Long-term recovery from alcoholism and drug addiction is an ongoing life process. Millions of individuals and family members have found mutual aid/support groups (also known as self-help groups) to be extremely helpful in achieving and maintaining long-term recovery.

Mutual-aid support groups play a vital role in alcohol and drug addiction recovery in the United States and around the world. And, research has consistently and clearly demonstrated that active involvement in mutual aid/support groups significantly improves a persons chances of long-term recovery.

Last year alone, more than 5,000,000 people across the nation attended mutual aid/support groups. The two best known mutual aid/support groups are Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Al-Anon Family Groups.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), co-founded in 1944 by Bill Wilson, a stockbroker from New York City, and Dr. Robert Smith, a physician from Akron, OH, now estimates it has more than 64,000 groups and an estimated membership of more than 1.4 million members in the U.S. and Canada. Worldwide, AA has more than 116,000 groups and an estimated membership of 2.1 million.

"In the end, Bill Wilson's alcoholism proved *not to be the tragic undoing* of this brilliant and loving couple, but rather the *beginning* of two of the twentieth century's most important social and spiritual movements--**Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) and Al-Anon Family Groups." -** From "When Love is Not Enough--The Lois Wilson Story" viewer's guide

Al-Anon Family Groups, established in 1951, was co-founded by Lois Wilson (wife of Bill Wilson) and Anne Smith (wife of Dr. Bob Smith) and now estimates it has more than 16,000 Al-Anon and Alateeen groups and an estimated membership of more than 215,000 in the U.S. and Canada.

Since AA started in 1935 and Al-Anon in 1951, there has been a dramatic growth in the number of mutual aid/self-help groups addressing a wide variety of needs of people coping with alcoholism and drug addiction, as well as many other types of problems: food, sex, gambling and a range of mental health issues.

Those who attend mutual aid/support groups often find a deep sense of fit--a sense of finally discovering and connecting to the whole of which one is a part. Within this community of like-minded individuals, mutual aid/support groups help you take responsibility for your alcohol and drug problems and for your recovery.

Says William L. White, a noted recovery advocate, *"The recovery community is a place where shared pain and hope can be woven by its members into life-saving stories whose mutual*

exchange is more akin to communion than communication. This sanctuary of the estranged fills spiritual as well as physical space. It is a place of refuge, refreshment and renewal. It is a place that defies commercialization--a place whose most important assets are not for sale."

Mutual aid groups are nonprofessional and include members who share the same problem and voluntarily support one another. Mutual aid groups do not provide treatment but provide social, emotional and informational support focused on taking responsibility for their alcohol and drug problems and their sustained health, wellness, and recovery.

For some groups, meetings can be **"open"--**anyone can attend or **"closed"--**attendance is limited to people who want to stop drinking or using drugs.

The following represents only a partial list of some of the most widely available mutual aid/self help support groups:

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) www.aa.org

An international fellowship of men and women who come together to share their experience, strength and hope with the purpose of staying sober and helping other alcoholics to achieve sobriety. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.

Alcoholicos Anonimos (AA) www.aa.org/lang/sp/subpage.cfm

Alcoholics Anonymous' outreach and support for speakers of Spanish.

Al-Anon/ALATEEN www.al-anon.alateen.org

Whether the person you are concerned about is still drinking or not, Al-Anon/Alateen offers hope and recovery to all people affected by the alcoholism of a loved one or friend. Support for friends and families.

Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA) www.adultchildren.org

Adult Children of Alcoholics is an anonymous Twelve Step for people who grew up in an alcoholic or otherwise dysfunctional home. We meet in a mutually respectful, safe environment and acknowledge our common experiences. We discover how childhood affected us in the past and influences us in the present.

Cocaine Anonymous (CA) www.ca.org

A fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other so that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from their addiction; the primary purpose is to stay free from cocaine and all other mind-altering substances, and to help others achieve the same freedom.

Crystal Meth Anonymous www.crystalmeth.org

Crystal Meth Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience,

strength and hope with each other, so they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from addiction to crystal meth. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using.

Dual Recovery Anonymous www.draonline.org

An independent, twelve-step, self-help organization for people with a dual diagnosis of chemical dependence and an emotional or psychiatric illness. Dual Recovery addresses how both illnesses affect all areas of life.

Marijuana Anonymous (MA) www.marijuana-anonymous.org

Marijuana Anonymous is a 12-Step fellowship that addresses the common problem of marijuana addiction. There are in-person and online meetings. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using marijuana.

Narcotics Anonymous (NA) www.na.org

NA is a fellowship of men and women who come together for the purpose of sharing their recovery from drug abuse. NA members are working together in a spirit of unity and cooperation to carry their message of recovery. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using.

Nar-Anon Family Groups (Nar-Anon) www.nar-anon.org

Nar-Anon is a twelve-step program designed to help relatives and friends of addicts recover from the effects of living with an addicted relative or friend.

Nicotine Anonymous www.nicotine-anonymous.org

Nicotine Anonymous is a 12 Step Fellowship of people helping each other live nicotine-free lives. Nicotine Anonymous welcomes all those seeking freedom from nicotine addiction, including those using cessation programs and nicotine withdrawal aids.