

PARENT SUPPORT GROUP START UP

GROUND RULES

- Listen with respect
- Everyone gets a chance to talk
- Seek first to understand before being understood
- Check out assumptions
- Take care of your personal needs
- Have fun!

Are there things here the group wants to remove or are there points that need to be added such as confidentiality?

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

- Who are you? Tell people a little about yourself.
- Why are you here?
- What made you come?
- What do you hope to gain from this support group?

BUILDING BLOCKS

Trust

- That people will express themselves
- That everyone will listen
- That the group's judgment is sound

Self Expression

- To views of others
- To the new options
- To questioning of own views

Listening

- By everyone
- To everyone, with an open mind
- With the priority of hearing others over expressing self

Openness

- To the views of others
- To new options
- To questioning of own views

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN JOINING THE GROUP

- What does the group do?
- Is this something that I am interested in?
- What do I do here?
- What is expected of me?
- What is the group like?
- Where can I go for support or if I have questions?

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Find allies and build a support network.
- If you have questions ask them.
- Get the word out about your skills.
- If your interest is going, make the necessary changes.
- If you don't like how things are going, become part of the solution.
- Don't get discouraged.
- Go to all the meetings.
- Take on Leadership.
- Relax, have fun and be yourself.

PRINCIPLES FOR AUTHENTIC INVOLVEMENT

- Mutual Trust
- Mutual Support
- Distribution of power
- Utilization of members skills
- Communication
- Clean objectives
- Ways to resolve conflict
- Control methods
- Values based practices
- Organizational environments
- Provide tools and skills to support the groups work
- Continual reflection and modification

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE GROUP

- Shared vision
- Skilled and or shared leadership
- Process orientation
- Diversity
- Membership - driven agenda
- Multiple sectors
- Accountability

*Discuss what this means to a group of parents of special needs children.
What should not be on the list-what should be added?*

I am supposed to bring the cookies to the meeting but child is in crisis! Group recognizes that crisis Example: I promised to bring cookies to the meeting but my child comes first! Is there a back-up plan or its no big deal if we don't have refreshments one night?

The group needs to decide how formal it wants to be. It may decide that it doesn't want to be this formal. A discussion needs to take place as to the pros and cons of the meeting structure.

A discussion also needs to take place on who will lead meetings, etc. Roles and responsibilities are important to identify.

UNDERSTANDING AGENDA'S

What should be on the agenda?

- Introduction of new and established group members.
- Ice Breaker to prepare the group.
- Approval of the Agenda
- Consensus on meeting procedures
- Minutes of last meeting
- Reports
- Main Event
- Announcements

SAMPLE AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Introductions
3. Review and Preview
 1. Agenda
 2. Minutes from last meeting
4. Reports
5. New Business
6. Next Meeting
 1. Creation of next agenda
 2. Distribution of roles and tasks
7. Announcements
8. Adjournment

UNDERSTANDING MINUTES

- The permanent record of events and actions for future reference.
- Written in clear and concise statements
- Are approved before they become part of the permanent record.
- When approved signed by the secretary

Minutes

- Date, time, and location of meeting
- Members present
- What was done
- What decisions were made
- What assignments were made
- List of materials given out
- Important announcements

Keep track of:

What we did

Handouts

Things to remember

Decisions

Members Present

Tasks to Complete: What Who By

Keeping meeting records is important for future grant writing opportunities as well as examining outcomes and assessment of parent participation and outcomes.

We can help develop this further as part of our technical assistance work.

Sample Involvement Questionnaire

It is important to have easy access to the credentials and interests of decision

Makers in your group. As a specific task or issue arises, you can then turn to an involvement questionnaire to determine who would offer the best skills for the job at hand. Involvement questionnaires are also an excellent medium for organizing basic information about your group and documenting their reasons for being involved with your group. Use this sample to create an involvement questionnaire for your group. In addition to the general questionnaire listed below, you can add questions specific to the needs of your group. Once you have what questions you want to ask, create a questionnaire of your own and distribute to members.

Name: _____

Occupation/Title: _____

Home Address: _____

Work Address: _____

Home Phone () _____ Work Phone () _____

Fax: () _____ E-mail _____

Best time and place to reach you: _____

Best times for meetings to be scheduled: _____

Please list previous boards, committees, or advisory groups on which you have served and dates served:

List other leadership positions or accomplishments and dates served:

List publications, awards, or honors:

List any skills you bring to this group:

Describe your primary reason for joining this group:

List anything else that you would like us to know about you:

Building Your Team

Introduction:

A group is a number of people who are in the same place at the same time. Examples of groups are people waiting to cross the street or in line to buy tickets to a movie. Groups are usually unorganized and exist without a vision or commitment.

A team is a group of people who:

- ❖ Know one another and respect one another
- ❖ Have leaders
- ❖ Have a purpose and goal that they all agree on
- ❖ Have rules they agree on and follow
- ❖ Have an agreed upon plan as to how they will accomplish their goals
- ❖ Know what each member's responsibilities are
- ❖ Value the contributions of every member
- ❖ Offer support and appreciation freely to one another

Can you think of some highly successful teams that accomplish greatness? It could be a team of athletes, a team of musicians, or a team of scientists.

So, what's the difference between any old team and a highly successful team? It is the level of TALENT, RESPECT, AGREEMENT, and AND SUPPORTIVENESS that exists within the team.

To start your effort you must build a strong team. The next pages list several activities that you can use to guide your team. Your team needs to reflect what you are trying to accomplish, your community and your members. Remember it is important as a parent (youth) leader to help individual members feel like a team because:

Together Everyone Achieves More With
Organization

Respect and

Kindness

These activities will help you come up with answers to important questions. The activities in *Getting Started* may take one meeting or several. Your team will grow strong by working together and taking as much time as needed to answer these questions. The answers you will find will be the foundation of your team.

Task 1: Why are we here and what do we want to get out of this?

Every person has a personal reason why he or she gets involved in a parent or community group. Not all the reasons need to be the same. By encouraging every one to share his or her reasons your team can begin to understand the many different reasons and value of being a part of this team. Before you begin make a list of questions that you think could help start the discussion such as:

- ❖ What do you want to get out of this?
- ❖ Why did you decide to get involved?
- ❖ How did you hear about this issue or team?
- ❖ What would you tell someone else if they asked you about this issue and or group?
- ❖ What would you tell someone if they asked you why you are involved?
- ❖ Why do you feel it is important to be part of this effort?
- ❖ What do you hope to accomplish?
- ❖ What do you hope to gain or learn?

You may decide to lead a group discussion for the whole group, small groups of 2 to 4, play a game, or create your own technique. If not all of the people know one another this could also be an opportunity for them to get better acquainted. Here are some possible ideas:

- Choose one question and go around the group to hear from each member. List the answers on a newsprint sheet.
- Break in small groups of 2 to 4 people to discuss the questions you've come up with. Have them list what they came up with on a newsprint sheet and then have each small group report back to the large group.
- Play Concentric Circles. Break the group into two equal groups. Have them form two circles, one inside of the other. Have the center circle participants' face out and the outer circle participants' face in. Each participant should be facing a partner across from him or her. The center circle stays stationary while the outer circle moves one partner to the right after each question. The leader then asks a question for the pair to discuss. After a short while the leader asks the outer circle to move one step to the right. Then the new pairs are asked to discuss either the same question or a new one. Continue until all questions are asked or members have had the opportunity to share with several other people. Bring the group back together and ask them to share what they heard or learned. List these items on a news print.

Task 2: What is the vision and purpose of our team?

A strong team has a shared vision and purpose. Your vision will provide others with how you see the future for your community in regards to children's mental health. Your purpose will provide others with the team's perspective, intent and aim. This may be different than the reasons that each member had for joining the team. Both the vision and purpose should be short, memorable statements explaining what your team is all about. Family members (young people) working together across the county have the ability to contribute to their community and world. Your vision and purpose are one way that your team can communicate who you are and what you stand for.

There are many ways to get started. You may decide to use the list of reasons that were given from TASK 1. Some groups choose to brainstorm words that describe your intent or desired action. You might create a word puzzle by having the members of your group listing individual words on squares of paper. Then bring all the words together and begin to build sentences to create your vision and purpose. By putting together your ideas your team will be able to not only be able to understand why you are a team but also share with the community. After you decide be sure to record vision and purpose along with the date of your decision. You'll want to keep a copy with your meeting minutes. You may also want to distribute a copy to members of your team and to new members. It is natural for teams to evolve over time. It is important that your team periodically reviews your vision and purpose to be sure it still represents what you are doing.

TASK 3: What do we call ourselves?

There are groups of family members (young people) across the country working to make improvements in their communities. It is a good idea for your team to come up with a name to personalize your team. If your team is being hosted by another agency or organization, it might be important to include their name in yours. The possibilities are endless. This could be a good use of the brainstorming technique. It is important to remember that certain words, names or letters have multiple meanings that could perhaps confuse or give the community a different impression of what your team is about. Carefully discuss the name you choose to be sure it does not send a mixed message.

Task 4: Do we want to create a motto, pledge or cheer for our team?

A motto, pledge or cheer is a way of sharing the commitment of team members'. Some teams use a motto, cheer or pledge to add meaning to their name or provide recognition of the team in the community. It may be something that is read or said to bring the team together and focus at the beginning of each meeting. Perhaps it might be used to remind the team of the value they provide at the closing of each meeting.

Your team may want to brainstorm ideas and work on it as a group or perhaps you may decide to have team members work on this at home and come to the next meeting with their idea. A motto, pledge or cheer will only be effective if your team enjoys doing it. Remember to be sure that if you use any slang terms you are not sending a mixed message.

Some examples of pledges or cheers are:

It's Time we made a change! We are the future! We can do it!

"Teamwork is the magic that helps ordinary people do extraordinary things!"

Power and Change

From the PAIN came the DREAM

From the DREAM came the VISION

From the VISION came the PEOPLE

From the PEOPLE came the POWER

From the POWER came the CHANGE

Peter Gabriel

Task 5: How will our Team make decisions on things?

Family member (youth) teams are about *doing*. In order to *do* you will need to use teamwork to plan and do team projects. An important part of teamwork is making choices, which are also called decisions. Team members must be able to live with those decisions and assume responsibility for them. Your team will be making lots of decisions, you have already made several decisions if you have gone through each of the tasks up to this point. Think back to how you make those choices. Did you vote or work to get consensus? Talk about it using the brainstorming techniques and then choose how your team will make future decisions.

Task 6: What will our team rules be?

In order for a team to be effective they need to create an agreed set of basic rules. Sometimes we call them "ground rules". They establish the standards of behavior by which your team agrees to operate while in a group. They help to create a safe environment for members of your team and keep the group productive. You have decided on how your group decides, now you can choose ground rules that will help your team work smoothly.

Often ground rules answer questions like:

- How often do I have to attend?
- How do we respect each other? What about put downs?
- How do we respect each other during a discussion?
- If I share something personal in a discussion, does it stay within the group (is it confidential?) or does it become gossip outside the group?
- During sharing times, like check -in, can I "pass" if I don't care to speak?

Be sure to record your ground rules and make a copy for all team members. It is also a good idea to list them on a large sheet of paper and display at all team meetings and activities.

Task 7: What about consequences?

Each team member has power. Each member is responsible to use their power in a positive way that brings people together. Being a leader means sticking to your agreements.

Sometimes rules get broken. But when they are broken consistently, the rule needs to be changed or consequences used to enforce the rules. Think about the necessary consequences to go along with your team's ground rules. Be fair and don't be overly tough.

Task 8: What kind of jobs do we need to have within our Team?

There are many different things to do to help your team work. Have a brainstorming session to help your team decide on a list of jobs. It is important to remember that some jobs happen all the time while others happen only once in a while. Some teams have even created new jobs along the way when they needed extra help.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- ❑ Who is going to plan the meeting?
- ❑ Who is going to lead the different portions of the meeting?
- ❑ What type of records do we want to keep?
- ❑ Who will keep the meeting notes?
- ❑ Are we going to have a scrapbook?
- ❑ Will we be having snacks?
- ❑ Who will contact everyone if a meeting is canceled or rescheduled?
- ❑ Who will be your contact with your hosting organization?

Once you have your list of jobs your team needs to decide who will do which job. Will people volunteer, first-come, first choice? Or by appointment, or by voting? How long will team members have a job?

Task 8: Do we need or want to recruit additional members to the Team?

An important part of being on a team is to be sure the right number of people is on the team to do what the team was formed to do. If a team is too big not everyone can contribute in a meaningful way. Likewise, if a team is too small there may be too much work for each member. As a group, decide how many people your team will need. If you need more, how will you recruit them? How will you describe what your team does to others?

When new members join you, how will you initiate them into the group so that they feel welcome and learn everyone's name. Also you will have to help them understand what your Team does and what they will do.

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