

NEW JERSEY SELF-HELP GROUP CLEARINGHOUSE

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HOW PROFESSIONALS CAN SUPPORT SELF-HELP GROUPS

Self-help groups can be a very good resource for many professionals. More than one quarter of the calls that we receive at the Clearinghouse are from all types of professionals looking for groups for their clients. In addition, many of the lay persons who call us do so because a professional has suggested that they seek out a self-help group. Self-help groups are an excellent way to offer supplemental support to your clients who may need additional help.

Since most self-help groups are member-run and are dependent solely on the time and money donations of their members, it can sometimes be hard even for the best of groups to thrive. To help groups succeed, there are many ways in which professionals can support self-help groups. Here are some examples.

Provide Referrals: Refer clients, patients, families and others to existing groups. Network clients together for support.

Help Support Group Development: Provide encouragement, assistance in planning, meeting space, photocopying, mailings, supplying refreshments for groups. Having to spend scarce resources on initial mailings can be hard for anyone who is interested in developing a group.

Educate Yourself: Learn about the availability, benefits and variety of self-help groups. Educate your colleagues about self-help groups, too.

Advocate: Promote the interests of the group with your agency, supervisor or others.

Researcher: Help develop group evaluations, research medical or other problems that groups may face.

Resource Person: Be “on call” in case the group runs into a problem. Your expertise might be just what the group needs in order to overcome some challenges that they face.

Trainer: Teach group leaders such skills as facilitation, active listening skills, conflict management, etc.

Mediator: During times of group conflict, act as an objective third party.

Guest Speaker: Offer to speak at a group meeting about something of interest to the group. Share your resource information with group members. Suggest other colleagues who also may be able to address an interesting topic at the group.