

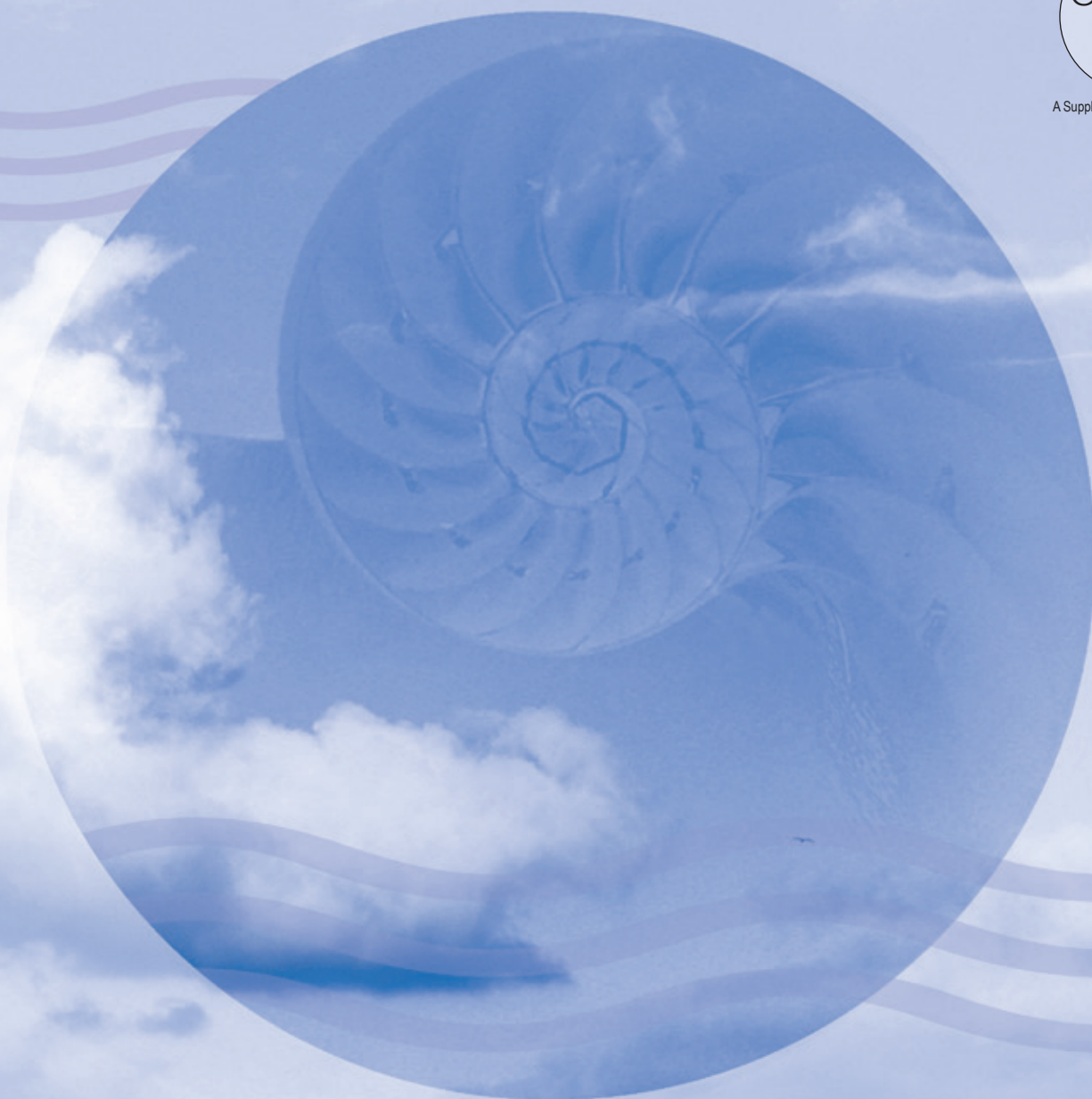
Parent Support Group

A Guide to Psychoeducational Support Groups
for Nonoffending Parents and Caregivers
of Children Who Have Been Sexually Abused

Guide



A Supplement to Circle of Hope



WASHINGTON COALITION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAMS

Parent Support Group *Guide*



A Guide to Psychoeducational Support Groups
for Nonoffending Parents and Caregivers
of Children Who Have Been Sexually Abused



WCSAP
Washington Coalition of
Sexual Assault Programs

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INTRODUCTION



This Guide is a supplement to the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs' (WCSAP) general guide to psychoeducational support groups, *Circle of Hope*. *Circle of Hope* provides information about the nature of psychoeducational groups and how they differ from self-help and therapy groups. In addition, there is general guidance on how to select participants, work with a co-facilitator, establish a curriculum, maintain healthy boundaries, and handle the inevitable concerns that arise in the course of running groups. This Guide expands upon *Circle of Hope* within the specific context of groups for nonoffending parents and is intended to be used in conjunction with it. *Circle of Hope* is available on the WCSAP website. <http://www.wcsap.org/circle-hope-guide-conducting-effective-psychoeducational-support-groups>

As with *Circle of Hope*, this Guide provides information specifically relevant to psychoeducational groups that are to be run according to the guidelines provided by the Office of Crime Victims Advocacy for community sexual assault programs in Washington State. Facilitators should review these guidelines (see Appendix A) in conjunction with the Guide.

For the purpose of this Guide, we have chosen to use the term "parent" to refer broadly to group participants. This term is meant to encompass any nonoffending parent, guardian, caregiver, or family member who has a central role in supporting the recovery of a child or youth who has been sexually abused and is therefore also directly affected as a secondary survivor.

Parent support groups can be remarkable tools for supporting a family's recovery from the trauma of sexual abuse. We respect the people who run parent groups, as well as the parents who have the courage to participate. Facilitating these groups is rewarding but challenging. This guide offers information about parents' needs, ideas on how to form and sustain a support group, a suggested curriculum, and abundant resources.



NONOFFENDING PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS



SECTION 1

THE PARENT'S JOURNEY

The parents of children who have been sexually abused often experience feelings of guilt and shame that are intensified by the real or perceived judgments of others and the stigma surrounding child sexual abuse. Silence within families and communities serves to isolate parents, making it difficult to express their emotions, process the impact of disclosure, and seek the necessary support to move forward. The group process is invaluable in addressing these needs and promoting healing for both the parent and the child.

A parent's response to his or her child following a disclosure of sexual abuse is one of the most significant factors influencing the impact of the abuse on the child. Thus, your work with parents also has direct effects on child survivors. This is especially important to bear in mind if you are working with parents who are ambivalent about what happened and how to react. Parents' reactions change over time and range from anger and denial to wholehearted support of the child. Your time with them is a snapshot of their healing process at one point along this continuum of responses, rather than a defining representation of who they are as parents and people. Be respectful and patient with parents at all stages of this journey, and remember that they are likely dealing with a myriad of emotions and concerns. For example, parents may be:

- ▶ dealing with the loss of a partner and experiencing financial hardship if the abuser was in the home
- ▶ struggling with their own experiences of abuse
- ▶ trying to care for other children in the home and keep up with the family's day-to-day needs
- ▶ navigating child welfare and/or legal processes
- ▶ renegotiating their understanding of the world. As one researcher found, "The traumatic grief and numerous losses nonoffending mothers experience when they learn about their children's abuse seem to negatively influence their perceptions of self (as mother and wife), others (as trustworthy), and the world (as safe)" (Willingham, 2007, p.17).

Reference:

Willingham, Elizabeth Upchurch, "Maternal Perceptions and Responses to Child Sexual Abuse" (2007).
Counseling and Psychological Services Dissertations. Paper 12. http://digitalarchive.gsu.edu/cps_diss/12

RECRUITMENT AND MARKETING

Getting a group off the ground is not an easy task, especially if you live in a small community. Though you may get some specific requests for a group, you may also need to do some creative networking and advertising to gather enough participants. Here are a few strategies for enhancing your recruitment and marketing efforts:

Be Prepared

Create an attractive, informative one-page flyer that describes your group to give to professionals and the general public. You may also wish to print inexpensive little cards (business cards) with basic information about the group and contact details.



Tell The Community

If your community does not know that your agency serves children and families, parents are not going to seek your services. Check your website and agency materials to make sure they highlight your services for children and parents.

Start Inside Your Agency

Do other staff members know that you are starting a group and do they understand its purpose? Advertise and educate at staff meetings or case conferences so everyone is informed. Advocates and therapists may be able to provide referrals; prevention educators and outreach staff can tell others about the group at community events and trainings. If you are a multi-service agency, be sure the information gets out to all departments.

Reach out to these professionals, agencies, and community members:

- Health care clinics and providers
- Clergy
- Mental health centers and professionals
- Child protective service workers
- Teachers and other school personnel
- Law enforcement
- Court personnel, system advocates, prosecutors (including child support prosecutors)
- Social service offices
- Youth group leaders
- Alternative health care providers
- Parenting groups (such as Mothers of Multiples or La Leche League)
- Informal community leaders
- Private multiservice agencies
- Domestic violence programs (if you are not a dual agency)
- Child advocacy centers

Review Your Client Files

Maybe you worked with someone last year who wasn't quite ready for the group process or able to make the time commitment. Make a quick phone call and see if it would be a better fit this time. Always keep a list of parents who have expressed interest so you can check back with them when a group is getting started. Be sure that you have asked parents if it is okay and safe to call them – you don't want to create a dangerous or awkward situation with these phone calls.

Use Your Connections

Send the information out to your email list and take some flyers to your multidisciplinary team meetings. Your community and system partners will be happy to have a resource when someone asks them for support services. You can help them make informed and appropriate referrals by providing information about the group and the screening process.

Back To Basics

Keep your website updated with the latest information about your upcoming groups and drop off some flyers at the local daycare, church, pediatrician's office, beauty salon, and mental health center. You may also wish to ask the local newspaper to write a story or donate advertising space.



WHO SHOULD BE IN THESE GROUPS?

How diverse should the group be?

There is a wide range of possible participants for these groups, from an 18-year-old whose three-year-old daughter was abused by her boyfriend to an elderly couple who is raising their teenage grandson. How do you decide who should enter a particular group? Some facilitators prefer to gather similar parents together – for example, a group composed of mothers of teens. In most settings, however, the criteria will need to be broader in order to assemble a group of reasonable size. A group composed of members with similar characteristics (in terms of gender, ethnicity, relationship to the child, time since the abuse was discovered, age of the parent, or age of the child, for example) may “gel” more quickly, as members face some common issues. When most group members have a characteristic in common and the group includes just one individual who differs on that trait – for example, one father in a group of mothers, or one teen mom in a group of older people – you will have to be particularly sensitive to the group dynamics so that person is not isolated or scapegoated.

In a more diverse group, participants may benefit from the variety of experiences represented. For example, a younger parent may find that an older participant has words of wisdom that are comforting, and participants at an early stage in recovery may gain a sense of hope from a parent who is further down the road. You will find that each group you facilitate is different and you will be surprised by what draws a particular group together. A skilled facilitator can help participants to connect even if they come from different backgrounds.

Should you include couples or extended family members?

Should you include couples in your group, or family members (such as an aunt who doesn't live with the family) who are not in direct caregiving roles? Different facilitators have different views of this issue. Some prefer to have a mother in one group and a father in another group, for example, so that each can obtain individual support and can speak freely of any conflicts within the family; other facilitators see a great value in having couples attend group together, so they can learn the same material and support each other.

Including family members who are not primary caregivers may create an additional challenge for group cohesion, but is generally worth it because these adults can offer significant support to the child who has been abused. For example, a grandmother who is worried about her grandchild might attend with the child's mother, and thus be better prepared to support both the child and the mother. This may be of particular importance in specific cultural groups where the care of children traditionally involves extended family members. Be sure to discuss this issue thoroughly with the primary caregiver or caregivers to ensure they are comfortable sharing their group experience. It is important that each family member has a “voice” in the group and participates as an individual.

Should you accept parents who are mandated to attend?

Once again, facilitators differ in their response to this issue. In some communities, Child Protective Services or the courts may include mandatory participation in a group as part of the parenting plan. Sometimes group attendance is a prerequisite for regaining custody. Most of the facilitators we interviewed believe that mandated participants can benefit from the group, but only if they have some interest and personal commitment to the group process. It is especially critical to protect the confidentiality of mandated parents so they feel safe to participate fully in the group. If the referring agency or individual requires proof of attendance, discuss various ways to meet that requirement with the participant. For example:

- ▶ Offer to give parents a verification of attendance for each week they attend.
- ▶ Offer to sign off on an attendance sheet.
- ▶ Inform them that they can sign a Release of Information (ROI) authorizing communication of their attendance information to the referring agency. If you do obtain an ROI, be sure to limit the release to attendance records only.

If a mandated participant is not a good fit for the group, or is so resentful that he or she would disrupt the group dynamics, talk to the referring person and explain that other services (such as individual therapy or advocacy) would be more appropriate. It may be helpful to have your option to turn away participants spelled out in your agency's policies so that you can support your refusal to accept inappropriate referrals.

How do you “screen” for the group?

It is a good idea to meet with each prospective group member individually to determine, whether he or she is a good fit for the group. You certainly don't want people to feel that they are “auditioning” for entry to the group, so using the term “screening” may not be helpful. This initial interview is an opportunity to build rapport and trust, to clearly state what you expect of group members, and to decide collaboratively whether or not the group is appropriate for that person's needs.

Commitment to the group is an essential requirement for prospective group members. On a practical level, is the person prepared to make this commitment and agree to attend regularly? During the initial interview, the facilitator can explain that regular attendance is crucial. When participants attend erratically, not only do

This initial interview is an opportunity to build rapport and trust, to clearly state what you expect of group members, and to decide collaboratively whether or not the group is appropriate for that person's needs.

they miss important information, but also the sense of group trust may be broken. It helps to have a calendar handy during the initial interview and to provide a handout with the scheduled dates for the group. For example, a prospective group member who knows she will be out of town for three weeks of the eight-week group should probably wait for another opportunity to join.

For a refresher on support group prescreening, you can access WCSAP's recorded webinar, *Sexual Assault Support Group Facilitator Skill Building Series: Pre-Screening* at <http://www.wcsap.org/sexual-assault-support-group-facilitator-skill-building-series-pre-screening>

How do you know if a parent is ready for group?

Most facilitators agree that people who are actively abusing drugs or alcohol need to address those issues first. In addition, severe mental health issues may make it difficult for a person to participate effectively in a group. While it is normal for parents to feel some anxiety or depression as they cope with the aftermath of abuse, a person who is too distressed to interact with others needs individual support before joining a group. If the prospective group member is unable to answer simple questions or to listen and respond to you during the initial interview, it is unlikely that he or she will benefit from the group.

Is the person prepared for the group process, and can he or she tolerate hearing the painful stories of others? Does she have the ability to empathize and show compassion? Can he handle the possible "trauma triggers" that may emerge during the group? These are decisions you will want to make together with the parent. Be honest about the challenges a group may entail, and don't try to talk parents into joining if they are hesitant.

What about the parent who doesn't seem supportive of the child?

Some facilitators believe that a parent who shows any denial of the abuse or anger at the child should not enter a group. However, as mentioned before, there is a continuum that represents the degree of support the parent is able to offer the child. Especially if the abuser is a partner, it is normal for the nonoffending parent to minimize or justify the abuse at first. This is a coping mechanism and part of the process of absorbing a gut-wrenching truth; parents should not be judged harshly for this. Determining whether parents are ready for group includes an assessment of where they are in this process and how their ambivalence (about the child or about the reality of the abuse) might affect the group dynamic, as well as their ability to support and protect their child. Even a parent who is very angry at her child and has a hard time believing the abuse occurred may be ready for group participation after several individual therapy or advocacy sessions. Remember that these parents are on an incredibly difficult journey. Try to match the interventions you offer to their needs at a particular time, while keeping future possibilities open.

What if you don't believe the parent is appropriate for the group?

Some facilitators are apprehensive about screening out potential group participants because they hate to turn anyone down. Framing the initial interview as an opportunity to look at a variety of support possibilities – from advocacy to individual or couples therapy to the psychoeducational group – will make it easier to come to a consensus with the parent about whether or not group makes sense right now. You may wish to defer the decision until the parent has a chance to think things over, or until you have the opportunity to consult with your supervisor or co-facilitator.

It is hard to decide in favor of another option when you are desperately trying to gather the minimum number of group participants, but including a parent who is not ready for group is a no-win situation for everyone. Ultimately, you may sacrifice other participants' experiences and healing by giving in to pressure (self-imposed or otherwise) to accept a parent who is not appropriate for that particular group.

As you begin to form a group, you may have a better sense of whether or not a particular parent will be a good fit. This may be different from group to group, so be flexible and tailor your selection process to the specific group. Trust your instincts – composing a successful group is an art.



LOGISTICS

Although facilitators often think first of the content for a group curriculum, remember that careful attention to the logistical details can have an impact on participants' attendance and their overall experience. These are some general considerations for your planning, but flexibility may be necessary depending on your needs and those of the participants.

Group Duration

These groups will be most beneficial when they last approximately 8 to 12 weeks. This provides time for participants to develop trust within the group and meaningfully cover the material. The group model described in this Guide is a closed psychoeducational group – that is, all participants start at the same time and end at the same time. No new participants may join the group after the first session. If participants want to stay connected after the group has ended, that can be done independently.

Group Frequency

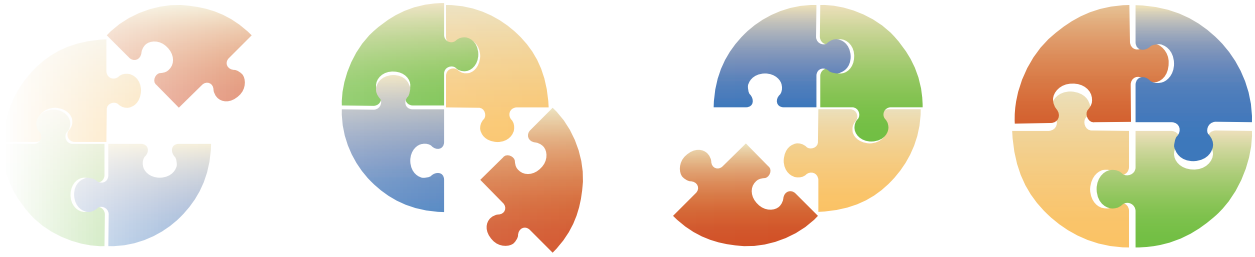
Weekly meetings will keep participants connected to the group and engaged in the learning and healing process. Depending on the curriculum and the group dynamics, it may be helpful to hold the last one or two sessions every other week. This allows participants to start transitioning back to “life without group” while also giving them additional time between sessions to implement the knowledge and skills they have gained.

Group Length

We generally recommend sessions that last 90 to 120 minutes. This provides sufficient time for education and group discussion but is not so long that participants begin to disengage or cannot commit to the time requirement. The length of your sessions may also be partially dependent on the size of your group.

Group Size

A group of six to eight participants is ideal, as it allows for diverse perspectives and experiences while still being a manageable size. Participants will all have an opportunity to share and learn in a personal way. Depending on your community, however, this may not always be feasible. If a smaller group is necessary, consider the group dynamics if one or two participants are unable to attend. In some circumstances, it may be better to provide one-on-one services in lieu of group or until you have adequate numbers.



Session Structure

A consistent routine within each session will help to create group identity and reduce participants' anxiety. However, this should not prevent facilitators from incorporating a variety of activities and teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning styles. For example, some people respond well to lecture while others learn best when they are doing something with their hands. Be sure to allow time each week for participants to connect with each other and process information through discussion, as this is a central purpose of group work.

Childcare

Accommodating participants' childcare needs may reduce barriers to group attendance. Agency volunteers or other staff may be the most convenient option for providing childcare, especially if your agency already has child-friendly spaces. Be sure to check with your supervisor and agency policies regarding any liability concerns or other issues with providing childcare on site. As an alternative, you could make arrangements with other organizations in your community to provide this service. They may already be offering childcare for another regular group or meeting or perhaps they would be willing to donate their space and time. Whatever option you choose, ask participants to be consistent in their utilization of the service out of respect for the childcare providers. You may also offer to provide information about child sexual abuse and support regarding any behavioral concerns for whomever provides childcare during the group.

Setting

The environment can have a tremendous impact on the group experience. If the location of your meetings and the space itself feels safe, relaxing, and inviting, it will help to increase participants' comfort levels and ease anxieties. Holding group sessions at your agency may or may not be the best option given privacy, childcare, accessibility, and safety considerations.

Food

A little food goes a long way in keeping people happy, especially if your meetings are scheduled around the dinner hour. Having coffee or tea can also help to create a welcoming setting. If you are short on funds, check with some local restaurants or groceries to see if they would be willing to donate.

Interpreters

Be prepared to address language accessibility in your group. If you have a participant who needs interpreter services, you should try to contract with the same interpreter for the duration of the group. Carefully consider any confidentiality implications and process any concerns that the group may have. Interpreters should adhere to the same confidentiality policy as participants and should be prepared for the content of each meeting. It is helpful to give interpreters any handouts or written materials in advance. Provide potential group participants with the name(s) of the interpreter or interpreters, so you can find an alternate interpreter if personal relationships are an issue. During the first session, educate the group about working with interpreters so it is a positive experience for everyone involved.



One of the facilitators we interviewed conducted a group with participants who all spoke another language in which she was not fluent. With the group's consent, the facilitator worked through an interpreter and found she was able to conduct an effective group.

Including Low-Literacy Participants

Some parents in your group may have limited literacy (which may or may not be related to limited English proficiency). It is important to obtain a rough assessment of literacy levels during prescreening. Be straightforward during prescreening and ask potential group members to let you know if they are having trouble understanding any information or if they would like you to read the materials out loud. People with low literacy levels often mask this because they are fearful of others' reactions. It is important to let potential participants know that this is a common issue, and you will be discreet in helping them participate fully. If you are aware that some parents may have trouble reading group materials, use the following strategies to encourage their participation:

- ▶ orally review all written materials given to group members
- ▶ choose activities carefully, or modify activities that require reading and writing
- ▶ have participants pair up for activities, matching low-literacy members with parents who are more proficient at reading and writing

FACILITATORS

Qualifications of Facilitators

Those programs that are offering support groups funded by the Washington State Office of Crime Victims Advocacy must conform to the facilitator qualifications in the Support Group Standard (see Appendix A). These standards require that “the facilitator must be, or receive consultation on group process from, a Masters level therapist,” along with other training and education requirements. WCSAP’s recorded webinar, *Quality Supervision for Support Group Facilitators*, may be a helpful resource: <http://www.wcsap.org/quality-supervision-support-group-facilitators>

Facilitators should be knowledgeable about community resources, because the families represented in these groups often have multiple needs.

Offering an Array of Support Services

Group members may need additional support outside of group sessions. For example, a group discussion may trigger traumatic memories and emotions for a participant, and he or she may need some time in an individual advocacy or therapy session to work this through. Certainly parents of children who are engaged in the legal system will need legal advocacy to help them navigate its complexities. Some parents may also be survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault and may need to be linked with an advocate. Facilitators should inquire about parent’s current support services during the screening process, and should offer informed referrals if necessary. For example, if you need to refer a parent to the system advocate at the local prosecutor’s office, the referral will be more effective if you know that advocate and what he or she can offer, and if you assist the parent in making the connection.

Preparing to Facilitate

Preparing to facilitate starts with self-reflection. Try to imagine yourself working with this group, week after week. What issues do you anticipate will create the greatest challenges for you? What are your personal boundaries (about issues such as self-disclosure) and what topics do you think could create discomfort for you? You may wish to do some journaling or talk to a supervisor or trusted colleague before you begin to work with the group. Consider issues such as any personal biases you may have (we all have them!), and whether your status as a parent or non-parent may affect how you interact with the group.

If you are new to facilitation or new to working with parents' groups, you may wish to partner with an experienced facilitator. You will want to obtain training (whether through workshops or self-guided education) about the particular issues that parents face when their children have been sexually abused.

Co-facilitation

Many facilitators believe that having a co-facilitator is necessary to manage everything that takes place during a group. However, some people really enjoy facilitating on their own. For a small group with four or five participants, an agency may not be able to justify taking the time of two staff members to facilitate.

If you do co-facilitate a group, pay close attention to your relationship with your co-facilitator, as it will affect the group dynamics. Do you enjoy and respect each other? Do you value your differences and handle them well? Can you communicate clearly, even about difficult issues? Do you agree on your respective roles in preparing for and conducting the group? Co-facilitators will want to be sure to clearly communicate with each other about issues such as self-disclosure, handling difficult group members, and maintaining boundaries with the group. *Circle of Hope* offers a more thorough discussion of co-facilitation issues.

Co-facilitators will find it beneficial to set aside time before every group meeting for planning, discussing concerns, and coordinating the session content and delivery. Additionally, after each session co-facilitators will need time to debrief. If you are an introvert and like to think things through before discussing them, you may wish to delay your post-group meeting with your co-facilitator or your supervisor to the next day. These meeting times should be formalized and "built in" so other obligations do not interfere with getting together on a regular basis.

What About Guest Speakers?

Some facilitators invite guest speakers to the group; others do not. If you believe there is a particular topic where your knowledge is not as strong as you would like, you may want to have a guest speaker to supplement your presentation for that session.

Consider asking other staff members from your program to be guest speakers. If you use external experts, line them up in advance and tell potential group members who they are, so that any confidentiality concerns can be addressed in advance. It would be awkward and potentially unsafe to discover that a speaker knows a group member socially. Be sure to have any speakers from outside your agency sign confidentiality agreements, and review that agreement briefly with the group and the speaker during the relevant session. "I just want to remind everyone that Ms. X is aware that this group is confidential, and she has signed a confidentiality agreement."

You may also want to consider having parent "graduates" of previous groups as guest speakers. Their presence and participation is powerful and can give current group members a sense of hope.

Helping Participants Share Their Stories

Being able to talk freely about the abuse suffered by their children and its effect on the whole family is an important aspect of healing for the participants in the group. The group may be the only place where parents are able to talk about what happened and try to understand how to cope. As a group facilitator, you will want to make an intentional decision about the level of sharing that is appropriate for the group in terms of descriptions of what happened and details.

In making this decision, consider the purpose of sharing information, the impact on the group, and privacy considerations for the child. If a participant needs to unburden herself about the details of the abuse to an extent that seems excessive for the particular group, you will want to offer individual advocacy or therapy services.

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How to Handle Participant Sexual Abuse History

The parents in your group may have their own histories of having been sexually abused in childhood or sexually assaulted as an adolescent or adult. As they learn about sexual abuse in the group, this can cause inner turmoil. In some situations, participants may not have identified their experience as abusive prior to attending the group.

Within the group setting, you don't want to delve deeply into any abuse that parents may have experienced; however, you do want to be aware of how this abuse may affect their response to their children and to identify this issue for the group. Parents who have also been abused may experience traumatic reactions when trying to assist their children. They may be overwhelmed by their own feelings, making it difficult to focus on the child's needs. They may make certain assumptions based on how they or their family members handled the situation in the past, for example, "I just decided not to let it bother me, and my mother told me I shouldn't think about what happened. Why can't my daughter do the same thing?" Sometimes parents are prompted to deal with their own abuse for the first time, and this can result in a tremendous healing opportunity for the entire family.

In the group setting, explore these issues in a general way and help parents understand why it is important to deal with their own past experiences. Getting help and support for themselves as well as their children is critical to stopping the cycle of abuse. Inform parents of the resources available for this work: individual advocacy or therapy, and support groups or books for adult survivors of abuse. Explain that working on these issues in depth is outside of the scope of the group. Be alert for signs that other group members may be triggered by hearing about participants' abuse histories.

Safety

A study of children seen at a sexual abuse evaluation clinic found that domestic violence occurred in 54% of the children's homes (Bowen, 2000). Children and families often experience multiple forms of violence and trauma, and this has safety implications for your group. Some of the group members may be involved with or have recently left abusive partners, or the child's abuser may have threatened the custodial relative,

Children and families often experience multiple forms of violence and trauma.

Reference:

Bowen, K. (2000). Child abuse and domestic violence in families seen for suspected sexual abuse. *Clinical Pediatrics*, 39(1), 33-40.

creating a high-risk situation. It is important that these participants have access to advocacy services for safety planning, and that the group facilitators are aware of any risks to the group itself. For example, if a participant's ex-partner is stalking her, you will want to work with her to ensure that she is not followed to group for her own safety and that of the entire group. The expertise of colleagues in the domestic violence field can help sexual assault group facilitators to address group safety issues.

Taking Care of Yourself

Working with any aspect of child sexual abuse can be emotionally draining. To make your work as a group facilitator sustainable, you must take care of yourself. Whether or not you have a co-facilitator, it is helpful to have supervision or peer consultation to help you process any difficult issues that arise. Keeping time boundaries crisp (for example, making it clear to the group that you can't linger after the sessions) may help you to feel less stressed. Pay attention to your own emotions and reactions, and give yourself the time and space to consider them. Make sure there is an appropriate person to talk to when you are upset or confused about what has happened in group, so that you won't be tempted to violate group confidentiality.

Be kind to yourself when you make mistakes – no one is perfect. Also, remember that some groups just don't seem to work, regardless of your skill as a facilitator. While you can learn from negative experiences, don't judge yourself harshly if a group fails to "gel" or members drop out.

GROUP EVALUATION

Because support groups take time, energy and money, it is important to build in an evaluation plan. Effective evaluation helps you to assess the impact of the group, garner feedback to improve the group content and facilitation, and ensure accountability to funders. If you receive Specialized Funding through the Washington Office of Crime Victims Advocacy, there is a requirement that the group be “outcome-based,” which means that you must have a measurement tool. The *Circle of Hope* guide includes a detailed section on “Measuring Outcomes in Closed Psychoeducational Support Groups” (pp. 50-53).

It is important to set and share clear goals and objectives for your group. For example, a goal might be “Participants are better able to cope effectively with the aftermath of the sexual abuse of their child, and to provide appropriate support to their child.” The objectives should be measurable and specific to your group, such as “Participants will be able to identify and utilize healthy coping skills.” Review your curriculum carefully to ensure that the objectives and outcome measures (i.e. survey questions) accurately reflect the session content. In other words, don’t try to measure it if you didn’t actually do it. Evaluation measures can be relatively simple, but they should be carefully developed so the data gathered meaningfully informs future group content and facilitation.

It is critical to have a pre-test as well as a post-test so you can show changes in participants’ knowledge, skills, and feelings based on their participation in the group. The pre-test can be given once a participant has been accepted as a group member or during the first session, and the post-test should be given during the final session.

Evaluation can also happen throughout the group in more informal ways. You will want to make this a meaningful process: Let parents know that you really value their input and that it has an effect on future groups; document the ideas that you implement during the course of the group and share those with participants; and find creative ways to harvest the group’s wisdom. At conclusion of the group, ask for some written and oral feedback about what the group has meant to participants, what they found to be most valuable, and what they might do differently. You may ask for written permission to share appropriate responses (without any identifying information) in order to tell the story of the group to potential participants, referral sources, and funders.

How do I evaluate my group?

- Pre- and post-tests with questions related to group objectives
- Informal feedback throughout the group
- End-of-group evaluation form that asks about the group experience
- Discussion at the last session

The data gathered from the pre- and post-tests as well as the informal feedback shared throughout the group process will equip your agency with the information needed to provide successful, sustainable groups. (See Appendix D for sample pre- and post-tests and an end-of-group evaluation form based on this curriculum.)

SUSTAINABILITY

It is not uncommon to hear facilitators express frustration or regret over a group that could not be sustained. Oftentimes, this happens for reasons out of the facilitator's control and should not be seen as a personal failure. However, there are some steps that you can take to increase the chances of success for your group.

Screening

The screening process is your best tool for building a sustainable group. Although you can't predict everything, prescreening will help you to identify participants who are committed, compatible, and ready for the group experience. By learning more about each parent during this process you will also be better prepared to address individual needs and group dynamics effectively and maintain a safe space for participants. If you are having issues with sustainability, reassessing your screening process might be a good place to start.

Participant Input

You should get a sense of participants' expectations during prescreening but this should not be their only opportunity for input. Clarify participants' needs and interests early on so you can make any appropriate adjustments to your curriculum. Allowing participants to inform the content of your sessions will increase their investment in group and their engagement with the material.

Cultural Sensitivity

Getting to know prospective group members, clarifying expectations, and integrating participant input will help ensure that you are providing culturally-relevant and culturally-sensitive information. The group environment should be a safe space to explore how culture affects parents' experiences. If parents feel marginalized, they are unlikely to continue attending. It never hurts to reach out to your community partners for additional support, resources, and guidance.

Reducing Barriers

Work hard to reduce logistical barriers to group attendance. Try a different day, time, or location with your next group. It may take some trial and error to find a combination with the best results. You may find that an evening or weekend group allows more people to attend, but don't forget to consider your own needs as well. Consider the pros and cons of providing childcare. Your end-of-group evaluation process will offer ideas about improving access.

Commitment to Group

Reiterate the importance of participants' commitment to the group and integrate this into your group agreements. The dissolution of group can be very discouraging for invested participants, and it is important that everyone knows how their commitment or lack thereof can affect others.

Sustainable Size

Start with a sustainable group size. If you begin with only four participants, the odds are high that the group will struggle when one person drops out or has irregular attendance.

Supplemental Services

Ensuring that parents have access to one-on-one advocacy or therapy services before and during the group can help to keep your sessions on track. Parents may need these services to further process emotions or material that is overwhelming. Having these outlets may help to keep the emotional tone of the group more balanced as well. Ultimately, if your group cannot be sustained, individual sessions can be offered to participants who still wish to receive support and information.

HOW TO USE AND ADAPT THIS GUIDE

Customizing the Guide

Every agency and every group will be a bit different. This Guide is a suggested curriculum, and we operate from the assumption that you will make it your own to fit your community and your facilitation style.

Using Activities

Every session in this Guide contains suggested activities. This is because adult learners, like learners of all ages, enjoy active participation and tend to retain information better when they are highly engaged in the learning process. Using the psychoeducational model, you will be helping participants to learn, but you don't want an excess of "talking at" the group. Rather, you will use well-designed activities to help participants figure things out for themselves. Adult learners value learning experiences where their expertise is acknowledged and drawn upon, and activities provide an ideal opportunity for supporting shared wisdom.

Activities are fun, but they are not necessarily easy to facilitate. They require thought, preparation, and careful structuring. Some group facilitators love activities and enjoy immersing themselves in creative preparation of materials. Others are completely turned off by the "arts and crafts" nature of activity preparation.

If the preparation for activities – such as making up handouts, cutting out shapes, or making posters – is not something that appeals to you, you have some options:

- ▶ find someone else to help
- ▶ keep the preparations as simple as possible
- ▶ look up some activities that don't require many materials
- ▶ just grin and bear it!

A student or another volunteer or staff member might really enjoy using his or her creativity to help you prepare, relieving you of the task. You may even find that you have more fun with preparation once you see how the group actually uses the materials.

Taking Items Home

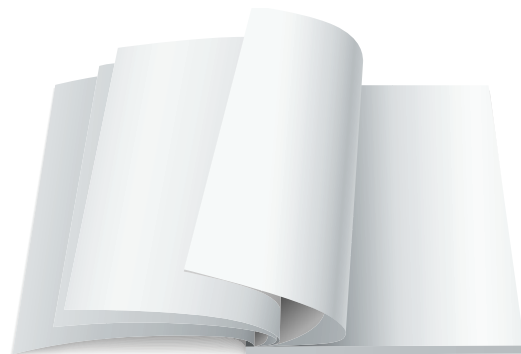
Some group activities result in products that group participants would ordinarily want to take home and keep. Because some group members may be living in abusive situations, this may not be safe. Discuss this issue at the first session and help the group members figure out how they would like to handle it.

Picking and Choosing

Each session outline may include more content than can be covered in eight 90-minute sessions. This is intended to provide flexibility so you can modify, expand, or reorganize the curriculum depending on the size, duration, and needs of each group you facilitate.

If the group is having a great discussion on a particular topic, you may choose to shuffle some topics to another session or to forego them altogether. On the other hand, you may put structured time constraints on the various segments of each session so that you can get to everything you believe to be important. Just be sure that you and your co-facilitator, if you have one, have talked this through and are in agreement about your approach. You may develop a subtle signal to indicate that it is time to wrap up a particular portion of the session. This can become a point of conflict between co-facilitators, so be sure to talk about it in advance and agree to work things out if time management becomes an issue.

Design your own curriculum by highlighting the points that you believe to be essential for the session, and then prioritizing the other items.



Updating Hyperlinks and Resources

For ease in following the hyperlinks in this Guide, you may wish to consult the electronic version on the WCSAP website (www.wcsap.org). Because hyperlinks may change over time, feel free to contact WCSAP for assistance if you are no longer able to access the linked resources. We can also provide alternative and supplementary resources on the topics included in this Guide.

OVERVIEW OF SESSION OUTLINES

Each session outline provided in this Guide contains a structure for the session. Group members will soon become accustomed to this format and will enjoy the sense of familiarity it provides.



GOAL OF SESSION: These goals are carefully designed to align with the stages of group development. If you choose to add topics to a particular session, they should support the session goal.



CHECK-IN: During the *Check-In*, the group facilitators ask each participant in turn to respond briefly to a prompt. This is an opportunity to acknowledge each person and to set the framework and tone for the session. It is important that the facilitators emphasize the brevity of this activity and establish the ground rule that other participants should not comment or interact during this phase of the session.



HANDOUTS: We suggest handouts that can be used during the *Learning and Discussion* portion of the session or given to parents to supplement session content.



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION: Knowledge is power, and shared knowledge is an important aspect of psychoeducational support groups. By encouraging discussion, the facilitators can help participants to connect information to their own lives and situations. Group members are the true experts on their own concerns; *Learning and Discussion* provides the opportunity for parents to integrate their experiences with a wider knowledge of the topic.



ACTIVITIES: Sometimes activities precede the *Learning and Discussion* portion of the session, and sometimes they follow it. There may be more than one suggested activity per session. Activities serve to build group cohesiveness, to engage group members in active learning, and to make the sessions more interesting and enjoyable.



SELF-CARE ACTIVITY: A special activity is included in each session outline to emphasize the importance of self-care and to provide examples for participants. These are brief activities and are designed to help parents cope and care for themselves so they can care for their children.



CHECK-OUT: Because participating in a group focused on sexual violence is difficult and challenging, participants need time to decompress prior to leaving the group each week. The *Check-Out* helps group members make the transition back to their everyday lives by providing positive, forward-looking suggestions for the coming week. The structure is similar to the *Check-In*, with a chance for each participant to make a brief comment in turn. This closing activity teaches realistic goal-setting and assists in managing the emotions that may be stirred up by the group.



RESOURCES: Reviewing the resources listed at the end of each session outline is an excellent way for facilitators to prepare for the session. Some resources are useful to share with group members; others are intended to enhance the facilitators' knowledge. All books mentioned as resources are available in the WCSAP library.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS: Each session outline contains information to assist facilitators in presenting the information appropriately, handling the group dynamics, and understanding the process of group development.



SUPPORT GROUP CURRICULUM



SECTION 2

SESSION ONE – BEGINNING OUR JOURNEY TOGETHER



GOAL OF SESSION: To begin the creation of a safe and healthy group environment in which participants can gain knowledge and share concerns.

Introduction to Group

1. Welcome group members and acknowledge that it may have been difficult just showing up for this first meeting.
2. Introduction of members and facilitators
 - ◆ Ask members to share their first names and whether they are related to (or partnered with) another group member.
3. Development of ground rules
 - ◆ Have the group come up with ground rules; write them on a flip chart.
 - ◆ If group members do not raise the following topics, raise them yourself and ask for input:
 - Confidentiality** – Remind the group of the information you gave each person during the screening process about the mandated exceptions to confidentiality. See page 28 in *Circle of Hope* for an overview of confidentiality issues. Discuss children and teens' needs for privacy as an additional reason for a strong confidentiality ethic in the group.
 - Discuss Safety Issues** – Any family members who have been abusive may not come to the meeting place; any concerns about safety, such as worries about being stalked. If there are any concerns about the safety of the group as a whole, the facilitator should develop a group safety plan with participants.
 - Attendance Policies**
 - Respectful and Nonjudgmental Responses** – to each other – especially around parenting issues.
4. Format of each meeting – let participants know what to expect
 - ◆ **Check-In** – explain that each person should *briefly* answer the prompt question, and that you will give a signal if the answer is too lengthy
 - ◆ **Learning and Discussion**
 - ◆ **Activities** – these may be scheduled either before or after the *Learning and Discussion* section
 - ◆ **Self-Care Activity** – a brief activity each session to help parents cope and care for themselves so they can care for their children
 - ◆ **Check-Out** – same rule as for *Check-In*, in order to allow everyone to participate and not take up too much time



CHECK-IN: *For our check-in today, we just want to get to know each other a little. So, here's the question: If you had an afternoon all to yourself and \$100 you could spend on something fun, what would you choose to do?*



ACTIVITY: All of Our Children

Preparation: Bring to the group cut-out silhouettes of children of all types, from babies to teens (Google “children silhouettes clip art,” “babies silhouette clip art,” and “teens silhouette clip art”). Be sure to bring plenty for the number of group participants. Bring silhouettes, blank paper, black markers, scissors, and tape (poster board optional).

1. Ask participants to choose the silhouettes that remind them the most of their children (any children in their household or immediate family). The silhouette doesn't have to look exactly like the child! Have some papers, scissors, and markers available so parents can draw stick figures if they prefer.
2. Have parents tape the silhouettes to the wall around the room. If this is not an option or if you prefer, have several large poster boards to which parents can tape the pictures.
3. When they are done, ask everyone to look around the room and comment on what they notice. For example, one participant may say “There are a lot of children!” Another may notice that the children range in age from babies to teens.
4. Ask group members why they think you asked them to do this. Using the silhouettes gives participants a glimpse of each other's family situations without getting too personal and keeps the importance of children at the forefront of the group.





LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

Preview of topics to be discussed in subsequent sessions

- ◆ Bring a handout with the dates and topics of group sessions.
- ◆ Provide the participants with index cards and have one large envelope for the group. Ask them to write down (anonymously) any questions or topics they would like the facilitators to cover during the eight weeks of the group. They can then slip the cards into the envelope.



Introduce the concept of the healing journey

- ◆ Sexual abuse affects every member of the family.
- ◆ Each individual and each family is at a different point in their healing.
- ◆ Be patient with yourself and each other.
- ◆ Explain that no parent is prepared for his or her child to be sexually abused, and no one is born an expert at dealing with all the consequences of abuse. One purpose of the group is to help parents learn what they need to know to help their children.
- ◆ Let participants know that it is generally not helpful to give “advice” within the group. They can share their thoughts and experiences but they should not tell others what to do or feel. Giving directive advice is not appropriate because other participants don’t know the whole story, and what works for one person may not work for someone else. Respecting each other’s feelings, which are neither right nor wrong, is a critical element of the healing process in group. There is a fine line between parents sharing their concerns and ideas versus being judgmental or directive. Raising this issue in advance allows the facilitator to tactfully keep participants from crossing this line.
- ◆ Acknowledge that group can be challenging because we are talking about tough issues and that can bring up difficult feelings. Brainstorm with the group about what to do if someone becomes upset during a session or in the days between group sessions.

- ▶ Discuss healing traditions: ***“Everybody brings his or her own traditions and culture to this group. In your culture or family, are there any healing traditions or practices that seem to help people in trouble? Would you like to make them a part of our group journey, either just for you or for anyone in the group who would like to take part?”***
 - ◆ Be sure no one feels compelled to participate in a practice that makes him or her feel uncomfortable.
 - ◆ Try to find ways to incorporate appropriate suggestions from members. You may wish to focus on the intent rather than the specific practice. For example, the intent may be to share one’s sorrows, to achieve an inner sense of peace and calm, or express gratitude. Other participants may achieve those ends through different means. Draw out the similarities rather than the differences.

Sarah:

I always pray when I’m upset. Can we have a prayer time during the group?

Facilitator:

How does praying help you?

Sarah:

It lets me calm down and think about things.

Facilitator:

How about if we take a few minutes at the beginning of each session for each person to do what helps him or her to calm down and think about things – whether it is praying, meditating, writing in a journal, or just deep breathing?



ACTIVITY: Sharing Our Stories

This activity is simply an opportunity for participants to tell what happened to their child and to share a portion of their story. Generally, facilitators limit the time for this activity for a number of reasons:

- ▶ The experience of telling or listening to a detailed account of child sexual abuse can be overwhelming.
- ▶ In Session One, group members have not had an opportunity to build trust with each other and may still be tentative about trusting the facilitators.
- ▶ Limiting the time for the total exercise and giving each person a time limit sets the tone for respecting group boundaries and giving each parent a voice.

Here are some suggested instructions:

We have the opportunity now to go around the circle and have each person tell a little something about what happened to your child and what that has been like for your family. In order for everyone to have a turn, I will give you a gentle reminder just before five minutes are up, so we can go on to the next person. You can share as much or as little as you wish during this time period. This helps us to know a little about each other's situations so we can work together in the group. Remember, what's said in here stays in here. This is important for each of you, and also because your kids have the right to privacy about these matters.

The purpose of telling these difficult stories is for parents to break through some of the barriers of shame and secrecy that our culture creates around child sexual abuse, and for group members to realize that they have much in common. This activity is important because it may be the first time parents are able to unburden themselves of painful experiences.

Some facilitators prefer to spend more time on this activity, or even to devote the entire second session to participants telling their stories. This decision may depend on the preferences of the facilitators, the culture of the participants, the relationship of participants to the facilitators, or other factors. Participants should always have the option to tell just a brief version of their story and a more upbeat activity should end the session.



SELF-CARE ACTIVITY: Talking About the Good Stuff

Have participants pair up (if there is an uneven number, there can be one group of three), and give the following instruction:

We've been talking about some difficult experiences. Now let's take a few moments to talk about something positive. Please pair up with someone you don't know, and tell each other some of the good things about any one of your kids, if you have more than one. Remember, only good stuff! For example, you can say something like, "My four-year-old son is very funny. He likes animals, and he really makes me laugh."

Each person should have a turn to share. Explain that this is part of self-care because it helps us to remember the positive things during difficult times.



CHECK-OUT: *What I most hope to achieve in this group is...*



RESOURCES

WCSAP recorded webinar: *Sexual Assault Support Groups: The Importance of Safety*
<http://www.wcsap.org/sexual-assault-support-groups-importance-safety>

WCSAP recorded webinar: *Culturally Competent Advocacy with Nonoffending Caregivers*
<http://www.wcsap.org/culturally-competent-advocacy-nonoffending-caregivers>



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ In preparing for this session, it is important that you read the “theoretical framework” information in the *Circle of Hope* guide.
- ▶ Be sure to conduct this session as you intend to conduct subsequent sessions; the first meeting sets the tone and expectation for the group.
- ▶ While you will touch on safety planning during this meeting, you will not be able to help participants develop a comprehensive safety plan within the framework of the support group. This should be done prior to group during individual advocacy work or group prescreening. Within the confines of the group, participants can simply indicate their safety concerns and whether their safety needs are being met. Each participant should have an ongoing individual relationship with an advocate if he or she is still in a vulnerable situation.
- ▶ Don’t be afraid of a little silence during this first meeting. If you ask a question, allow time for people to think before they answer. Group facilitators sometimes move on too quickly because silence can be awkward. You can always make a little comment like, “I’m going to give people some time to think about this,” or “That is a tough topic to talk about,” but don’t rush in to rescue the group from the silence. It is normal in the early phases of group development, and you want to encourage group members to talk to each other, not to expect the facilitators to do most of the talking.
- ▶ The silhouette activity is designed to be nonthreatening and to allow participants to move around the room, which should reduce some of the anxiety and awkwardness of the first group meeting. It also serves as an introduction to the concept of having an activity within the group session, setting the tone for future sessions.
- ▶ Facilitating the sharing of stories can be difficult, both for the group and for yourself. You can never predict exactly what group members will say. Don’t forget to reach out to your mentors or co-workers to prepare for this session and to debrief afterwards.
- ▶ Remind participants of your agency’s hotline number so they can talk about any concerns and feelings evoked by hearing others’ stories while maintaining the confidentiality of other participants.
- ▶ If participants did not complete the pre-test during the screening process, you will need to allow time for this prior to or during this session.
- ▶ Prior to Session Two, type up the agreed-upon ground rules and make copies to distribute.

SESSION TWO – OVERVIEW OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE



GOAL OF SESSION: To establish a foundation of knowledge about child sexual abuse that can be built upon in following sessions. Dispel misunderstandings and myths about sexual abuse that may be contributing to participants' feelings of shame, guilt and isolation.

Remind parents about the *Check-In* process.



CHECK-IN: *How are you feeling about being back here today? Nervous, excited, reluctant?*



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION: Before delving into the session content, re-visit the rules established by the group at the previous meeting and ask if there are any questions or additional thoughts. Hand out a typed copy of the group rules.



SELF-CARE ACTIVITY: Being Fully Present

Preparation: Put any sort of basket or box just inside the door to the meeting room. Provide three slips of paper to each participant.

1. Ask parents to write down the top three worries they are bringing into the room today, one per slip of paper. Tell them they will not have to share this information. They can just write a word or two to represent the worry.
2. Have each parent deposit the paper slips into the basket or box.
3. Tell them that it is sometimes hard to concentrate when they have so many things on their minds. Just for this meeting time, they can lay those worries aside so they can be fully present in the group.



ACTIVITY: Video, Childhood Stories Documentary

Available on the Darkness to Light website at:

http://www.d2l.org/site/c.4dlCIJOkGcISE/b.6300229/k.43F8/Childhood_Stories_Documentary.htm

Available through the WCSAP library or may be purchased at:

<http://yhst-40665800488165.stores.yahoo.net/chstdoabchse.html>

This documentary features four adult survivors of child sexual abuse and sheds light on how they coped with and thought about the abuse as children. This video may help parents to understand why their child did not tell and what tactics offenders use to gain access to and groom children. The survivors also talk about the impacts that the abuse has had on their lives. This provides an opportunity for you to emphasize the power of healing that parents hold once they are aware of the abuse. They can prevent many of the negative impacts of abuse by educating themselves and responding appropriately to their children.



HANDOUTS

Child Sexual Abuse Fact Sheet for Parents, Teachers and Other Caregivers

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

<http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/ChildSexualAbuseFactSheet.pdf>

Information about Sexual Offenders

Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress

http://depts.washington.edu/hcsats/PDF/infobrochures/sexual_offenders.pdf

Why does it happen?

Ask participants why they think child sexual abuse happens. During this discussion, address the underlying issues that contribute to child sexual abuse and explain the grooming tactics used by abusers. Allow parents to process their thoughts and feelings after sharing this information. This may be the first time that they fully understand the violation of trust and intentional manipulation of abusers, many of whom may be close family members, partners, or close friends.

- ▶ The shame and silence that surrounds child sexual abuse in our society leads to a lack of awareness and understanding. People do not want to believe that it happens and often think it is an isolated problem that does not affect their community. Some may blame individual victims and families, which prevents abusers and communities from being accountable and taking action.
- ▶ The sexualization of children in our culture leads to a greater acceptance of child sexual abuse. It has become normal for children and youth to be portrayed in a sexual manner and treated as sexual objects. Abusers use this cultural norm to justify their behavior and blame victims. When people talk about what a teen was wearing or say that a child was acting older than his or her age, it ignores the power disparities between adults and children that abusers exploit.
- ▶ Children are not given power in our culture. They are taught not to say no to adults and authority figures and are often not seen as credible. Children may not always have the power of knowledge to know what is right and wrong. Perpetrators take advantage of this vulnerability.
- ▶ Intergenerational abuse normalizes sexual assault and may prevent survivors from talking about the abuse or seeking help.
- ▶ Abusers are good at what they do. They play into myths about child sexual abuse and are enabled by the cultural norms discussed above. They may look for children who are especially isolated, marginalized, or seeking attention. They often engage in grooming, which is a very intentional process of manipulation that develops trust and ultimately gives perpetrators access to children. Because the grooming process is so effective, many abusers never have to use force or violence to commit their crimes.

Who perpetrates child sexual abuse?

Research on child sexual abusers is complex and beyond the scope of this session. There is no single profile of abusers. Focus this section on dispelling common myths about abusers and providing general statistics. The handout, *Information about Sexual Offenders*, is more in-depth and can supplement the information discussed during group.

- ▶ Most children are abused by someone they know. Approximately 50% of abusers are acquaintances to the child, and one-quarter to one-third are family members.
- ▶ More than 90% of child sexual abusers are male.
- ▶ Approximately one-third of abusers are juveniles.

Source: <http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/factsheet/pdf/childhoodSexualAbuseFactSheet.pdf>

Provide examples of ways that perpetrators may groom the child, the family, and the community.

Explain that grooming on all levels happens even in situations where the abuser is a close family member.

**ACTIVITY: Telling and Recanting**

Ask participants to brainstorm reasons why a child may not disclose sexual abuse and why a child may disclose and then say it didn't happen. This activity helps to synthesize many of the concepts covered during the session. Parents may be angry or hurt that their child waited to tell them about the abuse or did not tell them at all. Prompting parents to think through these ideas will help them to start processing these feelings and will normalize the fact that many children do not disclose for understandable reasons.

Share with participants that it is quite common for children to wait months or even years to disclose abuse. In fact, a review of the research on child sexual abuse disclosure found that only one third of adults who were abused as children revealed the abuse to anyone during childhood (London et al., 2005).

**CHECK-OUT: *What is the one thing you learned in the session today that was most helpful to you?***

Reference:

London, K., Bruck, M., Ceci, S., & Shuman, D. (2005). Disclosure of child sexual abuse: What does the research tell us about the ways that children tell? *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 11(1), 194-226.
<http://www.mecasa.org/joomla/images/pdfs/csa/disclosure%20of%20child%20sa.pdf>



RESOURCES

Washington State's sexual assault statutes:

- ◆ King County Sexual Assault Resource Center has a user-friendly information page on sexual assault laws: <http://www.kcsarc.org/pop/laws>
- ◆ Washington State statutes are available at <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=9A.44>

Identifying Child Molesters: Preventing Child Sexual Abuse by Recognizing the Patterns of Offenders
by Carla Van Dam

Myths and Facts about Sex Offenders
Center for Sex Offender Management
<http://www.csom.org/pubs/mythsfacts.pdf>

From Hurt to Hope: Child Sexual Abuse/Assault Advocacy Guide
Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs
<http://www.wcsap.org/hurt-hope-child-sexual-abuseassault-advocacy-guide>

Several recorded webinars to accompany *From Hurt to Hope* are also available on the WCSAP website <http://www.wcsap.org/recorded-webinars>

You may wish to refresh your recollection of some basic information on child sexual abuse and underlying causes via WCSAP's online training site, <http://learn.wcsap.org/> The relevant materials are in the Advocate Core under Child Sexual Abuse.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ In your preparation for this session, identify examples from the introductory video that can be used to highlight key concepts during your discussion.
- ▶ Although there is a lot of information to cover during this session, you can still look for ways to keep participants involved and help them process in a meaningful way. Before diving into each topic area, promote discussion by asking participants what they already know. You can help to fill in the knowledge gaps as you go instead of setting the session up as a lecture.
- ▶ Feel free to modify the content for this week depending on your group's general knowledge of child sexual abuse. This will also allow you to integrate feedback on their interest areas from Session One. If the feedback leads you to modify any of the upcoming session topics, be sure to inform the group.
- ▶ During this session, raising awareness of the prevalence of child sexual abuse and the social norms that contribute to this problem help to address the stigma and silence that parents often face. Your framing can also reinforce that this is a societal problem rather than an isolated problem with their family or with them as parents. Parents' time in this group will give them the tools to address challenges in their own families but can also serve to help others in the future.

SESSION THREE – COPING AND COMMUNICATION

GOAL OF SESSION: To help parents develop some coping strategies and communication skills to be able to handle their own emotional reactions and to help their children.



CHECK-IN: *When you are really upset, what is one thing you do that helps you to calm down?*

**HANDOUTS**

Feelings Following a Sexual Abuse Disclosure
(see Appendix B)

Dialectical Behavior Therapy Validation Strategies for Parents
by Christy Matta
(see Appendix C)

The Optimistic Child: Raise Your Children to be Optimists
by Elizabeth Scott
<http://stress.about.com/od/parentingskills/ht/raiseoptimists.htm>





ACTIVITY: Feelings Following a Sexual Abuse Disclosure

Preparation: Make copies of the handout “Feelings Following a Sexual Abuse Disclosure”. Have pens or pencils available for each participant.

1. Give participants the handout and read through the list of emotions. Explain that 10 is the highest score, and give an example of what 10 might mean for a particular emotion. Zero means that the person never feels that emotion, and the numbers in between represent how often and how strongly a person experiences that emotion.
2. Have each person fill out the form, and then ask if anyone is willing to share. You might start by asking, “Is there anything that surprises you, as you look over your questionnaire?”

“Not only do you question yourself sometimes, how could you do this, this is your fault, I think society as a whole will look at you – how could you not know this is happening?”

I have never felt shame like that ever in my entire life, I considered myself an excellent mother.”

(Willingham, 2007)

“Initially it was disbelief. I mean, I believed the girls. I believed my girls when they came to me. I knew they were telling the truth, it was just disbelief that he could actually do that. I knew that something happened; I didn’t know what.”

(Willingham, 2007)

Reference:

Willingham, Elizabeth Upchurch, “Maternal Perceptions and Responses to Child Sexual Abuse” (2007). Counseling and Psychological Services Dissertations. Paper 12. http://digitalarchive.gsu.edu/cps_diss/12



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

- ▶ It is normal and common to have a wide variety of emotions after learning your child has been abused.
- ▶ Many parents feel a sense of grief, because they know that things will never be the same. Ask the group to name some of the things they feel they have lost, such as a sense of safety or normalcy, financial stability, or a sense of competence as a parent.
- ▶ Parents may feel guilty about their own emotions, such as anger or a sense of loss, but these are completely normal. We have a responsibility to express emotions appropriately, but feelings themselves are neither bad nor good.
- ▶ The family is on a journey, and it sometimes may feel like a roller coaster ride!
- ▶ It is tough for parents because just when your child needs you the most, you are experiencing very difficult, disturbing emotions, and it is hard to respond the way you would like to.





ACTIVITY: Obstacles to Communication

Preparation: Use boxes, chairs, or something else that can serve as a physical “obstacle.” Make signs that contain one of the following statements, and tape one to each obstacle:



1. Tell the group that these are common statements that parents make, and that sometimes they can create obstacles to communication.
2. Depending on how many parents you have in your group, have them stand by the obstacles individually, in pairs, or in small groups.
3. For each obstacle, explain why it might stifle communication between a parent and a child. Ask the group members standing by the obstacle for some ideas about what else a parent could say when he or she feels like saying one of the obstacle statements. For example, for “I’m busy right now,” the parent might add, “but I’ll be done in a few minutes, and then we can sit down and talk together. I really want to hear what you have to say.”



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

- ▶ Building on the activity, talk about how a parent can show he or she is listening to a child.
- ▶ Explain that it is normal to want to “fix” things when your child describes a problem, but it is often more helpful to listen and ask questions to help the child figure things out on his or her own.
- ▶ With regard to the child disclosing more details about the abuse, parents should not pry, but should be prepared to listen without reacting in a way that would make the child think he or she should not have said anything. Expressing extreme anger at the abuser, for example, may shut the child down if he or she has more ambivalent feelings.
- ▶ Parents should be aware that children overhear much more than we think they do. When a child overhears a parent venting during a phone conversation or while talking to someone in another room, he or she may feel guilty, confused, frightened, betrayed, or embarrassed. Even very young children are affected by the emotional tone of conversations.
- ▶ Use the handout by Christy Matta (see Appendix C) as the basis for a discussion of positive communication skills. Here is a parent-friendly paraphrasing of the headings in that article. Give specific examples or ask the group for examples to make these concepts clear.
 - ◆ Respond to your child with interest.
 - ◆ Connect with your child by being warm, friendly, and positive.
 - ◆ Tell your child something about your own thoughts, feelings, and experiences (as appropriate, of course).
 - ◆ Be genuine. You are a person as well as a parent.
 - ◆ Be vulnerable. You don’t want to be right and in charge every second.
 - ◆ Cheer for your child. Show your support and your belief in your child.
 - ◆ Help your child to express thoughts and feelings.

**SELF-CARE ACTIVITY: Relaxation Exercises**

Teach parents a simple relaxation exercise. You may already have a favorite exercise. If not, you can teach one that is as simple as having group members sit comfortably in their chairs, and follow their breathing, in and out, trying to empty their minds of all concerns. Let them know it is normal to be distracted, and they can just gently bring their attention back to their breathing. Keep your voice soothing and low, and ask for silence during this activity.

After this activity, encourage participants to talk about how they can integrate brief relaxation exercises into their day. Explain the concept of the “stress ladder”: Each frustrating or difficult event during a day can push us higher up on the ladder, so that a small difficulty may push us off the top (yelling at our kids, crying uncontrollably, or being impatient with other people). Using a relaxation exercise can help you to climb down a couple of rungs on the ladder, so you can maintain control when the next frustration appears.

This is a great activity for parents to teach their children, and it provides an opportunity for them to lead by example. Kids of all ages can learn to slow down, breathe, and relax their bodies when they feel stressed.





CHECK-OUT: *What's one thing you can do this week to open up communication with your child?*



RESOURCES

Parenting a Child With Intense Emotions
by Pat Harvey and Jeanine Penzo

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk
by Adele Faber and Elaine Maslish

The Optimistic Child: A Proven Program to Safeguard Children Against Depression and Build Lifelong Resilience
by Martin P. Seligman



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ This session focuses on general communication and emotion management, and is not intended to delve deeply into abuse-related concerns.
- ▶ Let parents know that the next three sessions will address reactions to abuse and how to handle them in more detail.
- ▶ Normalize parents' feelings, and remind them that it is not helpful for them to "blame and shame" themselves. They may become aware of some of their past missteps, so let them know that every parent makes mistakes. They have the opportunity to make positive changes now.
- ▶ Mention that the crisis caused by sexual abuse is a huge challenge and would tax anyone's parenting skills, no matter how good.
- ▶ With humor, acknowledge that parenting may sometimes feel impossible in the aftermath of abuse because just as the child is most difficult and needy, the parent is stressed out and overwhelmed. No wonder things get tense!

SESSION FOUR – HOW ABUSE AFFECTS CHILDREN AND TEENS



GOAL OF SESSION: To help parents understand the effects of abuse on children and teens in the context of normal developmental stages and issues.

Is my daughter keeping to herself
because she was abused,
or is it just because she is thirteen?



CHECK-IN: *What is one change you have seen in your child since discovering that he or she was sexually abused?*



ACTIVITY: Images of Hope

Preparation: Bring paper, crayons, markers, and colored pencils. You may also wish to bring magazines, scissors, and glue sticks.

Give each participant a piece of paper and drawing materials. Ask them to draw a picture that represents their hopes for their child. If they are uncomfortable with drawing, they can write words or use magazine pictures. Allow time to share.





HANDOUTS

Sexual Development and Behavior in Children

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

http://www.nctsn.org/nctsn_assets/pdfs/caring/sexualdevelopmentandbehavior.pdf

Child Development Guide

WA State Department of Social and Health Services

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training/chidev/cd06.htm>

Provide participants with the link to this interactive guide that discusses physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and moral development by age. This information can also be used to provide examples throughout this session. If you have internet access, you may wish to explore the site with the group during your discussion on development or you may choose to have a computer available so parents can browse the site during break.

What is Healthy Sexual Development?

by Heather Corinna

<http://www.rhrealitycheck.org/blog/2011/06/09/what-healthy-sexual-development>

It's Time...to Talk to Your Children About Healthy Sexuality

National Sexual Violence Resource Center

http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/SAAM_2012_Child-development.pdf

Ten Things to Remember When You Talk to Kids about Sexuality

Stop it Now!

<http://www.stopitnow.org/gethelp/385?result=1679>



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

General information on how sexual abuse affects children and teens

- ◆ In some situations, there may not have been any significant indicators of abuse for parents to recognize. This doesn't mean that the abuse did not happen but rather speaks to the fact that children are resilient and will respond differently to abuse.
- ◆ Behavioral effects, such as sexual behavior problems, withdrawal, regression, aggression and substance abuse
- ◆ Physical effects, such as bodily pain or discomfort, headache, fatigue, eating or sleeping problems
- ◆ Psychological effects
 - Acute stress – Most children will have some immediate symptoms, which may include anger, anxiety, depression, flashbacks and being “on edge” or overly alert.
 - Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – This involves long-term effects that interfere with the child's ability to function. It is not uncommon in sexual abuse survivors, but it is certainly not universal.

Factors that influence the impact of child sexual abuse

- ◆ History of other traumatic experiences and/or anxiety problems
- ◆ Nature of the abuse, including duration, severity and victim relationship to the abuser
- ◆ Response from others following disclosure—belief and support from parents is central to a child's recovery. Emphasize the importance of what participants have already done for their children by seeking help and coming to group to gain more knowledge and skills. If parents express regret about past reactions, emphasize that everyone makes mistakes and they have the opportunity to handle things differently now and in the future.

Why does development matter?

- ◆ Children will have different responses and needs following sexual abuse depending on their stage of development. For example, parents of younger children may be more focused on re-establishing safety and security for their child. Parents of older children may need to be prepared to respond to the child's concerns about their own sexuality, their perceived role in the abuse, and the implications for the future.
- ◆ Understanding child development will help parents differentiate between normal and problematic behaviors following sexual abuse.



WE KNOW that children can recover from sexual abuse and that parents are vital to the healing process. While sexual abuse can have negative impacts on various aspects of children's lives, parents can proactively help children to overcome these impacts. Utilize these positive parenting goals as a way to educate parents about the potential effects of sexual abuse while providing concrete steps they can take to build resilience:

Ensuring Safety

Trauma can cause children (and adults) to react to everyday events or stimuli with intense fear. Certain people, places, or situations may trigger children to respond in ways that they themselves may not be able to explain. Children may revert back to earlier childhood behaviors or be reluctant to do things independently; teens may engage in risk-taking behavior and seem unconcerned about safety at all. All of these reactions are normal and should be met with patience and reassurance. Parents may also need to re-establish their role as the protector, as some children have carried the burden of keeping themselves safe or finding ways to minimize the abuse. Parents should still talk with their children about safety skills but should always communicate what they will do to ensure their child's safety in the future.

Rebuilding Trust

Children are often abused by people they have been told they can trust. In some circumstances, adults do not always understand that a child is disclosing abuse or know the warning signs that abuse is occurring. As a result, children may feel that the adults in their lives did not protect them from further victimization. Following abuse, parents can rebuild trust by reassuring their children that they can be counted on to protect them and being honest about their limitations (i.e. parents cannot be with their children every second of the day or foresee or control every possible danger). Parents can also help children to identify other adults in their lives that they can talk to and depend on. It is also important to reaffirm children's ability to trust their own feelings and instincts and support them in building healthy relationships with peers.

Promoting Healthy Sexuality

Sexual abuse can blur children's understanding of healthy sexual boundaries, roles, and behaviors. Younger children may display problematic sexual behaviors; teens may struggle with sexual shame or be preoccupied with sexuality. Regardless of age, ignoring sexuality all together will do little to address these potential effects of child sexual abuse. Parents may need to start by educating themselves in order to support healthy sexual development and engage their children in conversations about sexuality.



Addressing Sexual Recovery Issues

Just as we emphasize that sexual assault does not define a person, it also does not define his or her sexuality. As questions or anxieties surface, parents can reassure their children that the experience of sexual abuse did not take away their power to envision and express their own sexuality and sexual identity. Parents should know that their children may not feel comfortable discussing these issues with them, and that it is okay for the child to talk about his or her concerns with an advocate, therapist or another trusted adult. There are normal questions that children or teens ask (or think about) after abuse.

- *Am I gay now?* No, abuse doesn't determine your sexual orientation and experiencing a physical reaction in a situation of same sex abuse does not mean that you are gay.
- *Does this mean I am not a virgin anymore?* Your first consensual sexual experience will still be as important and special as ever.
- *If I experienced physical pleasure during the abuse, does that mean it was my fault or that I wanted to be abused?* No, our bodies are designed to react sexually. That reaction doesn't mean you wanted the abuse or were a willing participant.

Reorienting the Child Toward Normal Developmental Tasks and Activities

When children are preoccupied with surviving sexual abuse, typical developmental processes are interrupted. Additionally, the coping skills they utilized and depended upon during the abuse may no longer be healthy or appropriate once the abuse has stopped. Parents can introduce new coping skills and focus on getting their child back on the normal developmental path. The online child development guide referenced above has suggestions for effective parenting at each stage that can be used towards this goal.

Preventing Revictimization

Children who have been sexually abused are at a higher risk for being abused again or assaulted as adults. As discussed in Session Two, abusers take advantage of children's vulnerabilities and may specifically target children who are isolated, lack self-esteem and assertiveness, or are looking for adult attention. Addressing all of the above parenting goals are a part of preventing a child from being victimized again. Additionally, parents can be intentional about building their child's support system of positive role models and peers and seeking opportunities to build their child's self-esteem by helping them to pursue their interests and talents.



Getting Help for the Child

If a child's reaction to sexual abuse is extreme enough to cause severe distress, safety concerns, or significant interference with daily life, the child should be evaluated by a mental health professional. Let parents know they can discuss therapy with an advocate to obtain referrals and information.



ACTIVITY: One Step Per Goal

Preparation: Post flip chart paper around the room, and write one of the discussed parenting goals on each sheet of paper. Gather markers and index cards.

1. Ask parents to go around the room and write one thing they can do this week to further each of these goals.
2. Discuss the brainstorm as a group so participants can learn from each other's ideas.
3. Have each parent choose ONE step toward one goal and write it on an index card.
4. Let parents know that they will continue to gain skills and knowledge in future sessions that will help them to reach these parenting goals.



SELF-CARE ACTIVITY: Focusing on Your Strengths

Ask participants to describe (either to the group or in writing) a difficult situation that they handled really well when they were growing up. What personal characteristics or support systems helped them to deal with it successfully?



CHECK-OUT: *Share the one thing you chose to do this week to support your child's recovery and healthy development.* (This is the item each participant wrote on an index card at the end of the goal-setting activity.)



RESOURCES

WCSAP recorded webinar:

Child Sexual Abuse, Child Development and Advocacy: Adolescents

<http://www.wcsap.org/child-sexual-abuse-child-development-and-advocacy-adolescents>

WCSAP recorded webinar:

Child Sexual Abuse, Child Development and Advocacy: Younger Children

<http://www.wcsap.org/child-sexual-abuse-child-development-and-advocacy-younger-children>

What Advocates Need to Know about Therapy: Working with Children, Adolescents, and Families

Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs

<http://www.wcsap.org/what-advocates-need-know-about-therapy-working-children-adolescents-and-families>

Understanding Children's Sexual Behaviors: What's Natural and Healthy

by Toni Cavanagh Johnson

<http://www.tcavjohn.com/products.php>

Cultural and Family Differences in Children's Sexual Education and Knowledge

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/CTbrief_v3n1_CultFamilyDiffSexualEdKnow.pdf

www.scarleteen.com

This is a highly informative and candid website designed to answer any and all questions that youth may have about sex and sexuality.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ Some parents may believe or have been told that their child is now “damaged.” Similarly, older children may fear that they will be forever scarred by their abuse. You have the opportunity in this session to re-frame such thinking. Alleviate parents’ concerns that their children will experience every possible negative outcome by explaining that every child has different risk and protective factors that will influence how the abuse affects them. Many effects of child sexual abuse are only experienced in the short term and may be minimal. Furthermore, child sexual abuse is a risk factor, not a determinant of long-term problems. Your goal in this session is to educate parents about the potential impacts of child sexual abuse while also emphasizing the resiliency of children and families and the power that support systems can have on the healing process.
- ▶ This session may bring up a lot of specific concerns for participants. Normalize their feelings and the difficulties that they or their children are experiencing. Let parents know that you will be talking further about difficult child behaviors and parenting problems in Session Six and preventing revictimization in Session Eight. Based on the discussion this week, you can better prepare the content and resources for these upcoming sessions.
- ▶ After this session you may wish to review the cards collected from parents in Session One identifying questions or topics to be addressed throughout your time together. This will help you as you plan for the remaining group sessions.



SESSION FIVE – HOW ABUSE AFFECTS PARENTS AND SIBLINGS



GOAL OF SESSION: To facilitate the family's healing process by helping parents understand and respond to the impact of abuse on siblings and partners.



CHECK-IN: *Aside from the abused child, which family member do you worry about the most in terms of his or her reaction to what has happened?*



ACTIVITY: Brothers and Sisters

Preparation: Make a poster board with pictures of a variety of children and the heading "Brothers and Sisters." Bring sticky notes and pens.

1. Give parents sticky notes and ask them to name some things that brothers and sisters of children who have been abused might need, such as:
 - ◆ Knowledge of what is going on
 - ◆ Transportation to activities when Mom is tied up with abuse-related appointments
 - ◆ One-on-one time with parents or grandparents
2. Read off the items and discuss with the group. Even parents who have only one child can participate since this is a general brainstorming session. The group can identify ways to meet children's needs, such as having a trusted neighbor give the child a ride to piano lessons, or giving an older child a slightly later bedtime to ensure some one-on-one parent time.



HANDOUTS

Parenting Siblings

Mothers of Sexually Abused Children

<http://www.mosac.net/default.asp?pageid=34&deptid=1>



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

- D In couple situations where neither adult partner is the abuser, what effect does the abuse have on the couple's relationship? Some possible concerns are:
 - ◆ The need for time alone together
 - ◆ Anger and blame
 - ◆ Lack of understanding by one partner – "Why can't you just get over it?"
 - ◆ Lack of attention to each other
 - ◆ Problems with sex because of disgust about the abuse
 - ◆ Differences in disciplinary styles may be highlighted because the kids are acting up

 - D When the abuser was a spouse or partner, the nonoffending parent may have the following reactions:
 - ◆ A deep sense of betrayal
 - ◆ Guilt, shame, or grief
 - ◆ Practical problems because of changes in living arrangements
 - ◆ Resentment because the burden of parenting is no longer shared
 - ◆ Worry about financial problems
 - ◆ Loneliness
- "This can't be happening because I had so much faith in this guy, and I didn't want to feel like, that he would do something like that. Like I felt betrayed."

(Willingham, 2007)
- D Explain that the family is a system that is connected like a child's mobile that hangs from the ceiling; when one family member is in trouble or in pain, the entire family is affected.
 - D Acknowledge that family members can be a great source of support, but they may also contribute to the stress that the parent is feeling.
 - D Allow time for group members to share their concerns.

Reference:

Willingham, Elizabeth Upchurch, "Maternal Perceptions and Responses to Child Sexual Abuse" (2007). Counseling and Psychological Services Dissertations. Paper 12. http://digitalarchive.gsu.edu/cps_diss/12

**SELF-CARE ACTIVITY: Grown-ups' Night Out**

Have each group member take a few minutes to plan some pleasant time with another adult – couple time (if appropriate to the situation) or time with a friend. Suggest that the time be designated as a “relaxation zone,” with no discussion of the abuse allowed. Give some examples, such as watching a favorite TV program together after the kids have gone to bed, going out for coffee with a friend, or taking a walk together.

**CHECK-OUT: What activity with your partner or friend have you decided on for this week?****RESOURCES**

The Mothers of Sexually Abused Children (MOSAC) website has several excellent articles about siblings of abused children in addition to the handout above:

- ◆ *The Needs of Siblings*
<http://www.mosac.net/default.asp?pageid=298>
- ◆ *Immediate Effects on Siblings*
<http://www.mosac.net/default.asp?pageid=40&deptid=1>
- ◆ *Siblings: Secondary Victims*
<http://www.mosac.net/default.asp?pageid=154&deptid=1>



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ This session needs to be approached with sensitivity and informed by the parents' situations. For example, if a parent has more than one child who has been victimized, or if a sibling was the abuser, you may want to modify the content regarding siblings.
- ▶ Now that the group is past the mid-point, group members should be increasingly comfortable with each other. While offering structure to the group session, you can also be flexible about group topics as long as they are related to the overall subject of the session.
- ▶ While you don't want to shut down the conversation if a group member begins to talk about a relative outside the immediate family, remind the group that you will be focusing specifically on extended family members and others in the "outside world" during Session Seven.
- ▶ If a parent seems truly isolated and can't identify another adult to socialize with, have the group think of alternatives such as chatting with a friend online, having coffee with a co-worker, attending a book talk at the library, or looking in the local paper to find a meeting or event that sounds interesting.
- ▶ Talk about improving adult relationships in terms of sustainability. The group will end, but the need for adult contact and friendship will still be there. Help participants understand the connection between having supportive relationships in their lives and being better, less-stressed parents.



SESSION SIX – DIFFICULT CHILD BEHAVIORS AND PARENTING CHALLENGES



GOAL OF SESSION: To identify common behavioral responses to sexual abuse, and to increase parents' skills in handling these behaviors appropriately.



CHECK-IN: *How did your "Grown-Ups' Night Out" last week go?*



ACTIVITY: More or Less

Preparation: Have two pieces of poster board or flip chart paper. Label one "More" and the other one "Less." Gather several markers.

1. Ask parents to think of a specific behavior of their child that they would like to see more of, and a specific child behavior that they would like to see less of.
2. Give some examples to help them be specific: "Be more well-behaved" is too general. "Sit quietly at the table and eat until the whole meal is finished" is a more specific behavior description.
3. Ask each parent to write down one behavior in the "More" category and one in the "Less" category. These examples can be used later in the session when you are discussing how to encourage good behavior.



**HANDOUTS**

The Impact of Abuse on Children, pp. 3-4 in *Questions and Answers About Child Sexual Abuse: An Interview with Esther Deblinger, PhD.*

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

http://nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/ChildSexualAbuse_QA.pdf

Signs That a Child or Teen May Be At-Risk to Harm Another Child

Stop it Now!

http://www.stopitnow.org/signs_child_adolescent_risk_harm_child

Sexual Behavior and Children: When Is It a Problem and What to Do About It

Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress

http://depts.washington.edu/hcsats/PDF/infobrochures/sexual_behavior.pdf

I Broke The Rules and All I Got Was Hollered At

The Parent Coach

<http://www.parentcoachplan.com/assertive.php>



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

Using the handout, *The Impact of Abuse on Children*, define and explain these concepts:

- ◆ Trauma
- ◆ Hyperarousal, or “jumpiness”
- ◆ Re-experiencing, or re-living the trauma
- ◆ Avoidance (including trauma triggers)
- ◆ If you choose to include the “question and answer” about long-term impacts of sexual abuse, be sure to explain that with appropriate help, the outlook is much brighter for children. The tone of this section is a bit bleak and may upset parents.

Describe common behavioral reactions, tailoring your information to the age levels of the children you are discussing. For example, if all the parents in your group have children under the age of eight, you won’t want to focus on teenage behaviors. Be sure to let parents know that some children show no behavioral changes. They may be dealing with their feelings internally, or their coping skills may be effective in alleviating behavioral changes. Every child will handle the aftermath of abuse differently.

Fear-related Behaviors

These behaviors may include clinginess, a reluctance to do things independently (such as go outside and play or sleep alone in a bedroom), expressing worry about the abuser coming back to hurt the child or other people, or nightmares. Parents need to acknowledge realistic fears (such as worry about the abuser who is still at large) and tell the child what they are doing to protect him or her. For other fears, parents should gently but firmly help the child move away from the avoidance behavior one step at a time. Help parents to understand that avoidance can become a habit; parents shouldn’t force kids to do something that terrifies them, but should support them in approaching the feared situation.

Sleep Disturbances

In addition to nightmares, kids and teens may have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep. If the abuse happened at home, a certain room may trigger traumatic memories for the child. Sometimes simply rearranging and redecorating a bedroom may help the child to sleep better.

Moodiness, Depression, or Irritability

Some mood problems are to be expected. While parents should be understanding, they should gently guide children to express their thoughts and feelings appropriately and set limits on

aggressive or rude behaviors. If a child's moodiness or withdrawal persists, the parent should consider therapy. Also remind parents that sleep disturbances may be responsible for irritability.

Sexual Behavior Problems

Building on the discussion of healthy sexual development in Session Four, explain why sexual behavior problems may be a response to sexual abuse. Refer to the handouts to explain when sexual behavior rises to the level of serious concern. Also describe how children and teens may use behavior that seems "seductive" to relate to adults, because of the lessons learned from the abuser. This behavior should be curtailed firmly with kindness and without shaming the child. For example, a young child who tries to touch an adult's genitals should simply be told, "That is a private part of my body, and it is not okay to touch it."

Explain the basics of encouraging good behavior:

- ◆ "Catch your child being good" – pay more attention to positive behavior than negative behavior.
- ◆ Set clear limits and explain them in terms the child can understand.
- ◆ Empathize with the child's feelings, but continue to expect reasonable behavior (for example, don't let a child get away with avoiding chores because you feel bad about the abuse).
- ◆ Keep a good balance between acknowledging the abuse has happened and it hurts, and helping the child to work toward resuming as "normal" a life as possible.

Ask the group: *What are the parenting challenges you have experienced since your child disclosed the abuse? What are some ways you have coped with those challenges?*

Describe how therapy can help children, families, and parents. Address the stigma associated with seeking therapy.





SELF-CARE ACTIVITY: Quality Time with the Family

Have participants plan a fun family activity. It can involve just the parent and the child who has been abused, other family members, or the entire family. Give participants paper and pencil, and have them answer these questions:

- ◆ What activity will we do?
- ◆ Who will be involved in it?
- ◆ When will it be?
- ◆ How should we prepare, and who will do it?
- ◆ Will this be an activity that will be enjoyable for everyone involved?



CHECK-OUT: *Briefly share your plan for your fun family activity.*



RESOURCES

WCSAP recorded webinar: *Children with Sexual Behavior Problems*
<http://www.wcsap.org/children-sexual-behavior-problems-recording>

Solve Your Child's Sleep Problems by Richard Ferber

Healing the Harm Done: A Parent's Guide to Helping Your Child Overcome the Effects of Sexual Abuse by Jennifer Y. Levy-Peck

Online Tutorial:

Recognizing and Addressing Trauma in Infants, Young Children, and Their Families
 Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, Georgetown University

- ◆ This online training module is free, accessible for advocates, and takes less than an hour to complete.

Assertive Discipline for Parents by Lee and Marlene Canter



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ This can be a challenging session, and facilitators will need to be well prepared for participants' questions. Don't hesitate to say "I don't know" if a parent brings up a problem for which you don't have an answer. Be sure that you are familiar with local resources, such as an advocate with a great deal of expertise on parenting issues, or therapists who are skilled in dealing with abuse-related child behavior issues or assessing and treating sexual behavior problems.
- ▶ Parents will have some good ideas to share, but also remember that what works for one child or family may not be appropriate for another. You may have to gently remind the group to refrain from giving specific advice.
- ▶ It can be a huge relief for parents to hear that they are not bad or crazy because they are stressed out and may be irritable at times.
- ▶ The big message you want to give is that parents need to be firm but compassionate about difficult behaviors. Reasonable, age-appropriate expectations and discipline are helpful to all children and do not add to children's emotional burden.
- ▶ Help parents make the connection between their own levels of isolation and stress and their ability to cope with difficult behaviors from their kids. This is a great time to reiterate the importance of self-care and support.

SESSION SEVEN – DEALING WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD



GOAL OF SESSION: To explore the various sources of stress and support in parents' lives and provide information to help parents navigate the systems that become involved following a disclosure.



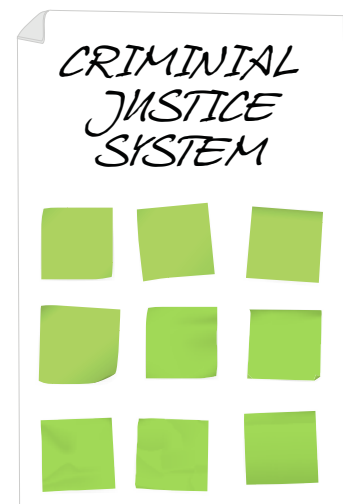
CHECK-IN: *What has been most challenging for you in dealing with the "outside world"? For example, not knowing what is happening with your child's legal case or feeling like your relatives don't understand.*



ACTIVITY: Navigating Systems

Preparation: Make signs that say "school," "CPS," and "criminal justice system," and tape them up around the room. Get a large envelope, index cards, and pens.

1. Explain that it can be challenging to know how to deal with these systems after a disclosure of abuse and that parents often have many of the same questions.
2. Invite parents to use the index cards to write questions (one per card) about how each of these systems work or how they should interact with them. The facilitator can also write common questions that parents have asked.
3. Collect the cards in an envelope so they are anonymous.
4. Tape each question under the appropriate sign.
5. Move to each station as you address each system in the *Learning and Discussion* section and answer the participants' questions as you go.





HANDOUTS

Sexual Assault and the Criminal Justice System

Harborview Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress

http://depts.washington.edu/hcsats/PDF/infobrochures/sexual_assault.pdf

Crime Victims' Rights

Office of Crime Victims Advocacy

<http://www.commerce.wa.gov/DesktopModules/CTEDPublications/CTEDPublicationsView.aspx?tabID=0&ItemID=46&Mid=950&wversion=Staging>

Parent's Guide to Child Protective Services

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/publications/22-484.pdf>



LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

A disclosure of child sexual abuse often means that parents are faced with new responsibilities, new people, new systems, and changing relationships. As they are trying to navigate this terrain, they must also help their children understand what is happening. This discussion will help parents prepare for and respond to these changes and encourage them to think about the ways in which they can empower their child by providing information and opportunities for input.

Criminal Justice System

The initiation, progression and outcomes of legal processes are largely out of parents' control and can be a significant source of stress and anxiety for parents and children. Since many cases do not move forward, parents will likely need support around 1) understanding what to expect if their child's case is being investigated and 2) coping with the realities of the criminal justice system and how this may differ from their expectations. Potential discussion prompts:

- ◆ What questions do you have about the investigation or prosecution of sexual abuse cases?
- ◆ What do/did you want to see happen with your case? What does/did your child want? What if things turn out differently?
- ◆ How can you help your child prepare for upcoming interviews or court dates?
- ◆ How can you explain the legal process and case outcome to your child?
- ◆ What role does the criminal justice system play in your family's healing?
How do you balance this with other avenues of healing?

Child Protective Services

A family's involvement with child protective services may be especially sensitive and some parents may wish to keep it private. Some parents may be attending group specifically due to a CPS mandate. If this is a topic you wish to address during this session, it may be best to share the information in a lecture format rather than through group discussion. Some general topics you could cover include:

- ◆ The role of CPS following a report of child sexual abuse
- ◆ How CPS operates in your community and what other systems or professionals they collaborate with, including how they might interact with your agency
- ◆ What services/resources the CPS office in your community can connect parents to
- ◆ What rights a parent has during a CPS investigation



School

A child's behavior and performance at school can be affected by sexual abuse. Additionally, children may have to miss school for court appointments, and school officials may need to be informed of protection orders. In some situations, the abuser may be another student or a teacher from the school. Possible discussion prompts:

- ◆ How can you advocate for your child at school while still protecting your child and family's privacy?
- ◆ How can you support your child's academic success?
Are there things you are doing already that have worked well?
- ◆ What (if anything) does your child's teacher or counselor need to know about the effects of the abuse on your child in order to support his or her success at school?
- ◆ How can an advocate help you to develop a safety plan with the school and your child?

Family and Friends

Depending on the circumstances, family can either be a significant source of support or a significant source of stress. Parents may be struggling with what information to share with family and friends or how to deal with people close to them that are unsupportive of their child. In some situations a disclosure of abuse may divide the family and make parents feel they must choose between their child and their extended family. Children's friendships and relationships with relatives may also be affected.

- ◆ How do you establish boundaries with people who are not healthy right now for you or your child?
- ◆ What can you say to family, friends, community members, etc. if they are:
Asking questions about what happened? Blaming you or your child? Denying or minimizing the abuse? Telling other people about your child's abuse?
- ◆ What is your child's role in determining who is told about the abuse and what is shared?
- ◆ How can you utilize the support and help that your family and friends offer?
- ◆ How can you cope with your grief if friends and family members seem to have abandoned you or villainized you?
- ◆ How can you help your child explore his or her own feelings and choices about relationships with family and friends?



SELF-CARE ACTIVITY: Life Savers

Preparation: Purchase a small inflatable swimming ring from your local dollar store for each participant. If swimming rings aren't available, you can cut them out of construction paper. Gather permanent markers.

1. Ask participants to write the names of all of the people in their lives that they can turn to for help on their life savers.
2. If it is safe for them to take the life savers home, encourage participants to pull them out during times that they are feeling alone or need support.



ACTIVITY

Since there may be an extra week between Session Seven and Session Eight, it is helpful to provide parents with an activity that they can do independently. Even if there is no gap between sessions, this activity is a powerful way to help parents synthesize all of the skills and information they have gained while also connecting with their children.

Ask each parent to write a letter to his or her child. This is an opportunity to express the thoughts and feelings that they may have been unable or unprepared to express before. It might include an apology, words of encouragement, or hopes for the future. To accommodate parents with low literacy, you may wish to suggest the option of recording a letter. It is the parent's choice whether to give the letter to his or her child or share it with the group in the last session.



CHECK-OUT: *Who has been the biggest source of support to you in recent weeks?*



RESOURCES

If you are not utilizing guest speakers or are not currently working with the topic areas addressed, your best preparation for this session may be consultation with other agency staff or system partners. This will help to ensure that you are up-to-date on how the criminal justice and child protective service systems are currently operating in your community, as well as any school policies or services that may be relevant.



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ This session should be tailored to the specific needs of the group so you can address their most pressing concerns. This week's curriculum is intentionally open-ended so you can modify as appropriate. If parents are currently involved with the criminal justice system or child protective services, focusing on these systems may be the best use of your time. If your group is longer than eight sessions, you may wish to divide this information into two sessions.
- ▶ You may have to be proactive to ensure that this session stays productive and forward-focused. You can provide a space for parents' feelings and experiences to be validated while still directing the group's energy towards responding and coping effectively with the systems and people in their lives. Ending on a positive note that focuses on parents' resources and supports will help to provide this balance.
- ▶ There may be some unresolved questions or issues from discussion. Let participants know how you or another staff member will follow up. Since the intent of this session is to answer general questions and provide a broad overview, remind participants of the ways in which their individual advocates can assist them in navigating case-specific concerns.

SESSION EIGHT – MOVING INTO THE FUTURE



GOAL OF SESSION: To provide closure for group participants and instill confidence and hope for the future of their families.



CHECK-IN: *What are your feelings about this being our last session together?*



HANDOUTS

40 Developmental Assets

Search Institute

<http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets/lists>

- ◆ This website provides Developmental Assets® Lists for four different age groups:
Ages 3-5, Ages 5-9, Ages 8-12, Ages 12-18





LEARNING AND DISCUSSION

- ▶ Debrief with the group about last week's homework. Provide time for participants to share their letters with the group if they wish.
- ▶ Discuss the difficult balance between parents' desire to protect their children and the need to let children have appropriate freedom and make mistakes.
- ▶ Discuss the prevention of revictimization in the context of resilience. Key factors associated with resilience (summarized by the WA State Family Policy Council, *The High Cost of Adverse Childhood Experiences*, 2007, http://www.fpc.wa.gov/publications/ace_impact.pdf):
 - ◆ Connections/attachment to competent and caring adults in the family and community
 - ◆ Cognitive and self-regulation skills
 - ◆ Positive view of self
 - ◆ Motivation/ability to be effective in the environment
- ▶ Provide participants with age-specific handouts of the 40 Developmental Assets to give them concrete examples of the experiences and qualities that support these resiliency factors. This is also an opportunity to make connections to the parenting goals in Session Four.
- ▶ "Boundaries and Expectations" is one category within the 40 Developmental Assets. Talk with parents about why establishing healthy boundaries is especially important for children who have been sexually abused and how this is related to the prevention of revictimization.
 - ◆ Abuse can often cause children and teens to set boundaries that are too open or too closed. You may wish to use the analogy of a burglar alarm system that is either too sensitive or not responsive enough. If it is too sensitive, even a squirrel will set it off; if it is not responsive enough, a gang of burglars may enter the house undetected.
 - ◆ Abuse reinforces unhealthy emotional and physical boundaries making it more difficult for children to identify inappropriate interactions and relationships.
 - ◆ Abusers invalidate children's rights to their own boundaries.
 - ◆ Children may not trust themselves to set and enforce their own boundaries, especially if they feel that they were compliant in the abuse.
- ▶ Review any concerns parents may have about their own ability to recognize potential abusers and protect their children.



ACTIVITY: Wall of Wisdom

Helping others can be valuable to the healing process.

Preparation: Buy a piece of poster board and gather markers.

1. Explain to participants that they have an opportunity to use their experiences and knowledge to help other parents whose children have been abused.
2. Ask participants to take a few moments to think about words of encouragement, or insights and information that they would like to pass on to other parents who are beginning their healing journey.
3. Allow each participant to write their thoughts on the poster board and explain that the Wall of Wisdom will be shared with future groups.



ACTIVITY: Graduation

Preparation: Create a memento or certificate that you can give to each group member that will serve to commemorate the start of a new chapter.

Give time for each participant to say something to the group about his or her experience. For example, what group has meant to them, how they have changed during group, or what they will take with them.



It is amazing how much a group can accomplish in a few short weeks. Help the participants to recognize and honor their progress, while being realistic that the work is ongoing.



ACTIVITY: Post-test and end-of-group evaluation

Post-test: Be sure to use the same test or survey that participants completed at the beginning of group so you can show any change in responses as a result of the group. Explain to the group that the pre- and post-tests are not about measuring the progress of participants; rather, they are measuring the helpfulness of the group.

End-of-Group Evaluation: The group evaluation should be separate from the post-test and should be described as an effort to continue improving the group experience for future participants. If time allows you may wish to discuss participants' feedback in addition to giving them the written questionnaire.



CHECK-OUT: *What gives you hope for the future?*



RESOURCES

Understanding What Makes Kids Vulnerable to Being Sexually Abused

Stop it Now!

<http://www.stopitnow.org/gethelp/46>

Protecting the Gift: Keeping Children and Teenagers Safe (and Parents Sane)

by Gavin De Becker

Unmaking Sexual Con Games: Parent Guide

by Ron Herron and Kathleen Sorensen

He Told Me Not to Tell

King County Sexual Assault Resource Center

<http://www.kcsarc.org/sites/default/files/KCSARC%20he%20told%20me%20ENG%20for%20web.pdf>



CONSIDERATIONS FOR FACILITATORS

- ▶ When you are discussing the prevention of revictimization or factors that make children vulnerable, feelings of guilt may resurface for parents. Remind the group that having regret over something that they or their children did or did not do is different from bearing responsibility for the abuse, which rests solely with the abuser.
- ▶ End the group on a positive note. Be sure to let parents know that you think they are amazing for having taken the time to learn how to help their children. Emphasize the strength and resiliency you have seen in survivors, and let them know that their children can have a happy, healthy future.
- ▶ You may find that you are somewhat sad at the ending of group. While it is fine to acknowledge that you have enjoyed the experience and will miss the group, remember not to make it about you. Utilize your co-facilitator or other colleagues to process feelings that are not appropriate to share with the group.
- ▶ Following the conclusion of group, make it a priority to meet with your co-facilitator and/or supervisor to debrief, review evaluations, and discuss lessons learned.





APPENDICES

SECTION 3

APPENDIX A

State of Washington Sexual Abuse/Assault Standards

SUPPORT GROUP	
Definition	Regular facilitated meetings of victims and/or secondary victims of sexual abuse/assault with a supportive and educational focus.
Goals	To provide emotional stability and promote the understanding of the impact of sexual abuse/assault.
Duration	1 to 2 hour average length of time per session; 1 to 4 sessions per month; 3 months to a year
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Group meetings with a planned beginning and ending date and an outcome-based, structured agenda with a primary focus on sexual abuse/assault issues.
Service Recipients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Adult or adolescent sexual abuse/assault victims ◆ Non-offending parents of child sexual abuse/assault victims ◆ Significant others who require help/assistance in order to address their own reactions to victimization and to effectively support the victim
Qualifications	<p>The facilitator must complete 30 hours of initial sexual abuse/assault training, plus 12 hours of ongoing sexual abuse/assault training annually. All trainings must be approved by the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs (both the curriculum and the trainer). The provider must be familiar with the dynamics of sexual abuse/assault and relevant community resources, as well as have an understanding of how medical, legal and social services respond to victims of sexual abuse/assault. The facilitator must also have training in group process and interpersonal dynamics, and experience as a facilitator or co-facilitator.</p> <p>The facilitator must be supervised by a paid staff person with a minimum of a BA degree in Human Services or a related field plus two years of relevant experience or a combination of six years of relevant experience, education and training. The facilitator must be, or receive consultation on group process from, a Masters level therapist.</p>
March 1999	

APPENDIX B

Feelings Following a Sexual Abuse Disclosure											
Anxious	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Angry	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Betrayed	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Confused	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disappointed	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Disbelieving	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Exhausted	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Frustrated	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Frightened	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Guilty	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Hurt	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Lonely	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Miserable	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Overwhelmed	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Regretful	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Sad	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Worried	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Withdrawn	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Others:											
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

APPENDIX C

Dialectical Behavior Therapy Validation Strategies for Parents

By Christy Matta, MA

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How Do We Validate

Validation and active listening techniques are specific ways of approaching your child to increase cooperation and balance the change we are often asking for from our children.

1. **Responsiveness:** Addressing our children with interest in what they are saying, doing and understanding. Expressing concern about his or her wishes and needs.
2. **Warm engagement:** Approaching kids with warmth and friendliness. Active positive communication with our voice, tone and posture.
3. **Self-Disclosure:** Communicating our own attitudes, opinions, and emotional reactions to our children, as well as reactions to how they are behaving.
4. **Genuineness:** Being ourselves, rather than always acting as “parent” or “authority figure.”
5. **Vulnerability:** Empowering them, rather than having an exclusively high-power-low-power relationship.
6. **Cheerleading:** Cheerleading is helpful in validating the person’s inherent ability to overcome difficulties and learn new skills. It is believing in our children, assuming the best, providing encouragement, focusing on their capabilities, contradicting other people’s criticisms that are not accurate, and providing praise and reassurance.
7. **Articulating** their un verbalized emotions, thoughts, or behavior patterns. Children are often unaware of their own feelings and behaviors. It is validating for us to give voice to what they are thinking and feeling.

Remember: What each individual child finds validating is different. One child may respond to simply being listened to, while another may respond when you articulate and express understanding for how he or she feels. Our children are not the only ones who can benefit from understanding and active listening. Husbands, friends, family and yes, even we, ourselves, need it. We all have times when we’ve got an important problem, emotional pain, are having trouble with change or are feeling out-of-control. Validation can help us and our children make necessary changes and face challenges.

In my house, once I stop pushing everyone to ‘get things done,’ I find the solutions come fairly easily. My kids will pick up the toys if I assure them they can keep out their favorite. They’ll put their dishes in the dishwasher if we spend dinner talking about their day and I notice small attempts they’ve made to be helpful around the house. My family life is not a fairytale of cooperation and teamwork, but I do find that when I’m paying attention and listening to my kids, I feel less like I’m alone in the never ending battle against disarray.

Reference:

Linehan M. Cognitive Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder . New York: Guilford Press; 1993.

Appendix D

GROUP EVALUATION EXAMPLES

Goal and Objectives

The following goal and objectives are based on the curriculum in this guide and informed the development of the pre- and post-tests. Remember that the goal, objectives, and pre- and post-tests should be in alignment. If you change one, you will probably need to change the others.

Goal:

Participants are better able to cope effectively with the aftermath of the sexual abuse of their child and provide appropriate support to their child.

Objectives:

1. Participants demonstrate increased knowledge about child sexual abuse and how to reduce the risk of revictimization.
2. Participants express increased confidence in their ability to support their child's recovery.
3. Participants indicate an increased ability to identify and utilize healthy coping skills.
4. Participants indicate decreased feelings of isolation, shame, guilt, and stress regarding the abuse of their child.

Pre-Test

1. Do you agree with the following statements?
Please check the box which indicates your level of agreement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am able to take care of myself in healthy ways when I am stressed out or overwhelmed.					
When I think about my child's abuse, I do not feel alone with my experience.					
I understand what I need to do to keep healing.					
I have enough knowledge about sexual abuse for me to understand what happened to my child.					
I know what to do to help my child recover from the abuse.					
I feel able to respond to the reactions of other family members.					
I know how to get the help I need for my child, myself, and my family.					
I have a sense of hope about my child's future.					
I believe I am doing the best I can as a parent.					
I am able to communicate effectively with my child.					
Overall, I feel like I am coping well with the abuse of my child.					

2. Please identify three goals you would like to accomplish during your time in group.

Goal 1:

Goal 2:

Goal 3:

Post-Test

1. Do you agree with the following statements?
Please check the box which indicates your level of agreement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am able to take care of myself in healthy ways when I am stressed out or overwhelmed.					
When I think about my child's abuse, I do not feel alone with my experience.					
I understand what I need to do to keep healing.					
I have enough knowledge about sexual abuse for me to understand what happened to my child.					
I know what to do to help my child recover from the abuse.					
I feel able to respond to the reactions of other family members.					
I know how to get the help I need for my child, myself, and my family.					
I have a sense of hope about my child's future.					
I believe I am doing the best I can as a parent.					
I am able to communicate effectively with my child.					
Overall, I feel like I am coping well with the abuse of my child.					

2. Please identify three things you have accomplished during your time in group.

Accomplishment 1:

Accomplishment 2:

Accomplishment 3:

3. How many support group sessions did you attend? _____

Thanks to Connie Au of the Children's Response Center for allowing us to use her materials as the basis for this sample survey.

End-of-Group Evaluation

Do you agree with the following statements?
Please check the box which indicates your level of agreement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The group was a safe place to share my concerns.					
I learned what I needed to learn about child sexual abuse.					
The facilitator(s) was (were) knowledgeable and helped the group run smoothly.					
The handouts were useful.					
The activities helped me learn and understand the information.					
I would recommend this group to others.					

1. What did you like most about the group?

2. What could be improved about the group?

3. What would make it easier for people to attend the group?

4. What will you do with the knowledge you gained in the group?

5. Any additional comments or thoughts you would like to share:

