

Development & Implementation of Support Groups in a Medical Setting

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Presentation Objectives

1. Learn about the different types of support groups
2. Identify the benefits of providing support groups for PLWH
3. Learn how to implement & evaluate support groups in a clinic/medical setting
4. Identify simple solutions for addressing common problems in a group setting

A little bit about us and where we come from...

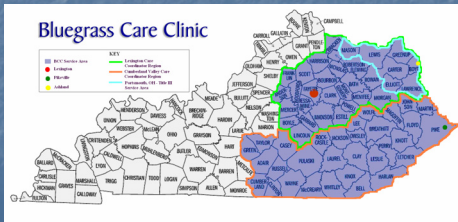


Bluegrass Care Clinic

- The BCC is located in the University of Kentucky Chandler Medical Center (UKCMC), providing services to persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) since 1990
- Funding
 - Ryan White Part C : HIV Early Intervention Services
 - Ryan White Part B & State Funds: HIV Care Coordinator Program
 - AETC Site

Service Area

- The BCC is the only provider of HIV primary care to indigent persons in the highly rural, medically underserved 63-county service area (central, eastern KY)



Bluegrass Care Clinic

- Provides HIV services to approximately 800 persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH)
 - 5 Infectious Disease Specialty Physicians
 - 2 Primary Care Physicians
 - 2 Clinical Pharmacist
 - 1 Physician's Assistant
 - 1 Patient Care Coordinator
 - 1 Mental health therapist
 - 1 Psychiatrist
 - 1 Nutritionist
 - 5 Social Workers
- Largely Rural: 50% of patients from rural area

Our Changing Population

- Women
 - 9% to 23% increase of AIDS cases in service area
 - AA were 12 times > than white women
 - Heterosexual transmission
 - 22%(2002) to 35%(2004) in new patients
- Hispanics
 - Doubled in KY from 7% (2001) to 13% (2003) of AIDS cases
 - BCC: new AIDS was 0% (1996) to 6% (2003)
 - Kentucky Hispanic AIDS rate is ~ 15% greater than the AA rate

Why did we start offering support groups?

Our clients wanted more interaction with each other...and a greater connectivity with the clinic

Current BCC Support Groups

- Gender-specific education groups
- Co-ed social events (e.g. picnic, holiday events)

In the works...

- Support person support group
- Spanish speaking
- Newly diagnosed

The Benefits of Support Groups for PLWH

- Support groups provide a safe forum for PLWH to discuss issues specific to their disease, such as:
 - Stigma & shame
 - Grief & loss
 - The initial shock of diagnosis
 - Medical side effects and concerns
 - Sex and sexuality

The Medical Benefits of Support Groups for PLWH

- Social networks have been proven to prolong survival among individuals living with chronic illness
- Social support is an indicator that is associated with higher levels of medication adherence

More benefits...

To have fun! HIV can be isolating...many of our clients are experiencing loss and groups create a social outlet.



What are the different types of support groups?

- Content
- Population
- Open/Closed
- *These are not mutually exclusive categories!*

Mutual Support

*The premise of all groups is **mutual support**—people coming together over a common cause to foster a sense of shared identity and alliance*



Education Group

GOAL—To become more knowledgeable

- Pre-established curriculum
 - Outside facilitators
 - Open or closed
- Screen for stage of disease

Therapeutic

GOAL—Examine emotions in a group setting and develop positive coping strategies to address common problems

- Skilled, outside facilitator
 - Closed membership
- Comprehensive screening

Population-based groups

- Gender-sensitive
- Homo/Hetero sensitive
- Support people
- Newly infected
- Ten years +
- Adolescents

Group Dynamics

- **Forming**—members behave independently, on best behavior, make friends
- **Storming**—members confront each other and leader, act out
- **Norming**—members adjust to each other, begin to trust each other and leader
- **Performing**—members are motivated, knowledgeable, & productive

Open or Closed?

- *Open*—anyone can attend at anytime
- *Closed*—members are closely screened and meetings are for members only

The Role of the Leader

1. To facilitate information sharing
2. To accept, reassure, show interest
3. To involve individuals in group discussion
4. To reflect, reframe, clarify, and confront
5. To enforce boundaries
6. To be quiet
7. *To bring the food!*

Considerations for Group Leadership

- Is there a safety issue that requires co-leaders?
- Are you using a student and/or a trainee?
- What is the gender/racial/ethnic make-up of the group?
- What type of leadership are you trying to model?

The Importance of *Contracting*



"Unless members are involved in clarifying and setting their own personal and common group goals, they cannot be expected to be active participants in their own behalf." Greif & Ephross, 2005)

Common Issues that Arise

- The dating game
- "Chatty Cathy"
- Lack of group focus

The Dating Game

- Ask the group to implement rules
- Discuss why dating interferes with the group process
- *Contract*





Chatty Cathy



- Take turns
- Re-direct
- Let others take responsibility
- Offer another forum to talk

Lack of Group Focus

- Be prepared with a back-up activity
- Call it like it is!

Getting Started

- Put together your team
- Do your research
- Define your goals
- Advertise
- Recruitment strategy
- Offer incentives
- Be prepared for the worst
- Celebrate small successes!

What do you need?

- Space
- Facilitator
- Childcare
- Transportation
- Food
- Curriculum

Evaluating Your Group

- Satisfaction surveys
 - Ongoing, brief
- Pre/post tests
 - Measure knowledge

Sample Evaluation

In the last year, I attended a BCC sponsored support group:
Frequently sometimes rarely never

If you attended a BCC support group, did you like the support group meeting?

YES NO

What did you like or dislike about the meeting?

If you attended a support group **NOT** sponsored by our clinic, tell us about your support group meeting? What did you like or dislike about that meeting?

Are there specific support groups that you would prefer? Circle all that apply:
Women only Family/friends HIV Negative partners
Men only newly diagnosed Ages 50+
Hetero only Pregnant/parenting People in recovery
Other:

Client Stories



Support for Men



What about straight men?



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Thank You!

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