



MOOD WALKS



Youth in Transition

Volunteer Guide and Application

MOOD WALKS

Youth in Transition

Mood Walks promotes both physical and mental wellness by reducing barriers and creating new opportunities for young people to be physically active and get outside!

During the 2016 Hiking season, 20 organizations across the province, working in collaboration with community partners and volunteers in both urban and rural settings, will receive training and support to launch a 10-week walking program for young people between the ages of 13 and 24 who are at risk of, or experiencing, mental health issues.

“We learned from each other, we admired what nature had to offer, we felt the wind in our hair, the rain and snow on our noses, and the sunshine on our skin. We breathed fresh air, and we were physically active.”

*Mood Walks Participant
2014*

Regular physical activity can have significant positive effects in preventing chronic physical conditions, supporting recovery and preventing mental illness. However, research shows that young people tend to become less physically active as they enter their teen years. This life stage is also typically a period of many “transitions” – from teenager to young adult, from high school to post secondary, from living at home to living away.

All of these changes tend to be accompanied by greater levels of stress, higher prevalence of substance use, as well as the emergence of mental health issues. Hiking combines physical activity with

exposure to the natural environment; two elements which have proven benefits in promoting mental wellness and recovery from mental illness.

Mood Walks will actively facilitate the development of new volunteer opportunities within participating social service agencies, local hiking clubs, conservation areas and other green spaces both urban and rural, post-secondary institutions and community organizations to create opportunities for capacity building and long-term sustainability. All Mood Walks participants will receive Safe Hiker training, and 20 people from across all Mood Walks sites will have the opportunity to be trained as Safe Hiker Instructors and/or Certified Hike Leaders.

Interested in becoming a volunteer? Read on to find out how you could benefit by participating in the Mood Walks project!



Mood Walks is an initiative of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario, in partnership with Hike Ontario and Conservation Ontario, with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

BENEFITS & SUPPORT

Walking groups are valuable tools for mental health service providers, benefitting clients, families, staff, organizations, and communities. Your expertise, resources, and knowledge about your community, the natural environment or hiking could be of great benefit to a Mood Walks group!

Volunteer benefits and support may include:

- **Introducing** young people and families to conservation, hiking, trail associations and outreach activities
- **Raising Awareness** and increasing participation in physical activity
- **New Relationships** with local social service agencies, community organizations, Hike Ontario, Conservation Ontario, and the Canadian Mental Health Association
- Highlighting the **Health Benefits** of conservation areas, parks and green spaces for all
- Opportunity to attend **Safe Hiker Training** with additional opportunities for **Safe Hiker Instructor** and **Hike Leader Certification Training**
- Access to the **Mood Walks Website** for additional resources and connections to the Mood Walks community
- **Mood Walks Newsletters** that volunteers will be invited to contribute to and share their stories!
- Education, Training and Support **Webinars** throughout the project
- **2-Day Leadership Retreat** for key partners, lead agency staff, and selected volunteers for relationship building and skill development
- Support from a **Project Manager**
- Peer leadership opportunities
- A **Mood Walks Summit** to exchange knowledge and celebrate our successes!

SUPPORT FROM LEAD ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to being responsible for hosting Mood Walks groups, Lead Organizations will also provide participating volunteers with guidance and support about engaging with youth who are at risk or experiencing mental health issues.

You will not be expected to be an expert in mental health to be part of Mood Walks, although your appreciation of mental health issues will likely increase as part of the project!

BE A MOOD WALKS VOLUNTEER!

Mood Walks groups will be led by local community organizations that serve youth in transition. **Lead Organizations** assume all leadership and responsibility for their group, especially regarding interactions with participants who may be experiencing mental health issues. For more information about hosting a Mood Walks program, download our Lead Organization Application Package at www.moodwalks.ca.

Local hiking clubs, parks and conservation areas, urban green space initiatives, schools, and other community partners will also be supported in establishing lasting relationships with community agencies participating in Mood Walks. What these partnerships look like may vary from site to site as all partners work together to determine the best way to utilize each other's strengths while respecting each partner's available time and resources.

Here are some ways we envision you might volunteer or support a Mood Walks group:

- Contribute your hiking knowledge and skills as a volunteer hike leader.
- Share your knowledge of local green spaces and hiking trails — recommend a hiking route, or volunteer your time to pre-walk a trail.
- Attend walks as a supportive volunteer.
- Provide transportation — help Mood Walks participants get to and from hiking trails.
- Help an organization evaluate the success of their Mood Walks group.
- Spread the word — if you are social media-savvy, you could promote the Mood Walks group using your website or Twitter account.

If you're not sure where to start, Mood Walks can help you find a volunteer opportunity!

PROVIDING FEEDBACK

We are interested in your feedback about being part of Mood Walks every step of the way. You can reach the Project Manager at jasmine@moodwalks.ca at any point with questions, comments, or suggestions.

In the fall of 2016, you will be contacted to provide some feedback about your experience as part of Mood Walks. You will be asked about:

- Your role as part of a Mood Walks group
- Your feedback regarding Mood Walks resources
- The success of volunteer opportunities
- Benefits of participation
- Your overall impression of the project

TIMELINE & KEY DATES	
Deadline for Expressions of Interest (Lead Organizations)	Monday November 30, 2015
Announcement of Mood Walks sites	December 2015
2-Day Hike Leadership Retreat	March 2016
Mood Walks! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups running! • Attend teleconferences and webinars • Receive newsletters • Attend speaker series and events 	May – October 2016
Give feedback about your Mood Walks experience	October 2016
Mood Walks Summit	February 2017

WHO CAN BE A VOLUNTEER?



Any individual or student that can offer support to a Mood Walks program is welcome to apply!

I am interested BUT...

Not sure **how** you might fit with this project? Share concerns or questions by contacting:

jasmine@moodwalks.ca

VOLUNTEER WITH A MOOD WALKS GROUP!

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

PERSONAL INFORMATION

First Name:		Last Name:	
Phone:	Email:		
Organization or School Affiliation (If Any):			
Mailing Address:			
City:		Province:	Postal Code:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is your area of interest (professional or studies)?

If required, are you willing and/or able to obtain:

- Criminal Record Check
- Vulnerable Sector Check

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Describe the resources and/or expertise that you hope to contribute:

WHAT SUPPORTS WOULD YOU NEED?

What supports can Mood Walks provide to you?

VOLUNTEER WITH A MOOD WALKS GROUP! EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

STATEMENTS OF CAPACITY AND INTENT

Outcomes: What do you anticipate will be the benefits of volunteering with Mood Walks? Why do you want to participate?

Barriers and Challenges: Describe any anticipated barriers or challenges to volunteering with a Mood Walks group.

Send your Expression of Interest to:

Jasmine Ferreira

Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario

180 Dundas Street West, Suite 2301

Toronto, ON M5G 1Z8

Fax: 416-977-2813 **Email:** jasmine@moodwalks.ca

Online Submissions

Expressions of Interest may also be submitted online at:

www.moodwalks.ca/about-mood-walks/volunteer-opportunities

Mood Walks sites will be announced in December 2015.

If there is not a Mood Walks for Youth in Transition group near you, you are still encouraged to make use of the free online resources provided by Mood Walks and to seek out volunteer opportunities with a local mental health agency, hiking club or conservation area.

For information about potential partners in your area, email jasmine@moodwalks.ca.

Stay in touch!

Sign up to receive news and information about the project at moodwalks.ca.