



VA - Social Skills Training (VA-SST) for Serious Mental Illness

Training Overview

- Social Skills Training (SST) is an evidenced-based practice for schizophrenia and other severe mental illnesses: **Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective, Bipolar, and Treatment Refractory Depression**
- Training will mirror model developed by Bellack et al. (2004)
- SST is based on social learning techniques and emphasizes the role of behavioral rehearsal in skill development - not discussion
- Focus of group is role playing simulated conversations. Small groups (6 - 8 patients) held twice a week in 60 minute sessions
- Prefer to have 2 staff members from each site/setting who can co-facilitate the group

Training Format

- 2-day workshop with experienced SST trainers (presentations followed by hands-on, interactive groups)
- Followed by 6-months of weekly clinical consultation via audio-conferencing (weekly calls = 1 - 1 ½ hours each)
- Trainees will audiotape all SST sessions during these 6 months and send tapes via Fed Ex for consultant review
- Trainees will log weekly session information into web-based tracking system

Clinician Trainee Requirements

- Work primarily (>75% of clinical caseload) with veterans diagnosed with SMI (as defined above)
- Clinicians from PRRC (Day Treatment) or RRTP (Domiciliary) settings (*other settings permitted if focus is SMI*)
- Must have space to run groups and audiotape at your facility
- Must have local support to implement SST groups and fully participate in consultation activities

Preferred Trainee Requirements

- Master's level clinicians
- Appropriate Disciplines include Psychology, Social Work, Nursing, Occupational Therapy (Peer Support Specialists may apply, but we highly recommend they attend the training with a clinician co-leader from their site)
- Must have local approvals to provide group sessions at your facility
- Experience running group sessions
- Comfortable in sustaining group sessions utilizing interactive teaching modality
- Motivated to dedicate time and effort to implementing SST at local facility

Trainee Expectations

- Start up at least one SST group at local facility immediately after attending the workshop (1-2 hours/week)
- Ideally, SST Groups should consist of 6-8 veterans and groups should have co-leaders (optimally, co-leaders would participate in the VA-SST training program together)
- Devote an additional 1 - 1 ½ hours per week for clinical consultation activities (6 months post-workshop) including group phone consultation one time per week
- Trainees will audiotape all SST sessions during these 6 months and send tapes via Fed Ex for consultant review
- Trainees will log weekly session information into web-based tracking system
- Make an ongoing commitment to integrate these services into daily care for veterans with schizophrenia and severe mental illness
- Participate in ongoing program evaluation efforts