

The Social Skills Training (SST) Model

VA Psychosocial Rehabilitation Training Program (VA-PRT)

- Program funded and supported by OMHS at VACO
- Part of effort to increase availability of psychosocial EBP to veterans
- Provides training, support, consultation to VA practitioners and MH leaders working with vets with serious mental illness (SMI)
- Training in 2-day workshop and 24 weeks of consultation
- Also includes a Train-the-trainer component
- Current focus on Social Skills Training for vets with SMI

Background of SST

- Identified as an evidenced-based practice for persons with serious mental illness
- Currently used in multiple research projects
 - Vocational social skills
 - Reduction of substance use
 - Improvement of health behaviors
 - Increasing leisure and recreation activities
- Currently used in multiple VA treatment settings, with veterans of different functioning levels

Several Models of SST

Model to be followed for VA project:

- *Social Social Skills Training for Schizophrenia: A Step by Step Guide, 2nd Edition.* Bellack, A., Mueser, K., Gingerich, S., and Agresta, J.



Logistical Considerations

- Small groups (6-10 max)
- Predefined curricula (content and goals)
- 2-3 sessions per week @ 45-90 min
- Co-therapists preferred but not required
- Group duration varies with content
- Emphasis on behavioral rehearsal
- Level of training geared to veterans
- Closed groups preferred but not required



Important Characteristics of SST Groups, slide 1

- Structured format in every session
- Abstractions are minimized
- Emphasis on role playing and practice
- Focus on one skill at a time
- Curriculum is planned



Important Characteristics of SST Groups, slide 2

- Role plays and home assignments are tailored to each member
- Group demands geared to members' abilities
- Communications are always positive
- Explicit and frequent reinforcement

SST Curriculum: 9 basic categories

1. Basic skills
2. Conversation
3. Assertiveness
4. Conflict management
5. Communal living
6. Friendship and dating
7. Health maintenance/Communicating with providers
8. Vocational/Work
9. Coping skills for drug and alcohol use

Format of Teaching a Social Skill, Steps 1-6

1. Give a rationale for the skill
2. Briefly have members share a relevant experience or rationale
3. Explain the steps of the skill
4. Model the skill and review with members
5. Have a group member role play
6. Give and elicit feedback

Teaching a Social Skill, Steps 7-11

7. Have the member role play again
8. Give and elicit feedback
9. Repeat role play again and give/elicit feedback
10. Repeat Steps 5-9 with each group member
11. Develop home assignments

*Next session will begin with “Review Homework” as first step.