George Enos, Program Director at (617) 625-9933; fax (617) 625-8374*



**Ruby Rogers Center**  
71 Union Square  
Somerville, MA 02114

