

Rejuvenating Your Parent Group
How to Heal and Renew!

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Think Positive!

- Why would people want to come to this support group?
- What are their needs?
- What are the five top reasons?
- What do we wish we could do better?

Reasons for Involvement with Support Groups

- For Information
- To have the support of others
- To normalize feelings
- To share their experience
- To get advice from “experts”
- To socialize
- Decrease isolation

You Gotta Believe!

- Value of groups:
- Smith & Howard: more helpful than intensive services like family therapy
- Delaney: Normalizes experience, sets realistic expectations, prepares for crisis, innovative strategies
- Child Welfare Information Gateway: parents less isolated, more empowered & confident

VA State Adoption Services

Their evaluation of 500 families identified three major service needs that led to successful outcomes:

- Parent to parent support
- Respite
- Adoption competent mental health/child welfare practioners

Post Adoption Services

- Information & Referral
- Parent Support Network
- Training
- Youth Support/Speak Out Teams
- Clinical Services
- Crisis Support

Post Adoption Support

- NACAC/MN DHS parent-to-parent support
- Lessons learned over 15 years:
 - ✓ Connecting with support early is important
 - ✓ Being with other adoptive families is normalizing
 - ✓ Parents learn from one another
 - ✓ Technology offers new ways to connect
 - ✓ Partnering with others increases outreach to families.

Time to Assess your Group:

- Membership Survey:
What are the members needs: time, location, child care, educational topics, fun, socialization, relationship building, etc.

LISTEN TO GROUP MEMBERS!

Methods: Survey monkey, focus group, telephone call, questionnaire

What do you do with the Assessment?

- Create yearly schedule:
 - Usually starting in September
 - Need to recreate every year
 - Plan both educational and social opportunities
 - What are people willing to do to help?
 - What other special skills in the group members?

Yearly Calendar

- Ideas:
 - October: Back to school issues
 - November: Holiday Stress
 - December: Fun time, social activity
 - February: Taking Care of the Care Giver
 - Retreat; couples or mom's
 - March: Adoption Tax Credit

Yearly Calendar

- Socialization:
 - Family Picnic
 - Families to sporting events
 - Back to school events
 - Honoring the members with a luncheon, awards banquet, small gifts
 - Cultural events
- It's so important to help families play together and have fun!

Yearly Calendar

- Educational
 - What are the issues that your members are talking about most?
 - behavioral issues
 - FASD
 - trauma
 - school issues
 - loss and grief issues

Tracking and Evaluation

- What was successful?
- Meeting /event/ support?
 - Presenter/ Facilitator
 - Description
 - Discussion
 - Participants
 - Any follow up

The four "C's"

- Communication:
 - Ownership: Everybody's group
 - Flow chart of talents/skills
 - Would you do the following?
 - We need your skills/talents to
 - do.....
 - When new ideas are incorporated and elicited, point this out to the group
 - Evaluation/Feedback

Four "C's"

- Connectedness:
 - Share stories, phone numbers, emails
 - Share issues, connect people that have the same issues
 - Newsletter or E-News
 - Social media connectedness:
 - Face book, website, blogs, internet support groups
 - Promote Your Group!!!

Four "C's"

- Creativity:
 - Attract New Members:
 - Welcome Committee (phone call or email after the meeting & when next meeting)
 - Mentoring (CT Foster Parent Association)
 - Have present members each invite someone they know to the gathering
 - Networking
 - Have fun together, laugh!

Four "C's"

- Creativity:
 - Have a family retreat or camp experience
 - Offer cutting edge training:
 - National Child Trauma Stress Network (www.nctsn.org)
 - Book: "Wounded Children ,Healing Homes" Jayne Schooler/Betsy Smalley
 - Respond to the needs you hear in group

Four "C's"

- CHANGE
- Meet the needs of your community/group!

- Types of Groups:
 - Venting Group....Mutual Support Group.....Service Group.....Advocacy Group...
 - Post Permanency Agency

MFCAA

- Started in 1999 as small support group
- Today; support 850 foster/adopt/kinship folk
- Programs:
 - Advocacy & support
 - Parent mentoring
 - Support groups & Training
 - Information & Sharing
 - Clothing & food pantry

Change

- Look at how the community has changed:
- Groups meeting four times a year and connecting through Face book at other times!
- Specialty group
- Older kids
- More foster to adopt parents

Other Issues

- Whose group is it anyway?
- ✓ Parent Run
- ✓ Parent Run/Agency Supported
- ✓ Agency Run

Facilitation

- Need person to really facilitate a meeting
- ✓ Believe in cause, Ask for help, Be willing to change, take care of self, laugh and find humor in situations, grab an audience, and find balance in this position
- ✓ Don't be afraid to talk about difficult situations
Allegations & disruptions

- Facilitating purposeful engaging activities throughout the life of the group is a necessity!

Meetings

- Have a beginning, middle, and ending:
- Beginning: mixer, get folk to relax and know each other, engage in the first five minutes, confidentiality
- Middle: take time to support as well as give information, make sure everyone has the opportunity to talk
- Ending: Send folk home feeling positive and wanting to come back..affirmations, what went well, things we could do better, where the next meeting will be, etc.

Stumbling Stones

- Personal & interpersonal relationships that are damaging & not dealt with
- Over-dependence on leader
- Lack of support within group/agency
- Identifying and securing resources for the group
- Delegating responsibility
- Lack of problem solving strategies

Strategies for Sustaining

- BALANCE: work, fun, personal time, fundraising events, support, education, hands-on involvement
- PLAN: activities for the entire year
- DELEGATE: You can not do this alone and this is all the members group
- LISTEN and take action
- LEADERSHIP that understands support, volunteers, problem solving
- FUNDING: be creative, look for new funding sources

Taking Care of the Leadership

- Take time together
- Talk to other groups that are successful
- Meet quarterly with other groups
- Ask for help
- Develop trust within leadership
- Be open to change, ask; "How are we doing? What can be do to improve?"

Have Fun!

- Remember that laughter , humor and fun are good medicine for lots of things!
- My favorite quote:

Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass,
It's ABOUT
learning
To DANCE
in the rain.
