

## FACILITATING A GROUP

### I. PRINCIPLES OF FACILITATING

- A. Show positive regard for participants
- B. Express respect for participant opinions
- C. Create atmosphere of openness and non-judgmentalness
- D. Exhibit a friendly manner, sense of humor
- E. Listen, don't talk (be a facilitator, not a participant)
  - a. Guide discussion
  - b. Don't become actively involved
  - c. Don't participate, share views, or engage in discussion
- F. Listen and think
  - 1. Keep past-present-future perspective
  - 2. What's been discussed, what is currently being discussed, where conversation needs to go
- G. Know boundaries of discussion
  - 1. Communicate boundaries
  - 2. Refocus tangential discussion

### II. BE CLEAR ON FOCUS

- A. What will the small group be discussing?/What is the group exercise?

### III. GROUND RULES

- A. No right or wrong answers, just express your opinion
- B. Only one person should talk at once
- C. First name basis
- D. Confidentiality
- E. Tendency for some people to talk, some people not to say anything: important to hear from each of you tonight because you've all had different experiences
- F. Reemphasize value of differing/complementary points of view: Does anyone see it differently? Other ideas?

### IV. SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

- A. 5 second pause
  - 1. Novice mistakes: Continuing to talk; offering answers too quickly
  - 2. Alternative: *Take a moment and think about what you'd like to say*
- B. Probe – request for additional information
  - 1. *Would you like to say more about that? Give some examples?*
  - 2. Excessive probing time-consuming

### V. RESPONDING TO PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

- A. Head nodding
  - 1. Use sparingly and consciously

2. Can be taken as agreement or approval
- B. Short verbal responses
  1. Neutral are acceptable – okay, uh huh, yes
  2. Avoid good, excellent, correct that imply judgment

## VI. CONCLUDING

- A. Summarize main points, ask if accurate
- B. Ask group member to summarize; ask for additions

## VII. CHALLENGES TO FACILITATOR

- A. Passive, quiet group
  1. Call on individuals
  2. Go around group answering a specific question
  3. Use pauses and probes
- B. Shy respondent
  1. Place directly opposite facilitator – plenty of eye contact
  2. Ask to speak up or continue because interested in their point of view
- C. Excessively verbal group
  1. Polite limit-setting
  2. Review one-at-a-time rule
- D. Outspoken group member
  1. Expert – can inhibit other members in group
    - a. Emphasize everyone's expertise,
    - b. Importance of all opinions
  2. Dominant talkers –
    - a. May or may not be experts
    - b. Use body language, lack of eye contact
    - c. Verbal strategies – thank you, that's one idea; other opinions?
    - d. Interrupt when necessary
    - e. Avoid critical comments – curtail spontaneity from rest of group
- E. Group member who consistently goes off on tangent – rambling, off-topic
  1. Drone on, seem to feel obligation to say something
  2. Discontinue eye contact after 20-30 seconds
  3. When speaker stops or pauses, ask for other opinions, ask next question
- F. Group which doesn't understand questions or task
  1. Clarify
- I. Inarticulate group
  1. Ask for personal stories, examples
  2. Avoid modeling answers
- J. Nervous, tense group
  1. Acknowledge difficulty of group discussion
  2. Use gentle humor