



PORTAGE

FREEDOM FROM ADDICTION

RESIDENT'S
MANUAL
RESIDENTIAL CENTRES
QUÉBEC





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Message from the Executive Director



A warm welcome to the Portage family.

The Portage Program has been in existence by and for people like you for over 40 years.

Since the first Portage centre was opened on February 14, 1973, tens of thousands of people suffering from substance abuse have come to Portage to take back control of their lives and overcome their addiction issues.

At Portage, the individual's needs are the basis of the treatment plan. You will be an active partner in designing your rehabilitation program.

This manual explains how the Portage Program works. It was written by a team of residents and Portage staff members to serve as a guide to all newcomers to the program.

There is a Residents' Committee at Portage, which is committed to ensuring that your concerns are heard and addressed. The mandate of the committee is to inform residents about their rights and obligations, to measure the degree of satisfaction of the services provided by Portage, and to promote the continuous improvement of the quality of residents' living conditions. The committee can also support you, should you wish to make a complaint.

Remember that all Portage staff members, administrators, as well as your fellow residents are here to support you on your journey to recovery.

"You alone can do it, but you cannot do it alone."

Best wishes,

Peter Vamos
Executive Director

A bit of history

Portage's first facility in Prévost, in the Laurentians, opened its doors on Valentine's Day in 1973. A small group of Montrealers who were trained at DAYTOP Village, a therapeutic community in New York State, braved the Québec winter cold to open the centre and begin offering residential rehabilitation treatment to people suffering from substance abuse.

February 14 has become enshrined in Portage's tradition as Metamorphosis Day. On this day, all Portage facilities celebrate the transformation that our residents experience at Portage. It is a very special celebration and we hope you will have the opportunity to participate in it.

Since that fateful day in 1973, tens of thousands of people such as yourself have passed through our doors at the various Portage facilities across Canada, on their way to recovery.

Mission

Portage fosters the strengths and skills of substance-dependent persons to enable them, through comprehensive and cost-effective interventions based on the therapeutic community approach, to live lives of sobriety, filled with dignity, self-respect, and accomplishment.

Approach

Portage's treatment approach is based on a case-managed therapeutic community model with core self-help principles. The Portage environment ensures the physical and psychological safety of program participants and the approach provides a supportive and facilitative milieu conducive to personal development. Portage believes that the inherent strengths of the residents are the basis for recovery.

Staff members

Portage programs are staffed by interdisciplinary teams. All staff members are committed to supporting the residents' growth and development. They adhere to a strict code of practices and ethics and provide the highest quality of care.



Life in the community

By entering the therapeutic community, you are joining the Portage *family*. You will share your daily life with people who are experiencing similar problems and who have chosen to help each other.

At Portage, you will live this journey with residents and staff members of different ethnic groups, religions, and social backgrounds.

Living within a community requires that residents assume certain responsibilities and respect certain rules. These rules have been put in place to ensure your safety and well-being and to help you make the most of your Portage experience and address your substance abuse issues. These rules help to ensure that all residents feel completely safe and free from intimidation, harassment, and exploitation of any sort.

The three cardinal rules to ensure all residents' safety are:

- **No use of drugs, alcohol, or any other non-prescribed drug or medication;**
- **No sexual activity between residents;**
- **No threats or physical or verbal violence.**

Failure to comply with these rules might compel Portage to recommend a different form of treatment or, if necessary, to terminate your treatment.

Strategic emphasis on security

Portage puts an important emphasis on the security of residents, employees, and informational assets as it seeks to continuously improve integrated quality management practices and the proactive management of risk.

Portage recognises that risks and errors are possible in the rendering of services and has therefore fostered an open environment in which one can report errors and near-errors without fear of reprimand or disciplinary measure.

Your responsibilities

We believe that you can succeed in your rehabilitation and we will continuously encourage you to make the necessary efforts. Our goal is to enable you to help yourself while supporting others in their efforts to help themselves. At Portage, we take the saying “*I am my brother’s keeper*” seriously.

During your stay at Portage you will often hear the expression “self-help”. This means that you came here to help yourself, and that you are responsible to help others and to accept the help they offer to you.

Your rights

As a resident at Portage, you have the same rights as any other resident at any other rehabilitation centre. The *Québec Act on Health and Social Services* (L.R.Q. chapter S-4.2) stipulates that you have the following rights accorded by law:

- the right to be informed of existing services, where you may receive such services and how to access them;
- the right to be informed of your state of health and well-being, of possible solutions and of risks and consequences generally associated with the solutions;
- the right to adequate and quality services of a human, scientific and social nature provided in a continuous, personalised and safe manner;
- the right to choose the professional or institution where such services are provided;
- the right to consent to or to refuse care;
- the right to receive aid in case of emergency;
- the right to participate in the decisions that concern your state of health and well-being, including the right to participate in the development and review of your treatment plan;
- the right for English-speaking clients to receive services in English inasmuch as there is a provision for such services in the Regional program of accessibility;
- the right to be accompanied and assisted when you request a service or information;
- the right to be informed on the procedure of examination of complaints, of the existence of Portage’s local Service Quality and Complaints Commissioner and of the most effective way to contact him;
- the right to recourse when in your opinion a misdeed has been committed and that your rights have been infringed upon;
- the right to consult your file according to the procedure governing case file management, and to include any information you consider important.

Other rights are included in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and the *Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*. The Portage family also recognises the following rights within the scope of your program:

- the right to quality and adequate services provided with continuity and in a personalised and safe manner;
- the right to be informed of the treatment intervention within the scope of your treatment, as well as any obligation directly linked to your voluntary admission within the Portage community;
- the right to confidentiality;*
- the right not to be exploited or unduly restrained, and if there is restraint, that it be by consensus and in the interest of the whole community;
- the right to send and receive mail that will remain private;
- the right to have visitors and the right to outings accompanied or alone, according to the terms of the program;
- the right to a minimum of privacy and to the possession of personal belongings in accordance with the code of living;
- the right to practice your religion and to meet the requirements of that religion, as much as it does not interfere with your treatment and the rules of the program;
- the right to a particular diet provided that it does not endanger your health;
- the right to receive the dental and medical care essential to maintain good health;
- the right to consult a health professional of your choice;
- the right to schooling if you have not completed high school;
- the right to participate in recreational and sporting activities within the scope of community activities;
- the right to end your treatment and leave the centre whenever you choose, without any physical restraint, regardless of any obligation you may have toward other authorities.

*The information obtained by virtue of the authorisations provided will be kept confidential and can be consulted only by members of Portage’s personnel in conformity with Portage’s policy on the confidentiality of personal information.

However, upon receipt of a summons, the members of the personnel are obliged by law to appear in court and divulge all information required.

Staff members and teachers are also required by law to notify Child Protection Services, without delay, of any earlier or current situation that might endanger the safety of a child, and to inform the authorities if the safety of a resident or any other person is endangered.

Your obligations

As a member of the Portage *family*, you also have obligations while you reside at a Portage facility.

These obligations are:

- you are required at all times to comply with the rules concerning the use of drugs, violence, threats, and sexual activity between residents;
- you are expected to be an active participant in the programming offered;
- you are expected to participate in the development and the review of your treatment plan in collaboration with your caseworker;
- you are expected to make your best efforts to acquire the competencies taught during your program;
- you are expected to try your best to live up to the commitments that you make to yourself and to the community;
- you are expected to make the necessary efforts to ensure that your interactions with other residents and staff members reflect the values of the program: honesty, respect, responsible care, etc.;
- you are expected to respect the confidentiality of information shared with the residents and staff members, both during and after your stay at the centre;
- you are expected, at the request of staff members, to supply a urine sample for drug control analysis;
- you are expected to limit your contact with outsiders to those who have a positive influence on you and whose names appear on your support system list.

These obligations also include all others you may have toward those who referred you to Portage, whether an employer, a tribunal, or another court body. You are responsible for informing your caseworker of all these obligations so that they can help you meet your commitments.



DRUG CONTROL

During your stay at Portage we will ask you to abstain from taking any drugs, alcohol, and non-prescribed medication. Portage is committed to providing a physically and psychologically safe environment. To this end, every attempt is made to maintain a drug-free community. To ensure your own safety and that of the community, you may be questioned and asked to supply a urine sample after returning from temporary absences.

Hygiene and safety standards

It is Portage's duty to provide a safe and secure environment for all residents. To do so, residents are required to submit all personal effects to a security search upon admission, and may be required to undergo an antiparasitic shower. All articles are numbered and listed on a personal effects inventory form. The same procedure applies upon a resident's return from permitted outings.

Additionally, a resident and his or her personal effects may be searched at any time without prior notice if there is a reason to believe that he or she is breaking a rule. Failure to consent could lead to a refusal of treatment, with Portage being obliged to end the resident's program.

Portage abides by all laws concerning the respect of personal rights and freedoms. It respects personal security and guarantees protection against any abusive searches or seizures.

During your time at Portage, you will be asked to work in the kitchen and to do some cleaning work. Portage must conform to provincial cleanliness, safety, and security standards, and to facilitate our adherence to those standards, you are asked to conform to the following policies:

Residents must:

- Not wear nail polish or jewellery including watches, rings, earrings, or other body piercings;
- Wear appropriate, flat, closed shoes.

Failure to consent could lead to a refusal of treatment, with Portage being obliged to end the resident's program.

Health service

Each of Portage's residential centres provides an on-site health service to the residents in treatment.

At any time, you can make a request to the nurse by following the procedures. He/she will assess your request and respond or, if necessary, refer you to the appropriate resource.

Given that the residents in therapy at Portage are being treated for addiction to alcohol, drugs, or medication abuse, medication that contains narcotics, barbiturates, benzodiazepines and opiates are prohibited at Portage. A replacement or a substitute medication can be prescribed by the visiting physician, if needed, so that you can continue your treatment program at Portage.

It is important to note that residents are not allowed to bring food, drugs (including over the counter medication), dietary supplements, or vitamins on site without written approval of the Director of Nursing. No drugs will receive approval unless they are prescribed by a physician and on the list of approved drugs at your facility.

Residents who require a long period of convalescence for health reasons, or who need a medication that is prohibited at Portage will be referred to external facilities for the duration of the medical treatment.

The therapeutic program

Portage offers its treatment services to men and women, adults and teenagers, pregnant women and mothers with young children, people suffering from mental health problems, and individuals referred by the justice system, with drug-related problems. The Portage therapeutic community is designed to treat substance abuse and its associated behavioural problems.

At Portage, substance abuse is seen as a symptom of a life in crisis, a crisis which makes relationships difficult and often pushes individuals to escape from the stresses of life through drugs.

Portage's staff will work with you in order to enhance your self-esteem and build confidence in yourself and your ability to deal with life's stresses without the use of drugs. You are the driving force in designing your treatment plan of care; the staff members are there to assist you in reaching your goals.

THE ENVIRONMENT

In an environment guided by mutual help and peer support, the therapeutic community approach will help you develop your strengths and confront your difficulties. Members of the community, who just like you, are seeking a positive lifestyle free of drugs, will support you in your efforts by providing the framework and the necessary encouragement to prepare you for the demands of today's society. Essentially, the environment itself is an agent for change that will enable you to feel more in control of your life. Your efforts and the support of your peers are the primary elements for change at Portage.

Portage employs several therapeutic techniques, including role modelling, a social mobility system, groups and individual meetings, and learning experiences, all designed to support you in working toward your goals.

THE TOOLS

Portage offers a number of evidence-based tools which have proven to be very beneficial to Portage residents. You are encouraged to use them during your program. They will help you increase your self-esteem, develop a realistic perception of yourself and others, and adopt new life strategies.

These tools are effective in combination with the experiential learning that the Portage environment provides. You will become familiar with these tools during educational groups and community activities.

Here are a few examples:

- Exploration
- Coaching
- Workshops and groups
- Outings
- Feelings management
- Community meetings
- Learning experiences
- Reflection and introspection
- Plan of care
- Competencies
- Sharing

THE COMPETENCIES

The therapeutic program that is used at Portage will help you identify the sources of your substance abuse problems through therapeutic activities, and will help you acquire competencies which you will put into practice every day.

In the course of treatment, you will find that you will acquire more and more competencies with which to handle challenges. You will also realise that you will be developing a wide range of strategies for achieving your goals.

THE PLAN OF CARE

The plan of care is one of the tools which will help you address the priorities that you identify during treatment as difficulties or needs in your life. This process of treatment planning requires you to re-examine and update your goals on a regular basis.

Your plan of care will address the themes of substance abuse, physical and mental health, personal development, social and parenting skills (where applicable), interpersonal and family relations, and social reintegration, among others. This plan, which you will create in collaboration with your caseworker, will be drawn up at the beginning of your program and will be revised periodically.

THE PHASES

The Portage program has distinct phases: the evaluation phase (pre-admission), the residential treatment phase, and the social reintegration and aftercare phase.

Adults from the Montréal region who complete a treatment program at Portage can then apply for the MIRE Employment Reintegration Program. MIRE, which was developed in partnership with Portage, uses an effective and innovative approach to helping clients reintegrate into the workforce. Portage also offers a similar employment program to adults in Québec City.

THE STEPS

The treatment phase includes a number of steps. At each step of your program you will belong to a different peer group and have different expectations to meet. You will only move on to the next step once you reach certain expectations and receive the consent of your peers and caseworker.

THE FRAMEWORK

The days are very structured at Portage in order to promote active participation in the program. A hierarchical system facilitates coordination of the clinical program and community management. It is the members of the community, supervised by the counsellors, who are responsible for coordinating community life and for managing the daily activities.

The Code of conduct

As a member of the Portage *family*, you will develop a healthy lifestyle and a positive attitude toward communal living. You will appreciate that daily life within the community requires respect for the Code of conduct, so as to promote:

- Respect for yourself and for others;
- Feeling of belonging;
- Positive partnerships with staff members;
- Attainment of the objectives described in your individual plan of care;
- Quality and security of the environment.

The following rules are the Portage Code of conduct. They have been established to maintain a therapeutic environment free of favouritism, discrimination, or intimidation.

PRESENTATION AND APPEARANCE

Your appearance and the way you present yourself often mirror what is going on inside of you. You are responsible for your personal hygiene and appearance every day, including:

- Being clean and showered;
- Keeping your hair well groomed and tidy;
- Being neat (ex: shirt buttoned, shoelaces tied, pants cinched at the waist, etc.).

DRESS CODE

You are responsible for presenting yourself and dressing in an appropriate manner. Your clothes, like your appearance, must be clean, neutral, and respectful.



The following articles are not in accordance with the Portage Code of conduct, are are therefore not authorised at Portage centres.

- Clothes or accessories with logos, designs, or motifs with negative connotations or referring to a clan or a street gang;
- Flip-flops and sandals that do not have heel straps, high-heels are not authorised for safety reasons;
- Jewellery and makeup, unless they are discreet.

According to rules established in each centre, standard jewellery like wedding rings, discreet earrings, or necklaces can be authorised, provided they respect the Code.

During summer, long shorts and sandals with a heel strap are permitted. During winter, and for sanitary purposes, you must have a clean, dry pair of shoes to wear inside the facility. Jogging suits and outerwear are appropriate only for sports activities.

You will be encouraged to dress more formally for special events such as the Portage Recognition Ceremony.

CONSENT TO RECORDINGS

For confidentiality reasons, no one is permitted to take photos, videos, or audio recordings in which residents are recognisable without the resident's written permission. If such a situation should arise and you agree to having the recording shared, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Signature by an authorised adult is also required for residents who are under 18 years of age.

PERSONAL EFFECTS

A list of permitted personal effects and details of what you will need during your stay at Portage will either be given to you before you arrive or upon your arrival at the residential centre. Please adhere to the list since storage space is limited.

We strongly recommend that you identify all of your belongings.

For security, confidentiality, and storage reasons, the following items are not to be brought on site*:

- Cellular phones, computers, laptops, tablets, iPods/MP3 players, or any other internet-capable devices, cameras, video cameras, portable CD players and radios, voice recorders, furniture, televisions, or any other electronic devices or valuable objects.

This will help to support a therapeutic environment which encourages exchanges between residents, and will prevent residents from isolating themselves.

** According to the rules established at each centre, some music playing devices may be allowed during specific activities or specific time periods.*

The decision is left to the discretion of each centre.

Any prohibited, non-authorized, or excessive items brought with you will be held by Portage and you will be able to authorize someone to bring them back to your permanent residence. Alternatively, they will be stored at the facility at your own risk.

When leaving the centre it is your responsibility to take all your personal belongings. A delay of 48 to 72 hours may be required to access any articles left with the administration. Should you leave without taking your belongings, you will be given a period of 90 days to reclaim the articles in person or in writing. These articles will not be handed to a third party without a written authorisation duly prepared and signed by you (except in the case of death).

After that time, all articles left at the centre will be considered a gift to the residents. Portage will not be held liable for the loss, damage, or theft of any article that has been left behind.



POLICY OF NON-RESPONSIBILITY

Portage assumes no liability for the loss, destruction, or damage by fire, theft, accident or other incident, of any article placed on the centre's premises, other than those left with administration. It is understood that any article brought onto the site or submitted to the centre's care and control is done so at the resident's own risk.

DAMAGE TO PROPERTY

If, for any reason, you deliberately cause damage to Portage property, you will be expected to pay the cost of repairs or replacement.

SPORTS AND SOCIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Portage encourages a healthy spirit in a healthy body. Therefore, various sports and socio-cultural activities are offered as part of the therapeutic program. Portage assumes no liability for any accidents that take place during these activities.

FOOD AND SUPPLEMENTS

When returning from a leave or absence, you are not permitted to bring back any food. Chewing gum is not permitted on the property.

Supplements or vitamins are not necessary; three nutritional meals a day and an active participation in the program will keep you fit and in good health.

CIGARETTES

Smoking is prohibited for residents, staff and visitors inside all Portage establishments and in Portage vehicles. You will be permitted to smoke in designated outdoor areas during smoke breaks. It is also prohibited to share your cigarettes with other residents.

Schooling at Portage

Portage encourages all members of the community who have not finished high school to return to their studies, in accordance with the terms of each program and each centre.

All adolescent residents are expected to continue their education once admitted to Portage and will have access to an academic program upon their arrival at the centre.

Adults can also participate in furthering their education if they wish. However, this service is not, as of yet, available in all adult programs.

School, like all the other activities, is considered a therapeutic activity and is an integral part of your rehabilitation. Your behaviour and the efforts you make in the framework of this activity should thus reflect the values that you are working on acquiring in the program.

Residents' committee

Portage believes that residents' opinions of its services should be given every consideration. As provided by the Act Respecting Health Services and Social Services of Québec, Portage allows and supports the grouping of residents to take on certain responsibilities that are granted to them by law. In each centre, this grouping is known as the Residents' Committee. According to law, the Residents' Committee has three functions:

- Inform residents of their rights and obligations.
- Promote the quality of services, as well as the satisfaction of residents relative to services.

- Protect the collective rights and interests of residents, and represent a resident, on request, to defend his or her rights.

The members of the Residents' Committee are chosen by the residents of each centre, and the responsibilities they assume are a basic part of the Portage Program. Once a year, the Committee must report on its activities to the User's Committee.

User's committee

Portage's User's Committee represents all residents who receive or have received residential or external services at Portage. The Committee acts as a spokesperson for the residents and reports to Portage's Board of Governors on an annual basis.

The User's Committee's mandate has five components. In addition to the three functions listed for the Residents' Committee, there are two additional ones:

- It must, on request, accompany and assist any resident who makes a request with regards to Portage services, including registering a grievance.
- It must ensure that all Residents' Committees have the necessary resources to function properly.

These provisions are included in the Act Respecting Health Services and Social Services, Clause 212.

Complaints management

The Portage environment is highly structured. It involves a set of systems and mechanisms that allow residents to manage community activities and interpersonal relationships.

As is the case in today's society, these systems are not perfect; you may sometimes feel that you have been treated unjustly or that your rights have been infringed upon. The therapeutic community approach has foreseen these possibilities and put in place a mechanism for the effective and multidisciplinary treatment of complaints which, if they should take place, would allow you to correct these situations.

This mechanism is ensured by the interrelationship of certain therapeutic tools (exploration, communication, etc.) with basic principles which require that neither staff nor residents can escape the application of these tools.

The law provides that no one can make allusions, threats, or reprisals against a person who exercises their right to make a complaint.

At any time during this process you have **the right**, should you wish to do so, to file a complaint with Portage's local Service Quality and Complaints Commissioner. In so doing, your complaint will be processed according to the complaints investigation procedure adopted by Portage's administrative board.

In addition to your complaint with Portage's Commissioner, you can inform the person or organisation that referred you to Portage about the nature of your complaint, and put them in contact with Portage's Complaints Commissioner, if necessary.

The Portage Residents' Committee can also assist you in carrying out your complaint about Portage, and you can also get help from the regional *Centre d'assistance et d'accompagnement aux plaintes* (CAAP), which is a complaint assistance and support centre.

You will find the contact information for all of these people in the Service Quality brochure which will receive at the same time as this Resident's Manual at the beginning of your program or upon admission.



It's up to you to succeed!

We are happy to welcome you into the Portage *family*. Now that you are here, all the ingredients are in place for you to succeed.

No doubt you will experience difficult times while in therapy, but you will be very proud of yourself for not giving up. Nobody expects you to be perfect. Just be yourself and use all the tools that Portage puts at your disposal. Facing your problems is not easy, but it is certainly a better solution than running away from them. Remember that:

"Only you can do it but you can't do it alone."

Best of luck on your journey to self-discovery at Portage.

The members of the **Portage family**



The Resident's Creed

*I have come here in search of myself. Confused and afraid
I have led my life in the shadow of drugs. I have rejected
all those who cared for me and loved me. I had become
a stranger to my family. Guilt, lies and hurt became my
most intimate companions, drugs and alcohol my most
cherished friends. I belonged nowhere and to no one.
I felt desperately alone.*

*Here at last, I have found true friends. I no longer need
to be the giant of my dreams or the dwarf of my fears.
I am allowed to be genuine, to express my emotions.
My friends act as a mirror for me, our common quest
heals me. The strengths, love and dreams that now live within
me have become beacons for my life. From here I will go
forth, whole once more, self-aware, confident and assured,
never to live in the shadows again.*

