Florida Institute for Group Facilitation

A joint program of So Florida Chapter of IASWG and Sunshine Social Services, Inc.

Group work is a crucial program component for many social service and behavioral health agencies. Groups are used to teach important life skills, to improve interpersonal communication and install pro-social behaviors. Groups are used to provide peer to peer support, opportunities to test new identities and ways to recover from trauma or loss. Group work promotes emotional, relational and behavioral health in ways that surpass what can be expected of other kinds of interventions.

The quality of leadership and facilitation of group work in such agencies settings significantly affects the outcomes in treatment. While many evidence based practices used in the field of mental health and behavioral healthcare provide training for clinicians and peer specialists on the delivery of services in group contexts, few of them engage staff in learning or enhancing the fundamental skills of group leadership and facilitation itself. And especially in times of ever shrinking funding for services, many agencies have precious few opportunities to hone the facilitation skills of the members of their staff.

A team of group work specialists took on the challenge in 2013 to formulate a method for addressing this need. (*The members of the team are listed below*.) A program begun in the Fall of that year put strong emphasis on experiential based learning. At its core, the training program was based on the simple principle that the experience of being a group member is the best platform for addressing the tasks of group facilitation. The faculty developed a learning module entitled "Multi-dimensional Experience of Group" based on that principle. Participants in the program asked for more. The Florida Institute for Group Facilitation was formed by the team's leaders to respond to that request.

The Institute has developed a more extensive training program that builds on the foundation of that first training module. Remaining true to the program's experiential foundation, the enhanced program adds training on core topics and skills that are essential for group facilitators.

The program is designed for all who function as group leaders, facilitators or co-facilitators in behavioral health care settings, including mental health programs, addictions treatment facilities and related programs or facilities. Participation in the program is open to

1. Mental health professionals from various disciplines including Psychology, Social Work, Marriage and Family Therapy or mental health counseling.
2. Nursing professionals
3. Addiction treatment professionals
4. Others who function in the role of facilitator or co-facilitator as part of a treatment team

The program content is guided by The Core Competencies for Group Facilitation, a part of IASWG's Inventory of Competencies for Social Work with Groups. This articulates role expectations for

facilitators for groups convened for multiple purposes including areas of direct concern for FIGF, namely group leadership in the context of behavioral health care.

The program includes the following learning opportunities:

(Descriptions and learning objectives for each module are attached at the end of this document)

1. The six hour "Multi-dimensional Experience of Group," as indicated above is at the core of the training program. It is a thoroughly experiential training in which participants form training groups for the whole day

2. Three 2 hour modules in foundations of group facilitation theory and praxis. These modules address fundamental principles of group dynamics and guide facilitators toward understanding methods for managing group members through the stages of group life from the perspective of the role of facilitator.

3. Three 2 hour modules in advanced topics on group facilitation theory and praxis address issues of group cohesion, diversity of members and special topics that arise in social service agency settings.

4. A once-monthly Group Facilitators' Supervision and Consultation Group is the setting where participants in the training program have the opportunity to develop and refine their skills with the consultation of other facilitators from diverse settings and under the guidance of the core faculty members. Participation in the supervision and consultation group is recommended for a minimum of 12 months

Program Objectives

Upon successful completion of this program, participants will demonstrate the ability to:

- Apply their understanding of group work theory and practice to different group populations, incorporating an appreciation of the dimensions of human diversity

- Articulate the rationale for choices concerning group services and practice with a wide range of populations

- Understand and incorporate systemic variables when making interventions, including: organizational context, group size, composition, structure, culture, and communication patterns

- Use their knowledge of group dynamics and development to enhance their practice across a range of group models

- Use practice skills to facilitate group process, promote mutual aid, and mediate between the individual and the group

- Critically analyze ethical issues and dilemmas unique to group work

Core Faculty

Kris Drumm, LCSW ACHT, former Group Program Coordinator at Sunserve, has over 25 years of experience of working with diverse communities. Now in private practice at A Healing Space in Wilton Manors, she has led treatment groups in various clinical in-patient and out-patient settings.

Heidi Heft LaPorte, DSW, is an Associate Professor at Barry University where, in addition to teaching courses on group work in both the MSW and PhD programs, she has extensive experience in research, evaluation of clinical practice and consulting with social service agencies.

James Lopresti, Ph.D., LMHC, SunServe's Director of Clinical Education and Senior Clinical Supervisor, is a frequent presenter on gay and lesbian issues for professionals, and has taught at various graduate level programs including Barry University, Loyola University of Chicago and the Johns Hopkins University. He has led group programs and mentored group leaders in clinical settings in Washington, DC and South Florida serving the LGBT community

Mark Macgowan, PhD, LCSW, Professor, School of Social Work at FIU, is the author of *A Guide to Evidence-Based Group Work* (Oxford University Press). Dr. Macgowan's funded research projects include multi-site, community-based randomized designs involving culturally diverse groups in both Florida and North Carolina

Mark Smith, PhD, LCSW, associate professor in Barry University's School of Social Work where he teaches graduate classes in group work, co-leads the Florida Chapter of the International Association of Social Work with Groups (IASWG).

Cindy Sterne, ACSW, LCSW, MCAP, ICADC, CCTP, Human Services Supervisor with Broward Addiction Recovery Center, has over 25 years of clinical experience working with diverse populations in a variety of settings. She is an adjunct with the Florida Atlantic University School of Social Work where she teaches courses such as Practice with Individuals, Practice with Families and Groups, and Issues in Counseling Women among others. She also serves on the Florida Certification Board's Behavioral Health Advisory Council**.**

Todd Tedrow, DSW, LCSW, is the Director of the MSW Program at the Barry University School of Social Work. A long-time leader in healthcare and higher education, he has developed Narrative Therapy groups in healthcare settings and has been successful in collaborating with agencies to secure program funding. Todd has presented internationally on the topic of Narrative Therapy in Groups, and has provided regular training on this topic at the local and state level

CORE TRAINING: "A MULTIDIMENSIONAL EXPERIENCE OF GROUP" (6 contact hours)

(This unified program is entirely devoted to group work. Participants will have various opportunities to participate in experience based training activities according to their areas of professional concern**)**

This full day training event is designed for persons responsible for leading groups in various clinical settings. It provides multiple opportunities for inculcating, refreshing, enhancing and expanding skills for group work leadership in a variety of settings. At the end of the day, participants will:

- Achieve enhanced understanding of the experience of group from the members' perspective
- Understand foundational skills for facilitating groups such as creating safety, group norms and group culture
- Understand approaches that address group dynamics including: conflict, lack of participation, safety issues and processing "taboo" subjects or topics

- Understand the dynamics of group co-leadership, including leadership style, differing theoretical orientations and gender diversity

PROGRAM COSTS:

Full Program Enrollment fee (contact JLopresti@sunserve.org for current costs) Includes 18 CEUs for Florida licensed Psychologists, Social Workers, Marriage and Family Therapists, Mental Health Counselors, ARNP, RN, LPN, Florida CAPs)

1. Multi- Dimensional Experience of Group (6 hrs)
2. Foundation modules (6 hrs)
3. Advanced modules (6 hrs)
4. Twelve session option to participate in limited membership monthly supervision group (within 18 months).
5. Certification as Group Facilitator Specialist by the Florida Institute for Group Facilitation

Individual sessions : *(Training and supervision sessions are available for others when there are openings. Full program participants are guaranteed enrollment at all sessions and cost is included in full program enrollment fee*)

APPENDIX A – TRAINING SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

- ➤ *All sessions include attention to principles and practices of facilitation for groups that meet either on-site or using internet- based platforms, or both.*
- ➤ *All training modules have the option for attendance either on-site at the training location [*Center for Spiritual Living, 4849 N. Dixie Hwy., Oakland Park, FL, 33334] *or via Zoom.*
- ➤ *Because of the structure of the training, "A Multi-Dimensional Experience of Group" requires that participants be equally divided between "on-site" small groups and "Zoom" small groups.*

A. CORE TRAINING: "A MULTIDIMENSIONAL EXPERIENCE OF GROUP" (6 contact hours)*This full day training event is designed for persons responsible for leading groups in various clinical settings. It provides multiple opportunities for inculcating, refreshing, enhancing and expanding skills for group work leadership in a variety of settings. At the end of the day, participants will:*
- Achieve enhanced understanding of the experience of group from the members' perspective
- Understand foundational skills for facilitating groups such as creating safety, group norms and group culture
- Understand approaches that address group dynamics including: conflict, lack of participation, safety issues and processing "taboo" subjects or topics

- Understand the dynamics of group co-leadership, including leadership style, differing theoretical orientations and gender diversity

_____

B. FOUNDATION MODULES: *These modules address fundamental principles of group dynamics and guide facilitators toward understanding methods for managing group members through the stages of group life from the perspective of the role of facilitator. Each module is 2 hours in length and provides 2 CEUs for all mental health and nursing disciplines. Descriptions for each module and learning objectives are listed below*

Module I: This training module introduces participants to core principles of group work and draws on demonstration of various activities used to facilitate group process.
- o Identify key fundamentals for group work
- o Identify the uses and benefits of various group activities

Module II: This training module introduces participants to essential micro level skills when working with individuals and groups and necessary for the effective facilitation of Group Work. Identification and demonstration of various skills used in groups.
- o Identify essential micro level skills for effective group work
- o Identify and demonstrate various skills necessary to facilitate effective group work.

Module III: This training module introduces participants to the stages and life cycle of groups. This module introduces participants to additional skills necessary for effective group facilitation, particularly those of group leadership, self-awareness and the ability to effectively manage conflict when present in group work.
- o Identify the stages of groups
- o Identify those skills present in effective group facilitators
- o Identify how they react internally to conflict when present in group work and how to mitigate and/or manage the external manifestation of such reactions

_____

C. ADVANCED MODULES: *Each module is 2 hours in length and provides 2 CEUs for all mental health and nursing disciplines. Descriptions for each module and learning objectives are listed below*

Module I: Principles, Practices and Facilitator Characteristics That Foster Cohesion
Cohesion is to group working as the working alliance is to individual counseling. It is a necessary condition for groups to do their work and to progress in accomplishing the members' goals for being in a group. Fostering cohesion depends on a personal stance for group leaders; it means having eyes and ears attuned to what is happening between group members on many overt and covert levels of communication all at the same time. And, simultaneously, it means having the skills to use that awareness in ways that deepen connections and address barriers to connection.
- o *Identify Skills that lead to the creation of cohesion in a group*
- o *Identify factors and dynamics that impede group cohesion*
- o *Understand the key characteristics of a group leader/ facilitator that foster cohesion*

Module II: Diversity in Group Membership: Principles, Practices and Facilitator Skills
Levels of diversity in group membership always set up challenges for group leaders. Certain issues arise for group leaders when members closely mirror each other in social-cultural and familial backgrounds, ages and life experiences as well as in communication styles. And other issues arise when there is great diversity in each of these domains of human experience. Successful group leaders know how to navigate

their way through these complexities to elicit the best opportunities for members to acquire the best outcomes from being in a group

- o Understand principles of group composition for heterogeneous vs. homogenous groups
- o Understand the benefits and challenges for each kind of group: heterogeneous and homogeneous.
- o Identify skills for negotiating conflict between members who come from different populations, affinity groups, or sub-groupings (e.g. younger vs. older, male vs. female, straight v. gay, black v white, etc.)

Module III: Impact of Trauma on Group Process.
Research evidence convincingly suggests that the neuro-biological processes that respond to intense stressors directly impact the "social" and interpersonal sectors of brain. As a result, the impact that traumatic life experiences can have on attachments, social relationships, and overall life satisfaction can be quite profound. Mandated groups, for example, are likely to have a larger proportion of persons who have been deeply hurt by trauma and least successful at dealing with its effects on their lives.

- o Identify skills for group management when working with mandated clients
- o Understand key factors for management of trauma-genic behaviors that can impact group members and group process

Module III: "Elective" Training Options.
From time to time, the Institute offers other modules under the rubric of Advanced Training. Sessions may include modules on "Evidence Based Practice in Group Work," and "Evaluation of Groups as Means for Program Improvement."

APPENDIX B   Inventory of Competencies in Social Work with Groups.

This inventory is based on the International Association of Social with Groups' (IASWG) Practice Standards, second edition.

Core Values

1. Helps each member to appreciate the contributions of the other members so that everyone's ideas are heard and considered.

2. Respects and highly values diversity in all of its dimensions such as culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities, and age.

3. Creates a group environment that offers an opportunity to live and practice the democratic principles of equality and autonomy. This value is presented to the group whenever appropriate and reinforced when members articulate it.

Pre-Group Phase: Planning, Recruitment and New Group Formation

4. Obtains organizational support for an affirmation of the group.

5. Selects the group type, structure, processes, and size that will be appropriate for attaining the purposes of the group.

6. Reaches out to and recruits potential group members.

7. Obtains consent from potential members and relevant others as required by ethical guidelines and organizational requirements.

8. Clarifies potential group members' goals and expectations of the group work service and uses this information to assess prospective members' potential investments in the pursuit of group goals.

9. Helps members specify goals in terms that can lead to the determination of their attainment.

10. Establishes an appropriate meeting place and meeting time that will be conducive to members' comfort, safety, and access to the group.

11. Prepares members for the group in appropriate ways (which will differ depending whether the group is intended to attain individual goals or to accomplish task purposes in the agency and community).

12. Demonstrates empathy in identifying members' feelings and reactions to joining the group.

13. Knows how to select members for the group in relationship to principles of group composition (may not apply to groups in which others determine the group's membership).

14. Develops a clear statement of group purpose that reflects member needs and agency mission and goals (often done cooperatively with the group members).

15. Considers potential contextual, environmental, and societal impacts on the group.

16. As appropriate, explains group purposes and processes to nonmembers such as other agency personnel, relevant community entities, and parents or referring agencies.

17. Considers issues of group content as well as the use of activities, supplies needed, and resources.

18. Identifies and uses methods to track group progress (e.g., group progress notes, formal and informal evaluations).

19. If relevant, considers with the co-worker together the implications of similarities and differences with respect to such issues as approaches, styles, and communication.

21. Accesses and uses supervision [or consultation] on a regular basis.

Group Work in the Beginning Phase

22. Works collaboratively with members to develop a beginning contract for work that identifies tasks to be accomplished, goals to be achieved and the process by which the work is to occur.

23. Discusses confidentiality and limits.

24. Assists members in identifying and clarifying individual goals and group goals.

25. Helps the members to link individual goals with group purposes.

26. Invites full participation of all members.

27. Solicits member feedback on the progress of the group.

28. If relevant, employs special skills in working with mandated members and understands the impact on group dynamics of member's mandated status.

29. Establishes rapport with individual members and the group as a whole.

30. Assists group members in establishing relationships with one another.

31. Highlights member commonalities

32. Encourages direct member to member communication.

33. Seeks to aid the group in establishing norms for participation that promotes safety and trust.

34. Seeks to cultivate mutual aid.

35. Appreciates the impact of various psychological, socio-cultural and environmental forces on participation.

36. Promotes group exploration of non-productive norms when these arise.

37. Promotes autonomy and self-determination.

38. Encourages member empowerment.

Group Work in the Middle Phase

39. Reinforces connection between individual concerns/needs and group goals.

40. Offers programmatic ideas and activities that support group purpose and assist in helping members achieve individual and group goals.

41. Assesses progress towards individual and group goals.

42. Identifies difficulties and obstacles that interfere with the group and its members' abilities to reach their goals.

43. If obstacles are related to the specific needs of an individual member, when appropriate, offers individual time outside of group.

44. Ensures that the group has attended to special needs of individual members (e.g., physical, cognitive, language, or cultural).

45. Assists members to engage in problem solving, in making choices and decisions, and in evaluating potential outcomes of decisions.

46. Summarizes sessions with the group.

47. Plans next steps with the group.

48. Re-contracts with members, if needed, to assist in achieving individual and group goals.

49. Clarifies and interprets communication patterns among members, between members and worker, and between the group and systems outside the group.

50. Models and encourages honest communication and feedback among members and between members and workers.

51. Reviews group values and norms.

52. Assists members to identify and articulate feelings.

53. Assists members to perceive verbal and non-verbal communication.

54. Helps members mediate conflict within the group.

55. Assists members to make connections with other group members that may continue after the group ends, if this is appropriate.

56. Uses tools of empowerment to assist members to develop ''ownership'' of the group.

57. Assists members to identify and access resources from inside and outside the group.

58. Uses record keeping techniques to monitor leadership skills and group process.

59. Uses group approaches appropriate to the populations served and the tasks undertaken as demonstrated in the literature, worker and agency experience, and other sources of professional knowledge.

Group Work in the Ending Phase

60. Prepares members for the group's ending in advance.

61. If a direct practice group, helps members identify gains they have made and changes that have resulted from their participation in the group. If a task group, helps members discuss what they have learned from this experience that will be useful to them in other task groups (involves considering how achieving group goals will contribute to the functioning of the organization and/or community).

62. Discusses the impact of the group on systems outside of the group (e.g., family, organization, community.)

63. Identifies and discusses direct and indirect signs of members' reactions to ending.

64. Shares worker's feelings about ending with the group.

65. Assists members in sharing their feelings about ending with one another and with the worker.

66. Systematically evaluates the achievement of individual and group goals (routine and systematic evaluation of the group experience could/should occur over time rather than in the ending stage alone).

67. Helps members make connections with other agencies and programs as appropriate.

68. Assists members in applying new knowledge and skills to their daily lives.

69. Encourages members to give feedback to the worker on the worker's role and actions in the group.

70. Prepares record material about the group for the agency, for individual members, and for referrals as needed.

_____

"Macgowan, M. J. (2012). A standards-based inventory of foundation competencies in social work with groups. *Research on Social Work Practice, 22*, 578-589."