Implementation of Social Skills Training in the VA
Implementation of SST in VA

1. Walk through choosing a curriculum

2. Identify and problem solve common implementation challenges

3. Address other practical considerations
Selecting a Curriculum: Benefits

• Meet needs of own veterans
• Used to facilitate individual treatment goals for veterans
• Used to decide when veterans “move on”
• Intimate understanding of skills taught from beginning
Selecting a Curriculum: Process

• Selecting a Curriculum (Handbook)
• Several questions to ask first
  – What are some site goals for veterans?
  – What are some strengths of veterans I work with?
  – What are some of the common goals and/or concerns of veterans that I work with?
Using common goals to select curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Veteran Goals</th>
<th>Potential Curriculum Domains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get a girlfriend</td>
<td>Basic Conversation Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make non-using friends</td>
<td>Friendship/Dating Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have good work relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get along with group home members</td>
<td>Communal living Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get along with family</td>
<td>Anger Management Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get a job</td>
<td>Conflict Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase work hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask for a raise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevocational Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocational Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selecting a Curriculum: Examples

- Conversational skills
- Assertiveness (assertion) training
- Dating skills
- Prevocational skills
- Workplace skills
- HIV prevention skills
- Medication management skills
- Substance abuse skills
- Skills for living with others
- Skills for improving family interactions
Sample Curriculum: Anger Management

- Session 1: Early warning signs of anger and situations that induce anger
- Session 2: Coping strategies for anger
- Session 3 - 5: Leaving Stressful Situations
- Sessions 6 - 8: Expressing Angry Feelings
- Sessions 9 - 11: Responding to Criticism from a Supervisor
- Sessions 12 - 14: Responding to Untrue Accusations
- ...
Implementation Considerations: Open vs. Closed Groups

• Open enrollment
  – May be necessary depending on site
  – Allows new group members to enter as needed
  – Keep group fresh and dynamic
  – May help keep numbers up

• Closed enrollment
  – Establish more cohesive group
  – May help with “safety” issues
  – Collaboratively establish group expectations
  – Reduce time spent on introductions
  – And more

• Combination
Implementation Considerations: Early Recruitment

- Veterans that have participated in groups before
- Consider issues around previous behavioral problems
- Consider issues with case management
- Other things to consider??
Implementation Considerations: Logistics

- Meeting Space
- Meeting Time (1x a week, 2x a week?)
- Dry Erase Board/Flip Chart for visuals
Other Practical Concerns

- Co-therapists or single therapist
- Group notes
- Location-specific concerns
Next Steps

1. Read materials
2. Attend first consultation session
3. Start Implementation Process
   - Complete Implementation handout
   - Complete Curriculum handout
   - Complete Information sheet
4. Participate in first monthly call