

ABOUT BNASAA: History

In November 1989, the Bahá'í International Health Agency, a committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, sponsored a conference in Montréal, Québec on AIDS and the Bahá'í community. This initiated a series of consultations on Bahá'í principles and issues related to AIDS and human sexuality. A group of individual Bahá'ís met with Counsellor Wilma Ellis in June 1992, to determine how best to give ongoing support and encouragement to these consultations. As a result, the Bahá'í International Health Agency formally recognized and sponsored the establishment of the Institute on AIDS, Sexuality and Addictions (IASA), and appointed a coordinating committee.

As consultations continued, it became clear that there were many other issues that were important to address as part of these sessions, particularly the issue of abuse. In 1995, abuse was added as an explicit focus, and the name of the initiative was changed to the Bahá'í Network on AIDS, Sexuality, Addictions and Abuse (BNASAA). At this time official sponsorship of the Network was transferred to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada. In the spring of 1997 a partner organization was started in Québec called Réseau Courage (Courage Network) specifically to address similar issues for the French-speaking community. In fall of 1999, the BNASAA Coordinating Committee was appointed as an official committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, with membership made up of Bahá'ís from both Canada and the United States.

Structure

The coordinating committee stimulates, encourages and coordinates individual initiatives, the development and dissemination of materials, assists in communication among interested individuals and Bahá'í communities, and provides a framework linking these activities with Bahá'í Institutions. Either individuals or task forces can plan and carry out activities supporting the purpose of the Network.

BNASAA has no financial resources of its own, but receives a small budget from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada. BNASAA activities are carried out by volunteers. All activities planned in conjunction with the Network must be self-supporting through registration fees, contributions, or scholarships. A small deputization fund is available when required to assist individuals, and it is hoped that each new activity will generate sufficient funds to replenish the scholarship fund so that future activities can also be supported in this way.