

# **Implementing Social Skills Training (SST) Groups within the VA**

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## **LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CONDUCTING SST GROUPS**

- 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

## MATERIALS AND PRACTICAL NEEDS

This section focuses on the practical and material resources you need to run a social skills group. Please take a moment and check if you have the resources available to you under Column A. If you do not currently have a resource available, please consider the corresponding question/statement in Column B.

<u>Column A</u>	<u>Column B</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Group room with chairs	Who you could ask about reserving a room two times a week for 1.5 hours?
<input type="checkbox"/> Dry erase board or flipchart and markers	Is there one within your department that you could borrow? Are there any funds available to purchase one?
<input type="checkbox"/> Xerox machine for Handouts and Homework	Is there another site close by with a copy machine that you could use?
<input type="checkbox"/> Time (before and after group - see Clinician Checklist)	What are some ideas about securing necessary time? If you are having concerns around time, be sure to discuss with your supervisor!

## IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING WORKSHEET

### Time/Date of groups:

Days of week group held: \_\_\_\_\_

Time group held: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of groups: \_\_\_\_\_

Projected date to start groups: \_\_\_\_\_

### Resources checklist for groups:

- Group room with chairs
- Dry erase board or flipchart and markers
- Xerox machine for Handouts and Homework

### Recruitment:

How you choose to recruit veterans for your social skills group will likely vary depending on the type of site you work in. For example, recruitment will be different if you work in a Partial Hospital Program versus a CBOC. If you work in a PHP, there may already be a structure in place to start a twice-weekly group. For example, you may add another group to an existing schedule or you may choose to replace another group you already lead. If you work in a CBOC you may have to be more active in hanging fliers and talking with providers about potential group members.

### Ideas for recruitment:

- Put up fliers at my site
- Attend treatment team meetings and discuss groups
- Email announcements
- Announcement or article in Newsletters
- Others?

## CLINICIAN CHECKLIST

### Before Group:

- ✓ Review skill
- ✓ Copy handouts
- ✓ Prepare homework
- ✓ Assign leaders to primary and secondary (if have two leaders)
- ✓ Prop flip board/dry erase board
- ✓ Prepare room (chairs in semi-circle facing board)

### After Group:

- ✓ Write medical chart note (for every veteran; after every group)

## SELECTING A CURRICULUM

### Discussion Questions:

1. What are some overall goals at my site for the treatment that veterans receive?
2. What are some common strengths of the veterans that I work with?
3. What are some of the common goals/concerns of veterans that I work with?
4. What sessions did I choose in the training that seemed particularly relevant for my veterans?
5. What domains seem particularly relevant for my veterans (check all that apply)?

<input type="checkbox"/> Basic Conversation Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Coping with Substance Use
<input type="checkbox"/> Assertiveness Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> HIV Prevention
<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Developing Romantic/Intimate Relationships
<input type="checkbox"/> Anger Management	<input type="checkbox"/> Health Maintenance
<input type="checkbox"/> Using Leisure and Recreation Time	<input type="checkbox"/> Medication Management
<input type="checkbox"/> Prevocational Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Managing Positive Symptoms
<input type="checkbox"/> Vocational Maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communal Living Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Friendship Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Familial Relationship Skills	

## SELECTING A CURRICULUM (CONTINUED)

6. Based on the relevant domains, which 4 or 5 seem to have the highest priority for your veterans?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

7. Based on those domains, which skills seem important to include?

Curriculum Domain	Skills
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

## SAMPLE CURRICULUM DOMAINS

### Anger Management

- Expressing Unpleasant Feelings
- Leaving Stressful Situations
- Responding to Untrue Accusations
- Expressing Angry Feelings
- Disagreeing with Another's Opinions without Arguing
- Responding to Unwanted Advice
- Problem Solving

### Coping with Substance Use

- Offering an Alternative to Using Drugs and Alcohol
- Refusal Skills – Pusher/Drug Dealer
- Requesting that Family Member/Friend Stop Asking You to Use
- Leaving Stressful Situations
- Problem Solving
- Compromise and Negotiation

### Vocational Maintenance Skills

- Listening to Others
- Following Verbal Instructions
- Responding to Criticism from a Supervisor
- Asking for Feedback about Job Performance
- Joining Ongoing Conversations at Work
- Disagreeing with Another's Opinion without Arguing
- Asking for Information
- Asking for Help
- Problem Solving

### Communal Living Skills

- Locating your Missing Belongings
- What to do if You Think Someone has Something of Yours
- Asking for Privacy
- Checking out your Beliefs
- Reminding Someone not to Spread Germs
- Eating and Drinking Politely



## SAMPLE CURRICULUM DOMAINS (CONTINUED)

\*Conflict Management Skills: Compromise and Negotiation, Leaving Stressful Situations, Disagreeing with Another's Opinion without Arguing, Responding to Untrue Accusations, Making Apologies

### Health Maintenance Skills

- Making a Doctor's Appointment on the Phone
- Asking Questions about Medications
- Asking Questions about Health-related Concerns
- Complaining about Medication Side Effects
- Requesting a Change in your Medication Dosage
- Asking about a New Medication You Have Heard About
- Reporting Pain and Other Physical Symptoms