

2014-2016 IDT – Group Support

Room Set-up—Tables with 6–10 seats each.

Session materials—Large sheets of paper and markers for the front of the room. On each table: group support handout, note sheets and pens, Brainstorming Guidelines, Suggested Ground Rules, Facilitator Instructions, A Vision for NA Service, the Traditions and Concepts summary handout, and *The Group Booklet* (at least one per table.) Copies of service pamphlets as available, either on the tables or on a separate handout table.

Title—Slide 1

Purpose of Session

- Highlight the importance of the group’s role as the primary way we carry our message
- Provide members an opportunity to experience one approach to discussing group issues
- Consider ideas for implementing some form of group support in local communities
- Review the Group Support Forum idea from the Service System Project

Session Outline

Introduction: Focus of the session and description of the process	5 minutes
Large Group Discussion: Identifying strengths of groups and the issues they face	20 minutes
Small Group Discussion: Brainstorming solutions to issues	25 minutes
Hearing from Small Groups: Sharing solutions	20 minutes
Supporting Our Groups & Wrap-up	20 minutes

Introduction

5 minutes

The Primary Purpose...—Slide 2

Open the session by focusing on the importance of an NA group’s role in carrying the message as discussed in our Fifth Tradition. Ask someone to read the excerpt from *The Group Booklet* in the handout on the tables:

The primary purpose of an NA group is to carry the message of recovery to the addict who still suffers. The group provides each member with the opportunity to share and to hear the experience of other addicts who are learning to live a better way of life without the use of drugs. The group is the primary vehicle by which our message is carried. It provides a setting in which a newcomer can identify with recovering addicts and find an atmosphere of recovery.

Better Supporting Groups...—Slide 3

Explain that the goals of this workshop are to discuss ways we can better support groups on a local level, and what that support might look like. Include the following points:

- Groups often have common challenges, and sharing experience can be helpful.
- ASCs are sometimes not able to make time for group-related discussions.
- A discussion about better supporting groups can attract members who are not interested in other service, but are interested in group-related issues.
- Offer an idea of how a group support forum might work.

Today's Process—Slide 4

Describe the process for today's workshop.

Discuss how there are different ways to create a list of issues that groups are facing. They may be selected from group reports to the local service body; they could be the result of an inventory process; or a list can be brainstormed at a workshop which is what we are going to do today.

As a large group, we will brainstorm a list of issues of concern, and then prioritize that list to identify the issues for our focus. At our tables we will brainstorm solutions to deal with the issues. Then each table will share those solutions with the large group. (Note: we do not prioritize these solutions.)

Large Group Discussion

20 minutes

Our Common Issues—Slide 5

Our Common Issues

Lead the workshop in brainstorming a list of issues their groups face, clarifying them if necessary so they are clearly understood by everyone. Write the issues at the front of the room so everyone can see them. For the purposes of this exercise, create a list of 6-8 issues, although in practice this list might be much longer.

Once the list is complete, ask members to prioritize the issues. Each member gets two votes. The top two vote getters will be the issues for discussion today. (Remind members that if this were a monthly meeting, we would revisit this list again. The issues not prioritized today might be prioritized next month).

[Facilitators Note: voting can be done by a show of hands, making a mark next to the preferred issue, or other similar method.]

Small Group Discussion—Slide 6

Introduce/review the small group discussion process including the Brainstorming Guidelines, Suggested Ground Rules, and Facilitator’s Instructions.

Each table will discuss to the two most highly prioritized issues. This discussion may build toward a solution or it may not, depending on the issue and the participants. Sometimes we can come up with solutions when we discuss issues; other times we just need to discuss so we can be more aware. Still other times maybe we need a solution but we cannot come up with one right away. We might find a solution in the next discussion of the issue: sometimes we need some time to—think it over, sleep, eat, have fun, pray about—it and see what we'll come up with next time...

Brainstorming Solutions—Slide 7

During this process some of the useful questions to ask ourselves include:

- What is our experience?
- What does our literature say?
- Where can we find more information about this?
- Do any of our groups have related strengths we can build on?

Ask each table to select a facilitator to help keep the discussion moving and to watch the time; and a recorder to take notes.

Brainstorming...Small Group Discussion Questions—Slide 8

The discussion begins with each table’s facilitator stating the issue and ensuring that everyone understands it. Each member at the table then takes turns to speak, offering any experience or ideas they may have. The recorder keeps notes, which will be collected at the end of the session.

1. *What experience or ideas do we have about our challenges?*
2. *Do we have ideas for solutions?*
3. *How can we build on our strengths?*

Halfway through this segment, remind members to move on to the second issue.

Small Group Feedback—Slide 9

Hear ideas from as many tables as possible in 20 minutes and record them on large sheets of paper at the front of the room. Remember to write the issue being discussed at the top of the page. Facilitators may need to ask for clarification if the ideas presented aren't clear.

While groups are sharing their results, you may want to remind them that in order for a discussion of solutions to be effective, the group support forum, or perhaps one or more of its member groups may need to follow through with a decision on how to take action.

Explain that this small group discussion exercise is an example of a group support forum, which is simply an opportunity for members to come together to focus on the needs of the group, including discussing group-related issues so that we can more effectively carry the NA message.

Supporting Our Groups—Slide 10

Ask the whole group *“How can we better support our groups?”*

How Can We Better...—Slide 11

Brainstorm ideas for changes, using the solutions just created in the small groups as a starting point if needed. Some other ideas to mention if they don't come up in conversation include:

- Some ASCs utilize group report forms for groups to ask questions or request help with any issues they may be facing.
- Some communities also use open forums at each ASC that provide an opportunity for groups to bring up any issues they may be facing.—
- Some communities have begun alternating a business oriented ASC with a group-support oriented ASC, each every other month.
- Group Support Forums (GSFs) as described in the motions passed recently at the WSC.

Record ideas at the front of the room. Try to help ensure that they have specific details that are realistic for the community to achieve.

The Group Support Forum—Slide 12

Spend the last five minutes on a brief explanation of the Group Support Forum, as described in the Service System Project proposals. Cover these points:

- The GSF is not just a problem-solving body.
- Other GSF activities may include workshops, training, and sessions to participate in projects such as the new Traditions Book.

- All are encouraged to attend.
- It may be a monthly, neighborhood-sized gathering, but the exact scheduling and size are adaptable.

Refer to the GSF description from the 2014 *Conference Agenda Report* in the handout.

Wrap up

5 minutes

Resources—Slide 13

- ✓ Remind everyone that the GSF tools on the SSP webpage offer ideas about holding GSF meetings—www.na.org/servicesystem. Remind members that some of the issues confronting groups are addressed in the existing service pamphlets and in *The Group Booklet*. It may be useful to distribute some copies of these, or have them on a handout table.
- ✓ Encourage members to consider having a Group Support workshop locally, and to share any input or additional thoughts with NAWS, worldboard@na.org.
- ✓ Remind members that we have a project to draft a Traditions workbook this cycle, and we need their participation. They can find more information, a discussion board, and workshop materials on the project webpage: www.na.org/traditions.

[Note to facilitator: Please send any input on these Issue Discussion Topic questions to worldboard@na.org. Session profiles and resources are available at www.na.org/IDT.]

Unity of Action...—Slide 14

Close by affirming the importance of the Fifth Tradition: that each group has the same primary purpose of carrying the message, and that the commitment of others to this is what made it possible for us to recover:

“Unity of action and purpose makes possible what seemed impossible for us—recovery.”