

## Starting, Nurturing and Maintaining Caregiver Support Groups

*Groups that are not growing are dying*

## First things, first

- ▶ Please remember this is just a primer. NACAC and others host multi-day trainings on support group development. Feel free to follow up with us and others for additional technical assistance.
- ▶ Reconsider calling your group a "support group." For this webinar, we use the term in instructional ways, but remember - many potential attendees and members will stay away from a *support* group as they may feel a stigma attached. Consider "coffee hour," "discussion group," "grandma's night out," anything that indicates camaraderie and normalization, while offering a welcoming reprieve from the daily work of caregiving.

## Why do people come to a support group?

- ▶ For information
- ▶ To have the support of others
- ▶ To normalize feelings
- ▶ To share their experience
- ▶ To get advice from "experts"
- ▶ To socialize

## Caregiver Group Development

- ▶ Primary Types and Evolution of Groups:
  - Frustration/Venting
  - Mutual Support
  - Service
  - Advocacy

Each type will have a unique:

- Reason for Existence
- Purpose
- Program/Services
- Structure



## Getting The Group Started

- ▶ As a group leader, one of your first tasks is to find other group members and organize your first public meeting.
- ▶ Decisions and action to take:
  - **Inviting new members**
  - **Location**
  - **Day and time**
  - **Publicity**
  - **Planning**
  - **Agenda**



## Developing Group Identity & Activities

- ▶ **Clarifying Identity**
  - Who are we?
  - What do we care about?
  - What problem do we want to address?
  - What are our needs?
- ▶ **Building the Foundation**
  - Choosing a Name

- ▶ **Exercise: Identify Your Purpose**
  - Writing Your Mission Statement
- ▶ **Dividing the Work**
  - Tracking Progress
  - Information and Outreach
  - Contacts and Membership
  - Activities and Events
  - Fundraising

## Managing Group Meetings

In caregiver group meetings, facilitation is the art of guiding group discussions and protecting the structure of the meeting to help the group be effective and productive.

- ▶ **Group Member Roles**
  - Task-Oriented
- ▶ **Human Dynamics**
- ▶ **Facilitator Reminders**
- ▶ **Discussions**
  - Choosing Topics
  - Education and Training
- ▶ **Structuring the Meeting:**
  - \*Beginning
  - \*Middle
  - \*End



## Anticipating Challenges as a Leader

- ▶ Balancing support and education
- ▶ Childcare and other needs
- ▶ Personal crises
- ▶ Burnout and Compassion Fatigue

## Becoming A Nonprofit Organization\*

- ▶ The benefits of incorporating and obtaining federal tax-exempt status are: donations, foundation grants, nonprofit mailing privileges, sales tax exemptions, and more.
- ▶ Getting Organized
  - Name and Mission Statement
  - Activities and Services
  - Officers
  - Board
  - Articles of Incorporation
  - By Laws
  - Tax Exempt Status



\* This can be a complicated process - contact us for technical assistance.

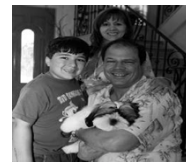
## Financial Planning and Fundraising

- ▶ A challenge to most groups is finding and keeping a secure funding base:
  - The Importance of Obtaining a 501 (C) (3)
  - Keeping Accurate Financial Records
  - Develop a Budget
  - Identifying Funding Sources
  - Fundraisers / Special Events
  - Dues
  - In-kind Donations
  - Proposals and Grant Writing



## Rejuvenating Your Group

- ▶ Like a living organism with a life of its own groups can become sick and die. They can be healed and renewed as they grow and mature into something different.
- ▶ Be Creative: Value Members Talent
  - \*Attract New People
  - \*Have a Retreat
  - \*Offer Services / Training
  - \*Respond to Community Needs
  - \*Retain Members / Allow Others to Lead / Be Open to Change



### Stages a group may go through:

- ▶ Stage 1 - nervous leader, silent members, people who come once and then not again
- ▶ Stage 2 - members numbers change, members getting a feel if they want to continue coming
- ▶ Stage 3 - members coming regularly, more commitment, ready to volunteer, trust, talk and laughter
- ▶ Stage 4 - crisis, the founder leaves, or key people leave
- ▶ Stage 5 - regroup and rejuvenate: requires planned succession of leadership and/or shared leadership from start

### Keep Members coming regularly

- ▶ Keep Communications open eliciting new ideas and participation
- ▶ Have the needs of the group changed?
- ▶ Feedback/Evaluation- Do you have any suggestions to improve our meetings?
  - Roses and Thorns

### Promote Your Group

Spread the word about your group. This helps to create awareness about the issue, gather new members, and gain support from the community

Create a unique angle or "hook" to help in promoting your group - name choice and recognition matter

Encourage group members to spread the word

Newspaper articles and announcements

### Promote Your Group Cont.

- ▶ Newsletters or E-Newsletters
  - Council members
  - Schools
  - Other support/caregiver groups
  - Community Organizations
- ▶ Websites
  - Using the web means that our information is available 24/7
  - It will communicate with isolated or disabled members

## Networking

It is important to consistently network to ensure the group's ongoing development and maintenance.

- ▶ Allows for the sharing of valuable contacts and information
- ▶ Gain support and referrals
- ▶ Establishes relationships

## Ongoing Commitment

- ▶ Don't confuse effectiveness with number of participants.
- ▶ Maintain your media contacts, stay in touch with your network organizations
- ▶ Be aware of your own limitations

## Ongoing Commitment

- ▶ The more you get your members involved, the more members will feel useful and have a sense of ownership and vested interest in the groups continuance.

## Looking Forward

- ▶ Reassess Your Community Needs (make sure your group is offering services that meet the needs of the community).
- ▶ Collaborate / Form Service Agreement with Agency (approach service delivery or support ideas that follow the lines of support, prevention and recruitment retention).
- ▶ Look for New Funding Sources (partner with successful community groups and be open to new approaches)  
Connect with Key People!

## Resources

- ▶ Starting, Nurturing and Maintaining Adoptive Parent Groups: A Guide for Leaders
  - <http://www.nacac.org/parentgroups/starting.pdf>
- ▶ Developing a Parent to Parent Support Network
  - <http://www.nacac.org/adoptalk/parent2parentnetwork.pdf>
- ▶ Taking a Break: Creating Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Respite Care in Your Community
  - [http://adoptuskids.org/\\_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/taking-a-break-respite-guide.pdf](http://adoptuskids.org/_assets/files/NRCRRFAP/resources/taking-a-break-respite-guide.pdf)
- ▶ <http://www.brookdalefoundation.org/RAPP/rapp.html>

## Grandfamily Resources

- ▶ Brookdale Foundation
  - Publications and Multimedia
    - <http://www.brookdalefoundation.org/RAPP/rapp.html>
  - Relatives as Parents Guidebook
    - [http://www.brookdalefoundation.org/RAPP/07-080\\_n4a\\_Brookdale\\_final.pdf](http://www.brookdalefoundation.org/RAPP/07-080_n4a_Brookdale_final.pdf)
  - Developing Rural Relatives as Parents Programming: Promising Practices
    - <http://www.brookdalefoundation.org/RAPP/Developing%20Rural%20Relatives%20as%20Parents%20Programmingpdf.pdf>
- ▶ Grandfamilies Outcome Workgroup (GrOW)
  - [madelyn@grandparentsasparents.org](mailto:madelyn@grandparentsasparents.org)

## Our Partners

- ▶ National Foster Parents Association
  - <http://www.nfpaonline.org>
- ▶ Generations United
  - <http://www.gu.org/OURWORK/Grandfamilies.aspx>
- ▶ North American Council on Adoptable Children
  - <http://www.nacac.org/parentgroups/parentgroups.html>

## Contact Information

Kim Stevens, Project Director  
 Advocates for Families First: *Enhancing Support and Advocacy for Children in Foster, Adoptive and Kinship Families*  
[kimstevens@nacac.org](mailto:kimstevens@nacac.org)  
 508-254-2200