



Facilitator Roles in Support Group Meetings

BASIC INFORMATION

HAVE YOUR FACILITATOR GUIDES (sheet protected colored papers with ring you received at training) AT EACH MEETING, USE THEM AND FOLLOW STEPS EXACTLY.

There are no lead facilitators in the NAMI Connection program. Facilitators **co-facilitate** the meeting. For each group meeting, there will be a primary facilitator and a secondary facilitator. **The primary facilitator one week may be in the secondary facilitator the following week.** This helps lessen any confusion co-facilitators or group members may have about depending on only one facilitator to lead the group through the structures and processes. These instructions will help clarify the roles of the co-facilitators during a support group meeting.

BEFORE GROUP BEGINS

- ❖ On group meeting day, both facilitators should have previously agreed who will be the primary and secondary facilitators for the meeting **that week**. You may want to set up a regular schedule of who will be primary and who will be secondary for each week.
- ❖ Both facilitators should plan to arrive between 15 and 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting. (Remember to ALWAYS start and stop on time as the group guidelines remind us.) Invite your Champion to meet early with you the first couple weeks your group meets so that they are there to help with any unforeseen problems (locked doors, no place to hang up the charts, etc.)
- ❖ Both facilitators should be involved in hanging up the charts, passing out the guidelines/principles of support sheets, organizing the resource table, and setting up chairs in a semi-circle. If you serve coffee, that should also be done prior to the start of the meeting.
- ❖ Both facilitators should be available to welcome group members as they come in.
- ❖ Some co-facilitators seat themselves together for increased (and less distracting) communication during the meeting. Others prefer to sit opposite each other so that at least one of them can see each group member clearly during the meeting. This is something that each team will need to decide for themselves before starting the meeting.
- ❖ Both facilitators should have their facilitator guides and their sand timers with them. The primary facilitator for that week should have them out and ready to use by start time. Be sure to have two sand timers of the same length (“blue for two” if you have a small group.)

GETTING STARTED

- ❖ The co-facilitator in the primary role **for that day** should call the group to order on time.
- ❖ The co-facilitator in the secondary role will have pen and paper ready to take notes on data information once members begin to check-in. (See below for *sample sheet* you can use to take notes. Information collected can be easily transferred for data reporting).
- ❖ The primary facilitator should be first to “check-in”. Remember to model the one (or two) minute time limit. Have pen and paper ready to take notes as group members check in so you can address the issues that come up for each participant. (Again, the sample sheet can be used to note issues and prioritize.)
- ❖ The secondary facilitator, if seated next to the primary, should go next and pass on the sand timer when done. If co-facilitators are seated opposite each other, the secondary will check in when the timer gets to him or her.

DURING GROUP WORK

- ❖ Once the group gets into group work, the primary facilitator should move the group along and use the facilitator guides to work through structures and processes.
- ❖ The secondary facilitator may, at appropriate times, interject his/her ideas or helpful solutions, but must remember not to monopolize group time or take the lead from the primary co-facilitator.
- ❖ Both facilitators should always remember to use “I” statements. Never tell someone what they should or shouldn’t do.
- ❖ If needed, the secondary facilitator may escort anyone from the room, if that’s appropriate. Both co-facilitators can agree on who should go according to the circumstances. These should be rare occurrences, i.e., someone is distracting to the group or someone remains emotional or suicidal after the structures and processes have been used.
- ❖ The secondary facilitator can keep track of time and signal the co-facilitator in the primary role when the meeting is drawing to an end. Decide how and when to signal time. For example, if the primary facilitator has not started to close the group by five minutes prior to the end of the group, the secondary facilitator can sign a “T” with his/her hands to indicate time to wrap up. Make sure the plan works for both of you.
- ❖ The primary facilitator will conclude the meeting on an “up” note.

AFTER THE MEETING

- ❖ Remove charts and table, pack up resources, and arrange the room as you found it. Keep the landlord happy.
- ❖ If there is no storage space in your group location, both facilitators may want to keep their charts, supplies and resources in their cars to ensure the group will always have them.
- ❖ Debrief one another and discuss who’s doing what the following week.
- ❖ Report your data - either by postcard or via email. After you transfer your data from your notes, destroy your notes. There should not be a record of the names of participants. You will want to decide who will be responsible for reporting either by the role they take each week OR the one person who tends to do a great job with details. Set up a plan that works for you and then stick to it.

