

Online Consultation Tips for Mentors

Written by: Carolyn Webster-Stratton

I have been providing online consultations to group leaders after workshop training for many years now. More IY mentors/trainers are being asked to do this. While face-to-face IY group consultation is always the best learning because of the opportunities for practices and input from other group leaders, it is often not possible. Barriers to this approach include the cost of a trainer or mentor to travel to the location as well as for group leaders. Moreover, there can be difficulty in getting a day that suits all group leaders for a face-to-face meeting and doesn't interfere with other agency obligations. Online consultations offer opportunities for more consultation scheduled at group leader convenience and in small groups, even with dyads.

This document provides some tips for setting up online consultation calls with those group leaders you are mentoring.

1 STEP ONE: DEFINE THE SCOPE AND STRUCTURE

- Generally 30-60 minutes of video can take 60-120 minutes for mentor/trainer to review and make notes. The number of clips that can be reviewed in one call depends on the length of time of the clip that has been sent. Keep video clips to 10-15 minutes if possible.
- Typically no more than 2 video pairs are reviewed in a 1-hour Zoom/Skype call. It is advised not to spend more than 1 hour on a Zoom/Skype call.
- Total time for one Zoom/Skype call for a mentor would be 3 hours, that is 2 hours of mentor prep time plus the one hour of Zoom/Skype time.
- Other group leaders may participate in the Zoom/Skype call besides the ones that submitted a video for review. They all learn from the feedback that each group dyad receives from a mentor/trainer.

2 STEP TWO: GROUP LEADER PREPARATION FOR THE ONLINE CALL

Ask group leaders to:

- Record their group session. Be sure that group participants have signed consent forms and understand the purpose of the video recording.
- Review video with co-leader (using the group collaborative checklist) and pick brief 10-15 minutes segments from the video for mentor/trainer review. Record time code on area to be reviewed.
- Complete the Online Call Prep Form which outlines brief background of video clip (session topic and context for what has been covered previously in session) as well as their goals for the video clip and any other issues they want to discuss.

- Send video clip to mentor/trainer 7-10 days in advance of the call. Work with your agency to set up a release of the video clip that is encrypted or password protected so that only the mentor or trainer can open it.
- Include with video clip, session checklist and participant evaluations.
- Confirm time for Zoom/Skype call.

3

STEP THREE: MENTOR/TRAINER PREPARATION AND ONLINE CALL

- Reviews the group leader goals, evaluations and checklists.
- Reviews the video clips and takes notes of group leaders' strengths and records ideas for group leader suggestions, future goals or questions.
- Have toys, puppets available. Be animated because this is two-dimensional so need to keep it more engaging.
- Involve other participants on the call by asking for their suggestions and experiences. This helps to support the group leader getting feedback.
- At end of the call, review key points and goals for the next online call.
- Try to encourage group leaders to submit the core elements of groups include segments of reviewing home activities, mediating vignettes, setting up role play practices and summarizing new learning.

4

STEP FOUR: FOLLOW-UP CONSULTATION

- We recommend after the initial training to have a face-to-face consultation early on, when group leaders are first delivering the program - ideally after the first or 2nd group session. This will help group leader to know the mentor and start developing a personal relationship before the online call occurs. If this is not feasible, then scheduling a call in advance of the group starting is very useful.
- Set up online calls: ideally 3 of these spread through the group sessions. For example, every 2-3 weeks. An 18-session group would get one call at session 4, 8 and 12.
- If feasible, a 2nd face-to-face consultation would happen about 2/3 way through the program.
- After the group has been completed it is helpful to have a follow-up Zoom/Skype call to summarize key learning and evaluations. Additionally, Mentors can help group leaders prepare their first set of materials for accreditation.

