



Stronger Together

Suicide Prevention Center

SURVIVORS OF SUICIDE ATTEMPTS FACILITATOR TRAINING OVERVIEW

Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services was honored to receive a \$250,000 grant from the Kate Spade Foundation to provide training and coaching to 300 facilitators around the nation who will be leading our innovative support groups for people who have survived suicide attempts. The Foundation, pledged to fund \$1 million to mental health programs nationwide after Kate Spade died by suicide in 2018.

There is so much stigma around suicide that people who have attempted it often have trouble finding a mental health provider who is willing or skilled enough to work with them. Didi Hirsch's support groups for people who have attempted suicide provide a safe and comfortable place for survivors to talk about their feelings and to learn coping strategies. We developed a manual to train people how to facilitate these groups. The curriculum was accepted by the National Suicide Prevention Resource Center in 2014 and can currently be found on their resources list at <http://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/manual-support-groups-suicide-attempt-survivors>. The curriculum has been requested over 1,600 times by individuals from every state and 36 countries.

If you are interested in attending a free 2-day training on how to facilitate Survivors of Suicide Attempts Support groups, please review the criteria and submit your application for consideration. Applications for FY 19/20, must be submitted by January 30, 2020 and the training must be completed by June 30, 2020. Additional trainings will be offered in FY 20/21.

INTRODUCTION

Implementing a support group for suicide attempt survivors is an undertaking that shouldn't be taken lightly. Individuals or organizations who take on this task must carefully consider their readiness to do so, in order to ensure success. Evaluations of the Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Center (SPC) Survivors of Suicide Attempts (SOSA) Support Group have been overwhelmingly positive. Individuals who choose to facilitate such a support group may find it to be some of the most rewarding work of their lives. However, implementing such a support group takes thought and strategic planning. Individuals and organizations who embark on this journey should consider a variety of factors when making such a commitment.

Before attending the two-day Survivors of Suicide Attempts Support Group Facilitators training, it is crucial to consider important items that can help to determine if an organization will be successful in implementing this support group. The items include, but are not limited to:

- **Organizational readiness to work closely with people who have lived experience of a suicide attempt including readiness to integrate peer support into their agency structure**
- **Selection of facilitators**
- **Required resources**
- **Recruitment strategies**

This document is intended to overview these areas of consideration before an individual applies to attend the training as well as the commitments that are required after completing the training.

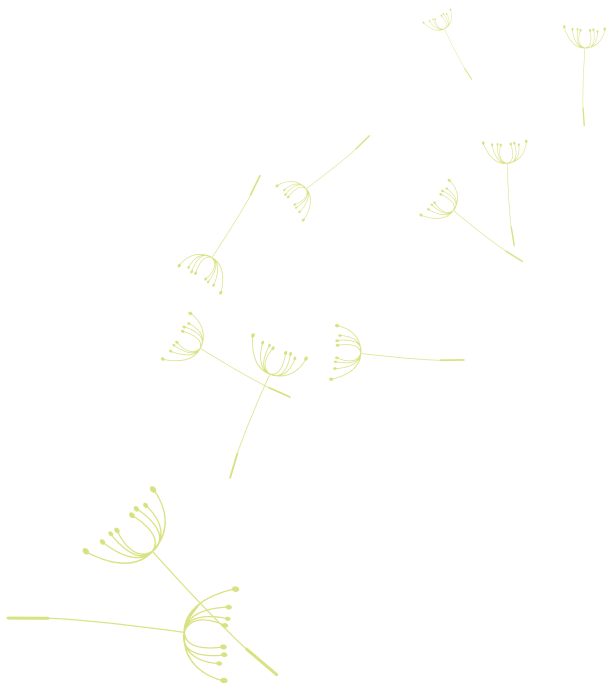


ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

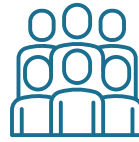
A large part of the success of the Didi Hirsch Suicide Prevention Center Survivors of Suicide Attempts Support group is due to the environment that the group creates for individuals with lived experience of a suicide attempt. The group provides a non-judgmental atmosphere where people can connect with others who have experienced a suicide attempt. Meeting peers with similar experiences and realizing that they are not alone can be a powerful experience for those who have survived a suicide attempt. Organizations who are considering implementing a SOSA support group should consider how their mission and core values align with those of the group. The mission and core values are listed below. Additional information about organizational readiness, including an organizational self-assessment for working with those with lived experience can be found at www.activatinghope.com. Additional information regarding individual readiness for sharing stories of lived experience can be found at <https://unitesurvivors.org/telling-your-story/> and <https://preventioncommunities.com/>.

SOSA MISSION

The Survivors Of Suicide Attempts Support Group offers suicide attempt survivors a safe, nonjudgmental place to talk about their common experience of having survived a suicide attempt. Members are encouraged to share their stories of recovery to support each other and learn new ways to cope with suicidal thoughts. Through peer support and clinician-guided facilitation we seek to encourage a supportive community to foster the development of effective coping skills and create hope for the future.



SOSA CORE VALUES



COLLABORATION

Suicide Attempt Survivors have valuable knowledge about what helps them to feel better and should be empowered through collaboration to make choices about their recovery.

LIVED EXPERIENCE

Suicide Attempt Survivors' experiences are important and should be valued as part of their recovery. As such, ongoing feedback is solicited from participants to continually improve the group process.

SUPPORT AND SKILL BUILDING

Suicide Attempt Survivors benefit from a balance of both emotional support and skill-building exercises in a support group.

CONNECTION TO LIFE

Suicide is a heavy topic. Suicide Attempt Survivors are encouraged to speak openly and honestly about their feelings related to suicide. Humor and socialization are an important element in balancing the mood and encouraging a connection to life.

PEER SUPPORT

Suicide Attempt Survivors often find comfort in connecting with peers that have survived similar experiences; peer facilitators are crucial in a successful support group model.

DUAL FACILITATION

While peer support is invaluable, the presence of a clinical facilitator allows a peer facilitator to focus on their needs without having to address the clinical issues that may come up in working with the other group members.

HOPE

Hope should be supported when working with Suicide Attempt Survivors. Some survivors find hope and meaning in using their experiences to help others.

LEAST INTRUSIVE INTERVENTION

Suicide Attempt Survivors may continue to experience suicidal thoughts. They should be supported in finding ways to stay safe in the most collaborative and least intrusive way possible.

LIFE PREVAILS

While collaboration is paramount, choosing life prevails. When Suicide Attempt Survivors are unable or unwilling to engage in collaborative efforts to stay safe, facilitators will initiate other efforts to support safety.

SELECTION OF FACILITATORS

This model requires two facilitators, one in the role of the clinical facilitator and one in the role of the peer facilitator. Typically the clinical facilitator is a licensed clinician or mental health provider with extensive training in suicide prevention and the peer facilitator is a person who has survived a suicide attempt. Ideally, the peer facilitator has completed at least one cycle of the support group as a participant. Initially, if an organization doesn't have a peer facilitator who has completed a group cycle, they may need to start with two clinical facilitators. Facilitating the group with only one facilitator is never recommended. The SOSA Facilitator training is open to anyone who is interested in learning more about facilitating a support group for suicide attempt survivors. Ideal candidates include:

- Individuals who have completed suicide intervention training
- Individuals who have experience in working with people who have suicide ideation or suicide attempts
- Individuals who have experience facilitating support groups or other group activities
- Individuals who are licensed (or licensed eligible) mental health workers
- Individuals with lived experience of a suicide attempt
- Individuals whose beliefs and attitudes about suicide align with the mission and values above

It is important that all individuals who attend the SOSA Facilitator training have discussed the training with their employer to ensure that they are aware of the expectations. Training participants, as well as their employers, will be required to confirm that they understand and agree to all of the commitments of the training and implementation of the group.

Participants who successfully complete the 2-day SOSA Facilitator training, participate in technical assistance calls and complete three eight-week SOSA group cycles including all required Support Group reports will be recognized as Certified SOSA Facilitators. It is important to note that Didi Hirsch reserves the right to make the final decision as to who becomes a Certified SOSA Facilitator. In some circumstances we may choose not to certify a potential facilitator who we believe does not possess the skills necessary to safely run the support group, however we will make every effort to help each participant be successful.



REQUIRED RESOURCES

Relatively speaking, the resources for starting the support group are minimal. The biggest resource needed to successfully implement the support group is time. Facilitators must be available eight consecutive weeks during the scheduled group meeting time. The support group's weekly meeting lasts one and a half to two hours (groups with fewer participants are limited to one and a half hours, and larger groups run two hours.) Additionally, facilitators need to allow additional time for set-up before and debriefing after the meeting.

Facilitators are typically involved in the recruiting and screening of group participants, although a different person could be involved in recruiting participants (see recruitment section below). Screening of group participants involves an intake interview that usually takes approximately 1 hour per participant. Facilitators also make themselves available for follow-up contact between group meetings, when necessary. At the Didi Hirsch SPC, documentation is completed after each group meeting and each follow-up contact. Additionally, facilitators will want to work with group members to make sure they are connected to outside resources, such as an individual therapist or psychiatrist. All in all, the clinical facilitator could expect to spend approximately 10-15 hours per week in all group activities, however when the group is first beginning, planning and recruitment may involve additional hours.

Other resources for the group include meeting space, technology to show videos, refreshments, printed handouts, standardized outcome measures and materials for creating Hope Boxes (art supplies, books, etc.)



RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

It has been our experience that a key factor in implementing a successful SOSA support group lies in a thoughtful recruitment strategy. Consideration should be given to how group participants will be identified and recruited. Collaborative relationships with community organizations such as local crisis hotlines, emergency departments, mental health agencies, and inpatient facilities can be ideal for reaching suicide attempt survivors. These relationships can be forged prior to a participant completing the SOSA facilitator training. Additionally, an agency may serve clients within their own organization who may be potential group members. In these cases it is important to consider any agency policies or procedures that may impact recruitment. Some organizations have struggled to find enough group members when they have limited the group to only people who were clients within their agency, instead of opening up the group to the community at large. Ideally, to make it most accessible, the support group would be offered free of charge for participants. In cases where this is not possible, it is important to determine a fee that members can afford. Some organizations may be able to bill for this service.



COMMITMENTS AFTER COMPLETING THE TRAINING

Funding for this training is subsidized by a grant from the Kate Spade Foundation. Selection is competitive and will be limited to those who can commit to the following requirements after successful completion of the 2-Day SOSA Facilitators Training:

- Facilitating the support groups based on the standard procedures as written in the Facilitators Manual and presented in the 2-day facilitators training
- Completing at least two 8 week Survivors of Suicide Attempts Support group in the first year after completing the facilitators training
- Participating in 10 weekly technical assistance calls
- Completing the post-group feedback from after every group session
- Working collaboratively with the Didi Hirsch Research and Evaluation Department to collect and analyze pre and post outcomes