Module 4: Group Development and Phase-Specific Tasks
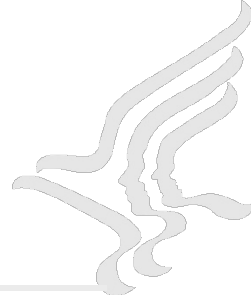
Based on material in Chapter 4 of TIP 41, *Substance Abuse Treatment: Group Therapy*

Module 4 Goal and Objectives

Goal:

Provide an overview of fixed and revolving membership groups and an overview of the tasks for the three phases of group development.

Objectives:

- Distinguish the differences between fixed and revolving membership groups.

- Prepare clients for groups.

- Describe the tasks for each of the three phases of group development.

Fixed Membership Groups
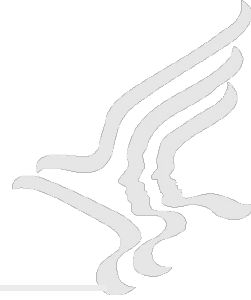
- Members are prepared and stay together for a long time.

- Membership is stable.

- Groups are either:
  - Time limited. Members participate in a specified number of sessions and start and finish together.
  - Ongoing. New members fill vacancies in a group that continues over a long period.

- Fixed groups are rarely used in substance abuse treatment.

Revolving Membership Groups
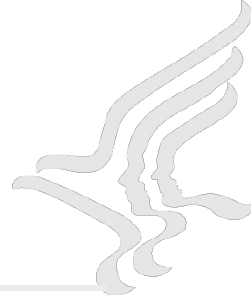
- New members enter a group when they become ready for its services.

- Groups must adjust to frequent, unpredictable changes.

- Groups are either:
  - Time limited. Member attends a specified number of sessions, starting and finishing at his or her own pace.
  - Ongoing. Member remains until he or she has accomplished his or her specified goals.

- Revolving groups are frequently used in inpatient treatment programs.
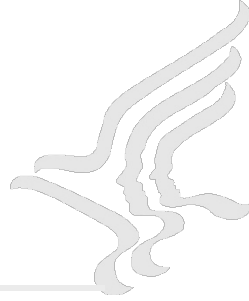
Pregroup Interviews
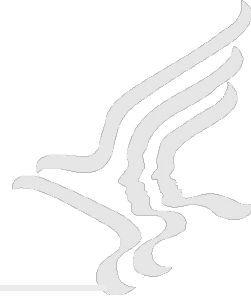
- Begin as early as the initial contact between the client and the program.

- Strive to:
  - Form a therapeutic alliance between the leader and the client.
  - Reach consensus on what is to be accomplished in therapy.
  - Educate the client about group therapy.
  - Allay anxiety related to joining a group.
  - Explain the group agreement.

Preparation Meetings
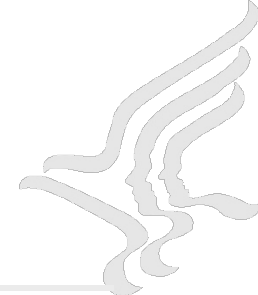
- Explain how group interactions compare with those in self-help groups.

- Emphasize that treatment is a long-term process.

- Let new members know they may be tempted to leave the group at times.

- Give prospective members an opportunity to express anxiety about group work.

- Recognize and address clients' therapeutic hopes.

Techniques To Increase Retention

- Role induction

- Vicarious pretraining

- Experiential pretraining

- Motivational interviews

- Prompts

Group Agreements
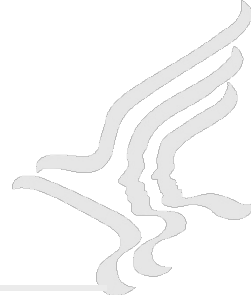
- Establish the expectations that group members have for one another, the leader, and the group.

- Require that group members entering a long-term fixed membership group commit to the group.

- Inspire clients to accept the basic rules and increase their determination and ability to succeed.

Elements in a Group Agreement
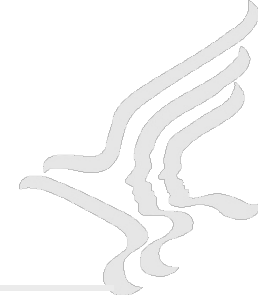
- Communicating grounds for exclusion
- Confidentiality
- Physical contact
- Use of mood-altering substances
- Contact outside the group
- Participation in the group
- Financial responsibility
- Termination

Beginning Phase: Preparing the Group To Begin
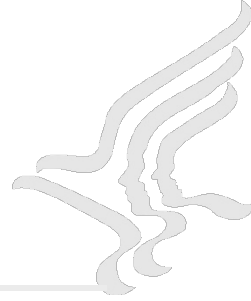
- Introductions

- Group agreement review

- Providing a safe, cohesive environment

- Establishment of norms

- Initiation of group work

Middle Phase: Working Toward Productive Change

- Both process and content are important.

- The group is the forum where clients interact with others.

- Clients receive feedback that helps them rethink their behaviors and move toward productive changes.

- Leaders allocate time to address issues, pay attention to relations among group members, and model healthful interactions that combine honesty with compassion.

End Phase: Reaching Closure
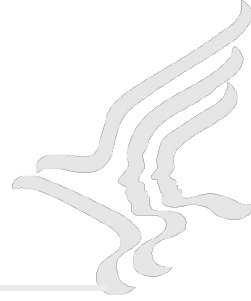
- Putting closure on the experience

- Examining the impact of the group on each person

- Acknowledging the feelings triggered by departure

- Giving and receiving feedback about the group experience and each member's role in it

- Completing any unfinished business

- Exploring ways to continue learning about topics discussed in the group