

NEW JERSEY SELF-HELP GROUP CLEARINGHOUSE

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STARTING A GROUP CHECKLISTS & OPTIONAL PLANS

Below are checklists and optional plans that you can use as you develop your new self-help group. Not all of information will pertain to your particular group; however, using the checklists might help you focus on the necessary tasks needed to develop your group. Except for developing a group focus, these can be done in any order. The attached pages that will guide you during this process.

Group Focus / Mission Statement Developed

Needs Assessment Complete (Searched for other group in the area to see what already exists, network with and/or visit for ideas (call Clearinghouse, helplines, hospitals, etc.)

Searched for "How-To" Literature (in library, internet, etc. to get ideas)

Visited / Contacted Other Groups to Gather Ideas

Publicity

Flyer Developed

Brochure Developed

Contacted Key Agencies (hospitals, schools, etc)

Newspaper article

Community Calendar (newspaper)

Letter to the Editor

Put Notices in Key Bulletins (churches, YMCAs, etc)

Radio

Cable TV

Contacted professionals, agencies, hospitals, schools, etc

Other: _____

Other: _____

Other: _____

Prepared Self or Someone Else to Be a Phone Contact Person

Core Group Identified

Core Group Had Meeting

Meeting Location Site / Time Selected

Group Format / Structure Developed

First Public Meeting Set (date/time/location): _____

GROUP FOCUS / MISSION STATEMENT

Before you can effectively develop a flyer, brochure, do any publicity, or even look for other people to help, it is important to sit down and really think about 1) the reason you are starting the group (your own support, to help others, etc), 2) who the group will be open to (person with problem only, families and friends, just men or just women, persons under 18, etc), and 3) what you would like the group to accomplish (mutual support, advocacy, social activity, education, etc). Remember, these elements can be changed at a later date if necessary.

Why Do You Want to Start This Group?

Who are the Potential Members for this Group?

Person with a specific Type of Problem/Situation: _____

Open to Various Kinds of Problems: _____

Families Welcome

Friends Welcome

Families Only of Person with Problem

Under 18 Welcome

Men only

Women Only

Other: _____

Mission Statement / Purpose of Group:

GROUP VISITATION

It can be very helpful to visit or network with other groups in your area, even ones that deal with problems and situations different than what your group will deal with. When you visit a group, or talk with the founder or other members, you can gather valuable ideas, learn about solutions to possible stumbling blocks, and decide what elements in the various groups might work, or not work, for your group.

When you visit a group, you might want to use this form to help you formulate your thoughts. Ask how the group got started. Talk with members to find out what they like about the group, and what they might like to change about the group.

Name of Group: _____ Contact: _____

Meeting Site: _____ Day/Time: _____

What Worked What Didn't Work

Welcoming _____

Mutual support evident _____

Good Interaction _____

Free flow of ideas _____

Format/Structure _____

Location _____

Time _____

Room Set Up _____

Facilitation Style _____

Conflicts Dealt With _____

Agenda _____

Ground Rules _____

Flow of Meeting _____

Refreshments _____

Other () _____

Other () _____

FINDING A CORE GROUP

When starting a self-help group, it may be beneficial to try to find a few other people who are interested in helping to start the group. This will allow you to brainstorm ideas, share the workload, and model “mutual help” from the start.

There are many ways in which to find others who might be willing to help you to start the group.

- Develop a flyer on your interest in starting a group.** In your flyer, cite your interest in hearing from those who would be interested in helping you to start the group. Include your name and phone number. Xerox copies and post them anywhere an interested person may go (doctor’s office, hospital, school, etc.) Mail copies to key people whom you think would know others like yourself.
 - Posted flyers in key locations
 - Mailed flyers to key professionals and agencies with follow-up letter/visit
- Developed a good working relationship with key professionals and others** who may know of someone who might be interested in helping you to start the group. (Sent flyers with cover letter explaining vision for group and the potential benefits. Follow-up with phone call or visit.)
- Contacted local newspapers** with information about your interest in starting a group
 - Wrote “Letter to the Editor”
 - Contacted Newspaper Editor to see if they would write an article about your efforts to start a group.
- Core Group Members Identified:** When someone calls who is interested, discuss with them your interests, your vision and ideas about the group, and ask if they would be willing to help. Remember, write down their names, phone number, email and other pertinent information.

Name Phone Location E-mail Interest

- ❑ **Core Group Meeting Set:** Once you have a few people willing to help, set up a time, date and location for a core group meeting. At the meeting, discuss ideas, visions, interests and responsibilities for the core group.

Date: _____

Time: _____ am/pm to _____ am/pm

Location: _____

Address: _____

Things needed to do to prepare for core meeting:

CORE GROUP MEETING AGENDA

Ideas about Group: Brainstorm ideas for the group with the core group about and write them down.

Discuss Group Format / Structure: Check all that you might like to incorporate into your group and ideas on how you could structure them. Add your own ideas!

- Group composition (person with problem only, families, etc): _____
- 12-step (or other format): _____
- Group Activities: _____
- Group Discussions: _____
- Group Discussion / Ground Rules: _____
- Educational programs: _____
- Member-run or professionally-run: _____
- Facilitation (one person, co-facilitators, rotating, etc): _____
- On-going or time-limited: _____
- Local chapter of national: _____
- Professional advisor or member-run: _____
- Frequency of Meeting (once per month, every other Tuesday, etc): _____
- Time of Meeting (day, evening, week-end, etc): _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Divide the Workload: Decide all of the chores that will be needed to get done before your first public meeting and divide them up among the core group volunteers. Make a note of the time-frame in which it needs to be done and/or the order in which they need to get taken care of.

<u>Responsibility</u>	<u>Who Is Responsible</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>√ Done</u>
Find / secure meeting location	_____	_____	_____
Look for "How-To" Literature	_____	_____	_____
Write newspaper article	_____	_____	_____
Contact media (be specific)	_____	_____	_____
Develop Flyer	_____	_____	_____
Post Flyers	_____	_____	_____
Get List of Professionals/Agencies	_____	_____	_____
Mail Out Flyers	_____	_____	_____
Write Cover Letters	_____	_____	_____
Call Key Professionals	_____	_____	_____
Find Guest Speaker	_____	_____	_____
Get refreshments for first meeting	_____	_____	_____
Greet new members at the door	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____

Develop Agenda for First Public Meeting: Check the ones you want to include. (Remember, this is your meeting. You can structure it how ever it best suits the needs of the members.) Make a note of who will be responsible for which portion of the meeting.

- Formal Start of Meeting
- Talk about how and why group started and goals for the group
- Introductions (Ice breaker)
- Group Discussion Topic/Other Activity: _____
- Discuss a Name for the Group
- Pass around sign in lists (if appropriate)
- Develop Group Discussion / Ground Rules
- Wrap Up (set date and time for next meeting): _____
- Formal end of meeting
- Refreshments / social
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Decide on Location, Date and Time of First Public Meeting!

SUGGESTIONS FOR LOCATING A MEETING PLACE

Self-help groups don't need fancy rooms or high tech buildings to meet in—they just need a safe, comfortable, quiet space that is easily accessible, so that members can talk and share with each other. Because of this, self-help groups can do quite well in a variety of places. The initial core group might find it simplest to meet in a member's home if someone is willing to open their home to people who are (initially) strangers. But once the group becomes larger and more "public," it is generally better not to meet in an individual's home. One reason for this is the tendency for the home owner to play "host" or "hostess" while the other members feel as though they are "guests" at the meeting. These roles can adversely affect a person's feeling of group "ownership" which can be the key to the group's overall success.

Groups usually work best in public or semi-public buildings. The meeting location should be easy to find, close to major highways and public transportation, and have a close, inexpensive and safe parking area. The facility should be handicapped accessible. The room should be well-marked with clear signage directing members to its location. You don't want to lose any potential members because they can't find the meeting space!

When you are looking for a meeting location, check with your membership to see if anyone has a "personal connection" to an appropriate facility (e.g. Rotary Club, hospital, corporation, church or synagogue, etc). If not, contact local facilities that might have available space. They include:

- Churches and synagogues are the most common sites for group meetings. Contact your local pastor, rabbi or parish priest to request a room for your meeting. A personal connection is best, and initially could mean no charge, or a minimal charge or donation.
- Community organizations or agencies such as community mental health centers, Red Cross, Salvation Army, Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, YMCA's, Kiwanis, or senior citizen centers will sometimes provide space free of charge. Your local library, daycare center, schools, banks, town hall or colleges are other locations where groups hold meetings.
- Hospitals are another option, especially if your group is health related. Contact the community relations or social service department to request a meeting place.

The availability of a kitchen or a sink with running water is desirable for making coffee or other refreshments. Since most groups prefer to put chairs in a circle for a better sense of community, it is helpful if you are able to rearrange the chairs in the room if necessary. See if there is a table that can serve to display books, literature, announcements, and other printed materials. A small amount of storage space can also be helpful for storing group supplies, books, etc.

When inquiring about a meeting place for your group, be sure to communicate that fact that your group is a voluntary non-profit organization that provides a needed service to the community free-of-charge. Be clear on the specific nights that you would like your meetings to take place, how long they will be, and who will be responsible for opening and closing the facility, and who to contact in the event of a change in your meeting schedule. Such attention to detail will serve you and your group well!

MEETING SPACE INFORMATION

It is a good idea to keep pertinent information about your meeting location on hand and available to other group members in case of emergency, a change in leadership, or meeting date and time changes.

This list should include information that your group should know about the meeting space.

Meeting Location/Facility: _____
Street Address: _____
Contact Person: _____
Telephone Number: _____
Meeting Time: _____
Meeting Dates: _____

Meeting Space Responsibilities (before and after the meeting):

- Reserving the room: _____
- Paying the rent/making donation: _____
- Setting up meeting place: _____
- Getting and setting up refreshments: _____
- Greeting new members at the door: _____
- Putting out literature: _____
- Bringing name tags and pen(s): _____
- Clean-up: _____
- Locking up building: _____

Rules / Regulations of Facility:

Set-Up Time: _____ Clean-Up Time: _____

RENT / DONATIONS REQUIRED

Person responsible: _____
Amount of rent / donation: \$ _____ per _____
This needs to be paid on _____ (first of month, yearly, etc).
Check is made out to: _____
Account Information: _____
Check is mailed to: _____

CHECK LIST

- Does agency have written directions to the site. If yes, ask for a copy.
- Do they have a spare key?

MEETING LOCATION EVALUATION

This form can be used to determine if a meeting location fits your group's needs. Note: not all of the concerns below may apply to your group's individual needs.

Meeting Location: _____

Contact Person: _____

Phone Number: _____

Questions to ask; things to consider:

- Is the meeting space affordable? Yes No
 - The meeting space is free
 - There's a fee/donation of \$ _____ per _____

- Is the room **comfortable** and group friendly? Yes No
 - Room is not too large nor too small
 - Room is clean
 - Chairs can be moved around to suit group needs
 - There are available tables for refreshments, literature, etc.
 - There are enough electrical outlets
 - Refreshments can be brought into the room
 - Room reservations don't have to be confirmed for every meeting
 - Your group can meet in the same room all the time

- Does the meeting site feel "**safe**?" Yes No
 - Room or agency doesn't have any "offensive" wall hangings or posters
 - Location does not tend to "trigger" bad memories for members
 - There is access to a telephone in case of emergencies
 - There are agency personnel available on the premises
 - The neighborhood is safe
 - Do other groups meet at there at the same time (if this is a concern)

- Does the agency/location offer any **special benefits**? Yes No
 - Refreshments are provided (specify: _____)
 - The agency is open during convenient hours
 - Use of copy machine is available
 - Use of fax machine is available
 - Flip charts, projectors, etc. are available if needed
 - Larger rooms are available for special occasions (parties, lectures, etc)
 - On-site storage space is available for group literature, books, etc.
 - A sink with running water is available for group use
 - A kitchen is available for group use
 - Member has "personal connection" (Name: _____)

- Is the meeting location **handicapped accessible**? Yes No
 - There are no stairs that members must climb
 - There are stairs, but elevators are available
 - The bathrooms are handicapped accessible

- Is the meeting location **easy to get to**? Yes No
 - It is close to public transportation
 - It is close to major highways

- Is the **parking** situation adequate? Yes No
 - Parking is free (No: \$ _____ per _____)
 - Parking meters are not necessary (No, with a time limit of: _____)
 - Parking fees can be waived by: _____
 - The parking area is lit at night
 - There is a guard on duty in the parking area
 - It is a safe walk from parking area to meeting location
 - It is a close walk from the parking area to meeting room
 - There are an adequate number of parking spaces available

Is Insurance Required Yes No (If yes, who will be responsible for looking into insurance policies: _____)

Meeting Location Regulations:

Write down any rules or regulations that will affect your group members or group meeting (e.g. time that building opens or closes, restrictions on food, etc):

Other comments:

BEING A CONTACT PERSON FOR THE GROUP

After you've advertised your group, hopefully, potential members will start to call. This can be very rewarding, so don't panic!

Know Your Responsibilities as Contact Person

1. Listen to the caller
2. Educate caller about your group
3. Encourage caller to attend the group
4. Refer caller to other resources if necessary
5. Deal with media who call

Be Prepared

Have pad and pen near phone

Write down callers' name, phone and anything you promised (call, mail information, etc)

Put copy of mission statement near phone

Have directions to meeting from all directions

Know when and where next group meeting is going to be

Have list of other local resources (helplines, etc)

Train other family members to answer phone and take messages for the group

Helpful Hints

1. Acknowledge how hard making the first call can be
2. If you promise to do something, do it!
3. Be honest about the group and whether it is appropriate for the caller.
4. If you use an answering machine, make sure it works, and listen to it on a regular basis
5. Don't talk too much about your own problems—listen. But don't listen so much that the caller has no need for you group!
6. Keep name and number of any alternate contact person by phone
7. If you can't talk, let the caller know when you will call them back, or have another contact person to call.
8. Thank the caller for calling

PUBLICITY

There are many ways in which to publicize your new group. Check off all of the following that you have done for your group. Cross off the ones that are not appropriate.

Key Elements

- Group Focus/Mission statement developed
- Flyer developed
- Brochure developed

Newspaper Information:

- Letter to Editor
- Newspaper article(s)
- Community Calendar(s)

Name of Paper Area Served Phone Number Fax Contact Name

Cable TV

Local Cable Area Served Phone Number Fax Contact Name

Radio Stations

Name of Station Area Served Phone Number Contact Name

Key Agencies to Contact

- Hospitals
- Schools
- Houses of Worship
- YMCA
- Internet
- Churches / Synagogues
- Hospitals
- Mental Health Associations / Centers
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Key Professionals to build relationship with for future referrals. Mail out flyers and make follow-up calls or visits.

- Teachers
- Therapists
- Doctors
- Social Workers
- Other: _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

FIRST PUBLIC MEETING

After making the arrangements for the meeting location, and publicizing your group, you are now ready for your first public meeting.

The most important thing that you can do is make all attendees feel welcome from the very start. Have someone assigned as greeter at the door. You may even want to have someone out in the parking lot to make people feel comfortable and know that they are in the correct place. Post signs directing people to the room (if appropriate).

Delegate Responsibilities

What Needs to be Done Who Is Responsible

Make arrangements for room _____

Post signs to room _____

Refreshments _____

Name Tags _____

Sign In List _____

Greeting members _____

Room set-up (chairs, tables, etc) _____

Run meeting _____

Take care of sign in sheet _____

Take notes _____

Clean up after meeting _____

Be phone contact person _____

Other: _____

Other: _____

Other: _____

Meeting Information

When: _____ Time: _____

Where: _____

Directions to meeting site from all areas

Phone Number of Meeting Site

Meeting Agenda: You can use the proposed agenda developed at your core group meeting. Put down the time-frame (e.g., from 7-7:15) for each item so that you can start and end on time!

Time Frame Activity Who Is Responsible

- Formal Start of Meeting _____
- Talk about how/why group started _____
- Talk about goals for the group _____
- Introductions (Ice breaker) _____
- Group Discussion /Other Activity: _____
- Discuss a Name for the Group _____
- Discuss Ground Rules/Group Discussion Rules _____
- Pass around sign in lists (during meeting?) _____
- Wrap Up (set date/time for next meeting): _____
- Formal end of meeting _____
- Refreshments / social _____
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Getting Attendees Ideas and Feedback: A good way to make your next meeting better is to find out what worked and what didn't work at your first meeting. Getting feedback also makes the new members feel more a part of the group so that they will be more likely to return!

Ideas on Group Name: _____

Ideas for frequency, meeting time, place and day of week: _____

Ideas for activities (guest speakers, group discussion topics, etc): _____

Other Feedback: _____

Getting Members to Volunteer:

Make list of things that need to be done and ask for volunteers. You can either pass around the list or leave it at the table. Be sure to ask for their names and phone numbers.

What Needs to Be Done Volunteer Name and Phone

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Circulate sign up list to get information on the members' talents, interests and strengths. (See attached sample.)

Follow-up

What Needs to Be Done Who Is Responsible

Call attendees to get feedback _____

Call members to remind them of next meeting _____

Make arrangements for meeting location _____

Other: _____

Other: _____

LIST OF WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

If you want, you can pass out a handout to let attendees know what things need to be done and see if they are interested in volunteering. See sample handout below.

Please Help Out with the Operation of Our Group!

Every self-help group depends on its members' involvement to keep the group running. Please help us continue our meetings by volunteering for any of the following tasks by checking the box. You would be volunteering until *(date)*. If you have questions just speak to *(name)*.

Greeter (Meets newcomers at the door, introduces them to others, hand out name tags.)

Phone Contact Person(s) (Answers call about the group)

Refreshments Coordinator (Arranges for refreshments at meeting, makes coffee, etc)

Liaison Person(s) (Maintains contact with key professionals and agencies)

Outreach/Publicity Coordinator (Gets the word out through press releases, notices in community calendars, etc.)

Librarian (Puts out literature at the meeting and events, checks out books, etc)

Treasurer (Collects/deposits contributions)

Newsletter Editor (Compiles newsletter, organizes printing, mailings)

Secretary (Keeps lists of active members, etc)

Co-Leader (Shares or rotates responsibility of group)

Social Events Coordinator (Makes arrangements for parties, outings, etc.)

Webmaster (Maintains website)

Other: _____

Thank you for your consideration!

Your Name: _____ Your Phone: (_____) _____