



GUIDE FOR STARTING EMPOWERMENT GROUPS

Illinois Imagines Project
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- Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault
- Illinois Family Violence Coordinating Councils
- Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living
- Illinois VOICES
- The Blue Tower Training Center

We owe a great debt to all of the women with disabilities who participated in this project. They gave us invaluable insight into their world, sharing their thoughts, feelings, ideas and dreams. Without their guidance, we could not have done our job.

Note to anyone using this module

This guide is one tool in a toolkit called: “Our Rights, Right Now.” If you do not have a copy of “Our Rights, Right Now,” and all its modules, you can receive a copy by:

- Contacting the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault at 217/753-4117; or,
- Visiting the materials section of www.illinoisimagines.org.

This module can be used alone, to establish and conduct an Empowerment Group for women with disabilities or in conjunction with any or all of the projects and activities described in “Our Rights, Right Now.”

If the Empowerment Group is a success, the group may want to continue, after the 23 meetings outlined in this module. An ongoing group may want to use some of the education sessions contained in “Women with Disabilities and Sexual Violence Education Guide”, another “Our Rights, Right Now” module. That module contains outlines and materials for 19 education sessions on healthy sexuality, sexual violence prevention and responding to sexual violence.

SECTION 1 GUIDE FOR STARTING EMPOWERMENT GROUPS

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GUIDE FOR STARTING EMPOWERMENT GROUPS

WHAT IS AN EMPOWERMENT GROUP?

An empowerment group is a group of women with disabilities who support each other in preventing sexual assault and finding resources to help survivors of sexual assault. Members of empowerment groups work together to make changes within themselves and their communities. An empowerment group is not therapy, although some survivors who participate may find it therapeutic as well as empowering.

This guide will take you through the process of creating and facilitating an empowerment group. An empowerment group may choose to use an ally as a co-facilitator in the beginning. This will allow all the group members to participate on an equal basis and give the group members time to get to know each other before members assume all leadership duties. The guide includes instructions in preparing for and conducting group meetings. Please note that this is only a guide. Each group will have its own personality. Feel free to use the guide as it is, or adapt it to the needs of your group.



WHAT DOES A GROUP DO?

This guide provides structure and content for a 23-session empowerment group for women with disabilities. Each session is described in detail including session plans, materials needed, a script for the facilitator to use, handouts for sessions and forms to keep group notes and records.

Topics included in this guide are:

- **Meeting 1:** Community Building
- **Meeting 2:** Organizing the Group
- **Meeting 3:** History of Oppression of People with Disabilities
- **Meeting 4:** Power – Personal and Group
- **Meeting 5:** Power – Using Our Personal and Group Power
- **Meeting 6:** Self-Esteem
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- **Meeting 17:** Group Decision Making
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- **Meeting 21:** Group Leadership and Structure
- **Meeting 22:** Conflict Resolution and Keeping Up Energy
- **Meeting 23:** Moving Forward Celebration

WHY START A GROUP?

In the 1960s and 1970s, the women's liberation movement opened many doors to equality for women. As women began to exercise their rights and find their voices, one of the things they began to do was talk to each other about their lives. Wherever they gathered – in homes, churches, college campuses, places they worked – women started telling true stories to each other about their experiences. Some of these experiences included sexual violence – rape, incest, sexual harassment and domestic violence. These stories, shared quietly in a group or spoken with a megaphone at a protest rally, were often accompanied by a plea or a demand: NO MORE RAPE. This rallying cry was the start of the anti-rape movement and led to the network of rape crisis centers around the state and the nation today.

However, some voices were left out of that phase of the rape crisis movement. For example, women of color, lesbians, transgender and gay people and people with disabilities were on the margins. Making space for their voices, their stories and their leadership is a growth step for the movement. This guide provides one method for people with disabilities to lay claim to their power: to share their life experiences, to listen to others, to claim safety from sexual violence as a basic human right and to create a space of safety and mutual support.

HOW DO WE DO THIS?

Whether you are a woman with a disability or an ally, this module will guide you in starting an Empowerment Group. Before you start holding the 23 sessions outlined in this module you have some work to do. So, find a friend or two and let's get started.

1. **Lead** – Just as with any project, someone has to say: Let's do this! If you're saying that, you're a leader!
2. **Find Support** – If you're a woman with a disability, find an ally or two to help you. If you work at a rape crisis center or an agency serving people with disabilities, find a woman with a disability or two to help you. Talk with them about why you want to start a group and what kind of help you need to get going. Share your contact information (names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses) so you can stay in touch.

3. **Make a Plan** – Now that you are a team, talk with each other about how to start the group. What do you need? Who can help you with that? Who will do each task needed to get the group going? **Form 1, Group Planning Worksheet**, is a tool you can use to write your plan.
4. **Recruit Group Members** – Start talking with women with disabilities about the group. Post flyers, go door to door in a residence, post it on Facebook, tell staff at disability service agencies and rape crisis centers. Pass the word – through e-mail, telephone calls and letters – that a group is starting and what it is about. Tell when and where it will meet. **Form 2, Recruitment Flyer**, can help you let people know about the group.
5. **Find a Place to Meet** – Empowerment groups can occur in many different settings. A group may be held at a local library, local college, a center for independent living, a rape crisis center, an apartment building, or within an agency that serves people with disabilities. For disability service agencies, there are many reasons to start an empowerment group. Some of the advantages of an empowerment group include:
 - Interested women will be able to participate without any transportation issues;
 - The agency will have a program that provides meaningful engagement for individuals served; and individuals will be able to gain skills and confidence.
6. **Organize for the First Meeting** – So, you know where you'll meet. Now it's time to get ready. Use **Form 3, Meeting Checklist**, to guide you in preparing for the first meeting.
7. **Keep Meeting Records** – For the first meeting you will need to gather membership information so you know who the members are and how to contact them. Use **Form 4, Member Information**, for this. Use **Form 5, Sign-in Sheet**, to take attendance at meetings. Finally, use **Form 6, Meeting Report**, to keep a record of what happens at meetings.

8. **Debrief** – After the first group meeting, make time to talk about how it went. Meet with the recorder and meeting planner for the group.
 - What went well?
 - What was the best part?
 - What could you each do to make the group better?
 - How will you keep good records of meetings?
 - Who will keep the files?
 - Will you want to meet a few minutes before the next meeting to be sure you're ready?
9. **Continue to Assess** – Make time to talk after each meeting. Make changes to group sessions to fit the needs of your group.
10. **Build and Grow Leadership** – As you move through all the group sessions look for opportunities to build leadership.
 - Who are the natural leaders in the group?
 - Who needs some support to build leadership skills?
 - What can you do to help the natural leaders shine and possibly lead the group in the future?
 - What can you do to build leadership skills among those with less experience?
11. **Prepare for the Future** – Each session should build members' commitment to the Empowerment Group and their skills for being part of a group. After the 23 sessions detailed in the module are completed, the group may lose focus and lose members if you do not have a good plan for what the group will do next. Start thinking, talking and planning for the celebration session (session 23) early. **Form 7, Planning for the Future**, is a tool that can help you plan for what happens next with your group.
12. **Accept Change** – Empowerment groups are like any other group of people. Be ready for people to leave – for lots of reasons: illness, a move, scheduling issues. Likewise, be ready to recruit new members and accept people who want to return.

NOTE TO ALLIES

“I believe it’s important, if possible, for advisors to fade from involvement over time, and it’s important for them to be careful not to exercise control over the group, and to avoid the scenario wherein a group falls apart if an advisor isn’t present. I believe advisors should be careful not to create dependency on themselves by doing too much and controlling too much of the group’s activities. Their role should be to guide and to advise, and to be willing to give up responsibilities to the group as the group becomes enabled.”

**Mark Satterwhite,
The People First of Missouri Advisor Book of Information and Advice.**

Thank you very much for your willingness to be an ally for this women’s empowerment group. Your position as a facilitator, advocate, and supporter is vital to the effectiveness of the group. The goal of an ally is to fade into the background of the group, shepherding from behind while the women in the group gradually step up to leadership positions and eventually take over the organizational aspects, facilitation, and action planning.

As an ally, your job is to support and encourage the women in the group to heal, discover their personal power, and live the life they desire. Allow the women to direct and shape the meetings while you steer from behind. Give the women choice and control whenever possible. Remember to provide assistance when asked and to adapt activities or accessibility to all group members. Members may need help to express their opinions and participate in activities.

You don’t need to be an expert facilitator or a professional counselor to be a great ally. Be your best self, adapt to what the women in the group ask of you and provide assistance to those who ask for it during activities or discussions.

Below are some desirable characteristics for allies. (Adapted from *Alliance Manual*):

- Communicate** with the members directly, not through other members
- Be** honest
- Follow **through**
- Come** to all the meetings
- Back us up** on the rules when we have to point out someone's mistake
- Ask us** questions
- Listen**
- Ask us what **we want** you to do
- Take advice** from us
- Learn what supports **each person** needs
- Be a **friend**
- Finds ways to **help everyone** get involved
- Make sure everyone knows **when** and **where** the **meeting is**
- Don't** take over for the leader
- Don't** dictate what we should do
- Don't** be afraid to speak
- Don't** make decisions without members
- Don't** assume that everyone agrees
- Don't** talk too much
- Don't** do too much for us
- PLEASE DON'T QUIT**

RECRUITMENT – GETTING THE GROUP GOING:

Starting an empowerment group targeted at this specific population of women requires alternative modes of recruitment since confidentiality and safe meeting spaces are of the utmost importance. If the group starts small, that's okay! The meetings will be powerful and life changing regardless of the size of the group. Below are a few suggestions for recruitment.

Local Networks

- Referrals from Rape Crisis Centers, Disability Agencies, churches, local schools/universities, etc.
 - Send emails or letters to these organizations stating the purpose of the group and asking if they would advertise it from within.

Current Organizational Membership

- Word of mouth from core members
 - Advertise Publically (Be careful with this because you want the members to feel safe). Newsletters, newspapers, signs.

FACILITATION TECHNIQUES

It is extremely important that the group members communicate effectively with one another and with external resources and partners. The following facilitation techniques can help the group members feel comfortable sharing opinions and feelings and allow all voices to be heard and acknowledged. Practice using these techniques to build trust among members and encourage individual confidence.

- Seating arrangement
 - Circles or semi-circles are the best for encouraging participation
- Introductions
 - Allow time in each meeting for people to get to know one another and check-in
- Check-in
 - Weather report – how people are feeling
 - Excitement sharing – something good that has happened recently
- Agenda and Review
 - Talk about what will happen this meeting and review what happened last meeting
- Visible Notes
 - Flip chart notes allow for meetings to be idea focused not person focused
- Brainstorming
 - Allow all ideas to be heard and written down
 - No negative ideas or criticism of the spoken ideas
 - Ask people who have not spoken for their ideas
- Go Around the Circle
 - Let each group member participate in the discussion by giving each a chance to speak in turn.
 - ◆ Interrupts back and forth debates
- Nods and Shakes
 - Group members respond to simple questions by nodding or shaking their head in agreement/disagreement
- Encourage Cooperation
 - Tension reducers – games, backrubs, humor, silence, stretching breaks
 - Create a safe space
 - Build trust
- Voting
 - Thumbs up, thumbs to the side, thumbs down – if the group needs to come to a consensus, this technique can be used. Thumbs up means the individual likes the decision, thumbs to the side means that the individual can live with the decision, and thumbs down means the individual cannot agree with the decision.

SECTION 2

MEETING SESSIONS

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MEETING SESSIONS

Using the Guide

Each meeting session includes:

- Objectives
- Materials needed
- Introduction
- Activities
- Conclusion

The materials include:

Scripted remarks for the entire meeting – The facilitator may read these scripted remarks or prepare in advance and use their own words to share the same information.

Notes – *Notes* to the meeting facilitator such as the purpose of each activity and description of the activity are in *italics*.

Directions – Directions to the meeting facilitator such as handout, papers, prepare easel and marker. Directions appear in CAPITAL LETTERS.



MEETING 1: COMMUNITY BUILDING

Objective: Get to know members of the group and establish ground rules for meetings.

Materials Needed:

- Paper easel
- Markers
- Sign-in sheet
- Handout 1: “Member Power and Ally Support”

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome to the first Empowerment Group meeting. The purpose of this group is to bring women together to find and use our power to help ourselves and each other be safe. This is called empowerment. When we are empowered, we can prevent and end sexual violence against women with disabilities and we can support survivors of sexual violence. We will meet when, where, for how long. Over the course of our meetings we will cover a variety of topics. Today’s meeting will focus on getting to know each other and setting some rules for meetings.

Icebreaker #1 (15 minutes): *Purpose: Learn the names of people in the group*

Name and Adjective Game: Say your first name and a word that describes you that starts with the first letter of your name.

Example: Abbie - Athletic; Jen – Jolly; Hannah – Happy

Processing: Hopefully that activity will help you remember each other’s names. If you do forget someone’s name, just ask them to remind you again!

Icebreaker #2 (15 minutes): *Purpose: Get to know a few things about the people in the group*

Two Extremes game: This game will help us learn a few things about one another. First, imagine that there’s a line running down the middle of the room. I will say two extremes or opposites, one located on the left side of the room and one located on the right side (point to left and right sides of room). Go to one side or the other based on where you stand on a particular issue. If you don’t fall clearly to one side or another, you can be in the middle of the line.

Example: Move to the left hand side of the room if you like salty snacks. Move to the right hand side of the room if you like sweet snacks. If you don’t have a strong opinion, stand in the middle.”

- Left hand side: Like doing outdoor activities.
- Right hand side: Like doing indoor activities.

- Left hand side: Chatterbox.
- Right hand side: Quiet.

- Left hand side: Sleep in.
- Right hand side: Get up early.

- Left hand side: Summer.
- Right hand side: Winter.

- Left hand side: Country music.
- Right hand side: Rap music.

- Left hand side: Traveler.
- Right hand side: Homebody.

Processing: Now you know who likes some of the same things you do and who likes different things. We will continue to get to know one another as we meet together.

Establish Group Member Role vs. Ally Role (10 minutes): Now we are going to talk about the roles of group members and the role of the ally. Ask if everyone in the group knows what an ally is (adapted from *The Alliance Local Group Manual*). If not, briefly discuss what the word ally means. Say what makes you an ally.

PASS OUT **HANDOUT 1: "MEMBER POWER AND ALLY SUPPORT."** These are a few of the things that group members and the ally of each group should do. Can you think of others to add to the list?

Establish Group Rules (15 minutes): PREPARE PAPER EASEL AND MARKER. DRAW A LINE DOWN THE MIDDLE OF THE PAPER EASEL AND WRITE “DO” ON ONE SIDE AND “DON’T DO” ON THE OTHER SIDE. Now that we know what each person in the group will do during the meetings, let’s brainstorm what would create a space of care and safety when we are together. Let’s make a list of what we can do to make our meetings safe. What should we not do to make this a safe space?

We will post this list at the meetings and point to areas as needed during meetings

Examples:

Do

Respect each other
Listen
Agree to Disagree
Stick to the subject
Engage
Come prepared
Follow through
and honor commitments
Keep focused
Stay on topic
Every contribution is worthwhile
Don’t interrupt
Take turns talking
Include everyone

Don’t

No cell phones
No swearing
No interrupting
No yelling
No name calling

Confidentiality (5 minutes): *Discuss what confidentiality means and that this group will be confidential.* At every meeting it is important that everyone is aware of confidentiality and that anything that is shared in the group will not be shared or discussed outside of the group. Have participants repeat together out loud, “what happens here, stays here.” (adapted from *The Alliance Local Group Manual, p.6*).

Conclusion: Thank you for coming to this session and participating in the activities. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

After the Meeting: Decide who will keep and post the do’s and don’t’s at each future meeting.

MEETING 2: ORGANIZING THE GROUP

Objectives: Find out the strengths and roles of group members. Discuss the purpose and values of the group.

Materials Required:

- Paper easel
- Markers
- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Small post-it notes
- Handout 2: “Why are we Here?”
- Pens, pencils

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Are there any new people joining us that we did not meet last week? Please tell us your name and a word that describes you that starts with the first letter of your name. Example: Abbie - Athletic. Hannah-Happy. HAVE NEW PARTICIPANTS INTRODUCE THEMSELVES.

Last time we got to know each other through icebreaker games. This week we will discuss each of your unique gifts and talents and how you can add to the group vision, mission and structure.

Activity (15 minutes): *Purpose: Find out about a unique strength that each member brings to the group.*

First, take a couple of minutes to consider what strengths you bring to this group. A few examples might be “creativity, insight, passion, training, good listener, understanding issues of women and disabilities, access to specific provider agencies, writing skills, task-oriented, work experience with sexual violence.”

PREPARE PAPER EASEL AND MARKER. Now we will go around the table and share our strengths with each other. I will record each person’s name and strengths on a paper easel chart to refer to later when matching individuals to assignments in future meetings (adapted from *Our Rights Right Now!* Overview Guide, p. 46).

Processing: From our list you can see that each one of you has unique talents and skills that you bring to this group. As we go forward, we will refer back to this list to remind ourselves of how each person in the group adds value.

Pick Leaders (15 minutes):

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REFER TO THE EASEL TO DISCUSS HOW EACH PERSON'S STRENGTHS CAN BE ASSETS TO THE LEADERSHIP OF THE GROUP.

This group will need a secretary to take notes about what we do at each meeting. Are any of you ready to do this job? DISCUSS AND ACCEPT ONE MEMBER AS SECRETARY BASED ON HER STRENGTHS. IF THE GROUP CAN'T PICK ONE PERSON, DO AN ELECTION WITH BALLOTS OR TALK ABOUT HOW TO SHARE THIS ROLE. GIVE THE SECRETARY THE MEETING REPORT SHEET AT THE START OF EACH MEETING.

This group also needs a meeting planner who will reserve the meeting space each week, make sure that the space is set up for a group meeting by organizing the table/chairs, and communicate with the ally about any other details for the meeting. USING THE SAME PROCESS DESCRIBED FOR THE SECRETARY; DISCUSS AND ACCEPT ONE MEMBER AS MEETING PLANNER BASED ON HER STRENGTHS.

Group Purpose (30 minutes):

Purpose: Discuss the reasons that this group exists, what it hopes to accomplish, and the values that the group will stand by.

DISTRIBUTE PENS/PENCILS AND **HANDOUT 2: "WHY ARE WE HERE?"** FOR MEMBERS TO WRITE ON/BRAINSTORM WITH DURING THE DISCUSSION. We'll spend some time thinking about the purpose for this group: why it exists and what it will do. Can you think of key words for why we are meeting? Let's brainstorm together by discussing words and phrases and writing them on the handout in front of you.

Ideas for key words: support, end violence, protection, empower, voice, action, change, stop rape, safety

Let's think about these words. How can we use them to write our purpose statement? What will we do in this group? Will we support each other? Will we make new friends to be part of our support systems? Will we create a safe space to talk about sexual violence? Will we help change the way that sexual violence against women with disabilities is handled at rape crisis centers/disability service providers?

PREPARE EASEL. WRITE THE PURPOSE STATEMENT ON THE EASEL PAPER. ASK THE GROUP IF THIS SOUNDS RIGHT. EDIT AS NEEDED.

Example purpose statement: We want to prevent rape of women with disabilities and help survivors get services. We will promote change within this organization and the community at large.

Core Values: PREPARE PAPER EASEL, MARKER, AND SMALL POST-ITS. Now let's brainstorm core values of the group. Core values are the values that form the foundation for the work that we do. Shout out values that you think we should have while I write them on this easel. Consider values that will guide how we work together as well as guide project activities.

Ideas for core values: embrace diversity, radical, hopeful, non-judgmental, empowering, survivor-driven, respectful, flexible, keep our word, unity, uniqueness

LIST ALL VALUES FOR ALL TO SEE. Now I'm going to give each of you 3 post-it notes. These represent your votes for the core values that the group should have. Come to the board and place your post-it notes by the words/values you think are most important for the group. You can put all three post-its next to one word/value or you can put the post-its by different words/values. WHEN THE GROUP HAS DONE VOTING, CIRCLE THE TOP 5 VALUES WITH THE MOST VOTES. ASK SOMEONE IN THE GROUP TO SAY OUT LOUD THE TOP 5 VALUES THAT GOT THE MOST VOTES.

Conclusion: Thank you for participating in today's activities and discussion. Our purpose and core values will guide the work we do in this group and in the community. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

After the meeting: Remind the secretary to bring the completed meeting report to the next meeting.

Ask the secretary if she wants to prepare a copy of the purpose and core values for all members or if she wants you to do that.

MEETING 3: HISTORY OF OPPRESSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Objective: Understand the history of oppression of people with disabilities

Materials Needed:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Group purpose and core values
- Then/Now Chart – see page 22
- Blank pieces of paper
- Markers

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval. SUMMARY IS READ OUT LOUD.

PASS OUT THE PURPOSE AND CORE VALUES. REVIEW THEM WITH THE GROUP. To reclaim our power and achieve our purpose, it is helpful to become more aware of the history of our struggle for equality, so today we are going to talk about the history of oppression of people with disabilities. The word oppression means “the exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, cruel, or unjust manner.” Oppression occurs when someone uses power to treat other people badly or hurt other people. In this session we will look at past examples of unjust actions against people with disabilities.

Background (10 minutes): It is said that those who do not remember history are destined to repeat it. That is exactly what we don’t want to happen with the history of oppression against people with disabilities. So let’s review some of that history.

History is all around us. Each of us has a history; it is what happened in our lives in the past. In 1776, an important part of history came from the Declaration of Independence that says “all men are created equal.” Not only are all men created equal, but all women and children too! It is important for all of us to remember that we are equal to each other.

People have had disabilities since the beginning of time. Some disabilities happen before a person is born while they are still inside of their mother; some happen after a person is born as a result of an accident or illness. No matter how the disability happened, it is not a punishment and you should never feel like it is your fault! Having a disability is a natural part of life.

A long time ago there were many ways to “test” people for disabilities. One way was just to look at people and see if they had a disability; if someone looked different than what was considered “normal,” they were labeled as someone with a disability. Another way occurred in Nazi Germany during World War II (1939-1945). A person in charge would stop a person on the street and would tell him to make a sentence using three words like *fox*, *dog*, and *field*. If the person could not put the words into a meaningful sentence, he or she was sentenced to death. These are difficult stories to hear and to think about, but they did happen. It is up to all of us to make sure that these things do not happen ever again!

Not so long ago, many people with developmental disabilities were sent to live at state operated facilities and state institutions. Sending someone away when they are born or after a developmental disability is noticed does not happen very much anymore. Now, many people with developmental disabilities are living at home with their families or in group homes with staff to help support them. People with developmental disabilities are also living on their own or with a friend or spouse. There are many options available now, but a long time ago there were very few.

Sometimes people with mental illnesses are still sent to state institutions. In the past, some people who were Deaf were sent to institutions. In some countries, children with any kind of disability may be abandoned when the disability is known.

History goes back many, many years. During all those years people with disabilities were treated differently. Let’s hear about some of the different ways people with disabilities were looked at and were treated. After I read each one, show “thumbs up” if you like the way people were treated or “thumbs down” if you don’t.

Activity (15 minutes):

- The **Greeks and Romans** believed that everyone who did not look or act like they did were not as good as they were. Children who were diagnosed as blind, Deaf, or mentally retarded were thrown into the river by their parents. The word *idiot* comes from the Greek language. **Thumbs up or thumbs down?**
- In the Bible, **Jesus** (4BC-30AD) was said to have shown compassion for people with disabilities and performed miracles to heal them. It was during this time that treatment of people with disabilities improved and killing children with disabilities was no longer commonly practiced. **Thumbs up or thumbs down?**

- **John Calvin (1509-1564)** preached that people were predestined by God to either be saved or not be saved; he implied that people with disabilities were not among those who would be saved. **Thumbs up or thumbs down?**
- **John Locke (1632-1704)** coined the term Tabula Rasa or “blank slate.” He said that ideas came from experiences, the five senses (sight, smell, taste, touch, hearing) and from thoughts, and that people with developmental disabilities had no hope because they were incapable of using their experiences, their senses or their thoughts. **Thumbs up or thumbs down?**
- **Thomas Malthus (1766-1834)** became concerned that as the population grew, there would not be enough food for everyone, so he advocated to identify and kill all people with disabilities. At that time society felt that a person’s worth was determined by what kind of work they did and how they could give back to society and to their community. Many people at that time felt that people with disabilities could not do any work and could not give back to their community, so they were not worth anything. **Thumbs up or thumbs down?**
- In his famous “I Have a Dream Speech” given in Washington, DC on August 28, 1963, **Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968)** said “I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.’” **Thumbs up or thumbs down?**

Over the years people recognized the value and contributions of people with disabilities. There have been many court cases and laws that have improved education, housing, and quality of life for people with disabilities.

Instructions: POST A CHART WITH TWO LISTS OF WORDS DESCRIBING TREATMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE PAST AND NOW.

Then

Fear
Control
Punishment
Results
Isolation
Assumptions
Giving Answers

Now

Trust
Empowerment
Responsibility
Relationships
Community
Awareness
Asking Questions

We can see many changes from the way things used to be to the way they are now. Yet, there is always room to grow and for things to get even better!

Activity (25 minutes): *Purpose: Discover the history of group members*

HAND OUT PIECES OF PAPER AND MARKERS TO EACH PERSON. In addition to the history of countries and famous people, history is about individual people like each of you. We each have our own history. Instead of calling it your HIS-STORY, we could call it HER-STORY. Write down words or use pictures to tell your herstory - where you were born, grew up, what you used to do, where you live now, what you do now, what you like, etc. (5 minutes). Share your herstory with the group using words, pictures, and stories to share your herstory with others (3 minutes per person).

Processing: This activity helps us to see how each person has her own story. Even if you've had many bad things happen to you in the past, you are always writing your story through each day that you live. Being a part of this group is a part of your story now. Through it, I hope you will find encouragement and that you will build a good history.

Homework and Conclusion (5 minutes): Everyone has a history and unique gifts and talents. Before our next meeting, research or think about people with disabilities throughout history and throughout the world who are famous for sharing their gifts and talents with others. Here are a few examples to get you started:

- Danny Glover, actor — Epilepsy
- Albert Einstein, mathematician/physicist — Learning Disability
- Helen Keller, writer — Vision and Hearing Impairment
- Walt Disney, cartoonist — Learning Disability

Thank you all for coming and for participating in today's session learning about the history of oppression of people with disabilities. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

(Lesson plan adapted from *Discovering Your Personal Power: A Real-Life Curriculum for Self-Advocates*)

After the Meeting: Remind the secretary to bring the completed meeting report to the next meeting.

MEETING 4: POWER — PERSONAL POWER

Objective: Understand different types of power and be able to recognize them in action.

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Paper easel
- Markers
- Handout 3: “Power Play”
- Handout 4: “My Personal Power Pledge”

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today’s agenda. SUMMARY IS READ OUT LOUD. Last time we talked about the history of oppression of people with disabilities and we shared our own histories with each other. Did any of you do research regarding the history of people with disabilities since our last meeting? If so, INVITE BRIEF SHARING REGARDING WHAT THEY LEARNED.

Today we are going to talk about power. We need to understand and be able to recognize our own power so we can use it to take care of ourselves.

Icebreaker (10 minutes): *Purpose: Re-introduce group members and loosen up.* Let’s start with a warm-up exercise. Take one minute to think about which super power you would want if you could choose just one. Super hearing? Elastic arms? Spiderman webs? Then introduce yourself and share which super power you would choose and how you would use that power to do good things.

Processing: Super powers are often used for good purposes. Think about all the super hero stories — they saved people and helped the world avoid destruction.

Activity (10 minutes): *Purpose: To understand how the group currently understands power*

During the icebreaker we discussed using super powers to do good things. There are good ways to use power and bad ways to use power. Using our power to help ourselves and others is a way to be strong.



When we are born, we all have power inside of us. This is our personal power. Sometimes we forget this because of the way we have been treated. When someone calls you names, you may not remember your personal power. When you are left out of things, you may not feel this power inside because your feelings are hurt. When we feel good about ourselves, we can use our personal power. This is different for each one of us. One day you may feel the power inside and maybe on another day you don't feel the power inside. Whatever you feel is okay. Can someone give me an example of a time when you used your personal power? WAIT FOR A PERSON OR TWO TO GIVE EXAMPLES.

Each of us can use our personal power in different ways. We can share power with others as equals. Sharing power together as equals means no one is the boss, both people are equal. Sharing power usually feels very good. Can someone give me an example of when they shared power with someone else? WAIT FOR A PERSON OR TWO TO GIVE EXAMPLES.

We can also use our power over others. When one person has power over another person, one person has more say than the other. When someone tells you to do something or you will be in trouble that is power over. There are many ways a person can use power over you. A boss has power over you because he or she can take away your job. Some bosses are very nice and don't make you feel bad. Other bosses may be mean when they use power over someone. A person with more money may have power over you and bribe you to do things you don't want to do. Some people take advantage of others by using power over them. Each of us has the ability to use power over others. Can you think of one time you have used your power over someone else? Can someone give me an example of someone using power over them? WAIT FOR A PERSON OR TWO TO GIVE EXAMPLES.

Who Has the Power? Activity (20 minutes): Have group members volunteer to be in skits. SEE **HANDOUT 3: POWER PLAY**. Have those interested in role playing to take turns being in the skits. After each skit ask the group: Who has the power? For each skit, have the group decide if it is power over, power with or personal power.

What makes you feel powerful? (5 minutes): PREPARE PAPER EASEL. LET'S TAKE A MINUTE TO SAY WHAT MAKES US FEEL POWERFUL. AS EACH GROUP MEMBER SAYS WHAT MAKES THEM FEEL POWERFUL, WRITE THEIR STATEMENTS ON THE EASEL.

Recognizing your own power: We all have power. Each one of us has power inside of us. In order to live the life you want, you need to be able to see, feel and use your personal power alone and with others. Let's all say this together, "I am a strong person inside." You may not believe it now, but keep saying this and soon you will believe it. Let's say it again, "I am a strong person inside." Good. This week, when you look in the mirror, I want you to be able to see that you are strong and capable. Look past any negative beliefs you may have. See your personal power. I see the power inside each of you.

Conclusion: Thank you all for coming and for participating in today's session. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

Meeting 5: Power — Using Our Personal and Group Power

Objective: Discuss how to use personal power and how to build collective power.

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Power Pictures Handouts
- Handout 5: “My Personal Power Pledge”

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today’s agenda. SUMMARY IS READ OUT LOUD. Last time we met, we talked about our personal power. This week we will discuss how we find and use our personal power in a group.

Icebreaker (10 minutes): *Purpose: To work on non-verbal communication techniques.* We are going to start this session by playing a game. The goal is to line up from the left side of the room to the right side of the room in order of birth month and day. For example, if you have a birthday on January 1st, you would be at the far left of the room. If your birthday is December 31st, you’d be at the far right. Now this would be a pretty easy exercise to do if you were able to talk to one another, but we’re going to make it difficult; you cannot write or speak to anyone. You must figure out a system to communicate with one another without using words (spoken or written) and get yourself in order based on your birthday month and date. Go! PROVIDE SUPPORT AS NEEDED.

Processing: Was that activity hard? Was it easy? That game shows that it’s very hard to understand one another when you can’t communicate using words. Let’s talk a bit more about communication and how it can help you in many situations.

Discussion about Communication and Personal Power (30 minutes): Using the personal power you have requires that you *communicate* that power. Communication helps you to get what you need and what you want. It helps you to feel connected with other people. It helps you build relationships in your life. Communication is also the key to becoming a self-advocate and letting others know what is important to you in your life. Learning new communication skills takes lots of practice, but it can be easy and fun to learn. The important thing is that you feel good about the way you communicate and that you get what you want and need.

You began communicating when you were a baby. You cried when you were hungry, cold, wet, or wanted to be held. You smiled when you were happy. Communication does not change much as you get older; you still cry when you are sad and smile when you are happy. Every day you practice communicating so you get better at it. Sometimes you may make mistakes when you are communicating, but you can learn from those mistakes.

People communicate in many different ways: speaking, facial expressions, using sign language, pointing, using a text-talking device or a communication board. All are great ways of letting people know what you want and need.

Communication does not just mean the speech we use. It's also about the tone of your voice, the facial expressions you have, and your body language. (Adapted from *Discovering Your Personal Power: A Real Life Curriculum for Self-Advocates*)

As a group, let's talk about ways that people communicate (8 minutes).

- What are some of the things that make it difficult to communicate?
- How can we help other people communicate?
- When might people communicate?

Now let's talk about how you can communicate to let people around you know what you like and dislike, how you feel, what you want, etc. Being able to communicate effectively gives you personal power in situations. I'll read a few scenarios and you tell me how the person in the story could communicate in order to get what they want and need. (15 minutes).

Sandy is meeting with her family and some staff. She tells the team that her only dream in life is to work at the YMCA. Sandy's sister tells her that she can't work at the YMCA because she uses a wheelchair and staff agrees. How can Sandy communicate what's important to her?

Jane's support person tells her that her annual meeting will be held on Tuesday at 9 a.m. at the workshop. Jane would like to have her staffing at her house so she can bake some cupcakes for the meeting. She would also like to have her staffing in the afternoon because she is not a morning person. How can Jane communicate to her support person what she wants?

Frank calls Susan a name, which makes her very upset. How can Susan communicate to Frank that he upset her? If Frank won't listen to Susan or if he doesn't stop calling her names, what can Susan do?

Discussion about Group Power – Power with Others (15 minutes):

We just talked about using personal power by communicating what you like, don't like, want, and don't want. Sometimes it can be hard to use your personal power because no matter how strong your voice is, there are people who have power over you and who do not listen or show respect to you. In these cases, we may need support and help from others. When we use our power with others, we have "group power" or power in numbers.

SHOW GROUP POWER PICTURE #1: "TWO WOMEN WALKING AT NIGHT." How is this picture an example of group power?

- You and a friend walking together at night have more power than just you walking alone.

SHOW GROUP POWER PICTURE #2: "WOMEN'S GROUP." How is this picture an example of group power?

- As a group, you can come up with better ideas and strategies than when you're simply thinking by yourself. A group talking together is supportive.

SHOW GROUP POWER PICTURE #3: "WOMEN ADVOCATING AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE." How is this picture an example of group power?

- One person fighting against a culture of sexual violence isn't as strong as several people fighting together. Together we can help change policies and law.

SHOW THE GROUP POWER PICTURE #4: "FISH ORGANIZING." How is this picture an example of group power?

- In the first picture, the big fish (sexual perpetrator) can intimidate all the little fish (women with disabilities), but in the second picture the smaller fish (women with disabilities) come together to stand up to the big fish (sexual perpetrator).

This shows that when women with disabilities join together, we can be more powerful against perpetrators.

Conclusion: Before we leave today, I am going to hand out a Personal Power Pledge to each person. Let's read it aloud together and then you can take it home and hang it up somewhere where you will see it often. **DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT 4: MY PERSONAL POWER PLEDGE.** READ IT OUT LOUD TOGETHER AS A GROUP AND HAVE EACH PERSON SIGN THEIR PEDGE. Thank you all for coming and for participating in today's session. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

MEETING 6: SELF-ESTEEM

Objective: Discuss how we feel about ourselves and ways we can improve our self-esteem.

Materials Needed:

- Sign-In Sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Paper and pens/pencils/markers
- You Tube of “Who Says?” music video with lyrics
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubsrgnTufNo>
- The Beauty of Disability with Shelley Baer
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xX1Job6O60E>

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of last week’s meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we’ll get to today’s agenda. SUMMARY IS READ OUT LOUD. These past few weeks we have talked about our power – as individuals and in a group. To use our power, it helps if we feel good about ourselves. The purpose of our meeting today is to discuss self-esteem – how we feel about ourselves and to share if we feel positive about ourselves and our lives. We are each powerful and our inner voices grow as we feel better. It is possible to build up our self-esteem by being aware of what makes us feel good and by talking to ourselves and others about what builds our self-esteem.

Activity: Who decides if you are awesome? (15 minutes) PREPARE THE YOU TUBE VIDEO OF “WHO SAYS?” Who knows Selena Gomez? She has a song about self-esteem. It is called “Who Says?” Let’s listen to it together. If you know the words, sing along. After listening/watching the video, discuss:

- What is that song about?
- What does it tell us?
- Who agrees with this line? “I wouldn’t want to be anyone else?”
- Who agrees with this line? “I’m just beautiful me.”

Play again so people can sing along if they want to.

Activity: Disability can be beautiful! (20 minutes) Now we are going to watch a talk by Shelley Baer. Shelley is a woman with a disability who shares her feelings about having a disability and beauty. PREPARE THE YOU TUBE VIDEO. WATCH THE VIDEO TOGETHER AND THEN DISCUSS. What do you think about the video?

- What does beautiful mean?
- How do you define yourself as beautiful?
- Is beauty on the outside or the inside?

**AFTER THE DISCUSSION, ASK EACH MEMBER TO SAY:
“I AM BEAUTIFUL” OR “I AM A BEAUTIFUL PERSON.”**

Activity: Personal Power Messages (20 minutes) Now we are going to talk about messages. A message may be a note someone sends you. Someone may leave a message on your telephone. A message of respect is when someone listens to us. A message of disrespect is when someone calls us a name.

What message does TV give us about women with disabilities? DISCUSS.

What message do magazines give us about beauty? DISCUSS. We know many of those messages are not true.

Another message women often get is that we have to be in a romantic relationship to feel ok about ourselves Is that true? DISCUSS.

Today we are going to come up with our own messages about who we are – positive messages that build our personal power. I want each of us to come up with a personal slogan. These are words we can use to help us remember we are important; that we are beautiful. Here’s an example: “I am strong.”

Let’s each write down a personal slogan. You can have more than one if you want. AFTER THEY’RE DONE, INVITE MEMBERS TO SHARE THEIR SLOGAN. TELL THE GROUP: You can practice saying this in the mirror. You can also have a slogan buddy. It might be someone in the group! REMIND THE GROUP THAT THEY ARE STRONG, CAPABLE, AND RESOURCEFUL (AND OTHER WORDS USED IN THEIR PERSONAL SLOGANS).

Closing: Thank you awesome women for coming today and participating in our activities. I had lots of fun with all of you. Our next meeting will be date at time at place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

MEETING 7: BULLYING

Objective: Understand bullying and different ways to respond and cope with bullying.

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Paper easel
- Markers
- Bullying Power Point Presentation (at www.illinoisimagines.org)
- Bullying Scenarios (www.illinoisimagines.org)
- You Tube: “It’s Not OK!” is a video highlighting The Arc Greater Twin Cities’ abuse prevention initiative.
(http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=T1YzH9nPfLE)

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of last week’s meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today’s agenda. SUMMARY IS READ OUT LOUD. Last time we talked about building our self-esteem so we can use our personal and group power. Today we are going to talk about bullying. It is important that we understand what bullying is and find ways to support each other when this occurs. We can use our personal power and power with others to stop bullying.

Bullying Power Point (45 minutes): SET UP BULLYING POWER POINT FROM ILLINOIS IMAGINES WEBSITE. GO THROUGH THE SLIDES AND HAVE MEMBERS RESPOND. It might be a good idea to have interested members take turns reading the slides. For those who are not readers, provide support. Members may want to share experiences they have had in being bullied and/or bullying others. Discuss ideas the group may have, such as doing a project for Bullying Awareness Month in October. There are also scenarios available on the website which can be used if more discussion is wanted and needed. Record ideas on easel paper.

Activity (10 minutes): *Purpose: to understand our choices in responding to bullying.* PREPARE THE YOU TUBE VIDEO. Show the YouTube video and have each member practice saying “It’s not okay”. DISCUSS IDEAS THE GROUP MAY HAVE AFTER WATCHING THE VIDEO. RECORD IDEAS ON EASEL PAPER.

Conclusion: Thank you all for coming and for participating in today’s session. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

MEETING 8: GENDER INEQUALITY

Objectives:

- To define gender inequality
- To identify ways men and women are treated differently based on gender.
- To demonstrate that men and women are equal and entitled to the same rights and opportunities.

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Flip chart and markers
- Sheet of paper with two large boxes drawn on it
- Sheet of Paper on flip chart with list of professions

Introduction: Welcome back to the Empowerment Group. SEND AROUND SIGN IN SHEET. (Name of person) recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today's agenda. SUMMARY READ OUT LOUD. Last time we talked about bullying. Today we are going to talk about gender inequality.

Discussion about Gender Equality/Inequality (30 minutes)

Begin lesson by telling participants that we all know that people are treated differently based on their level of ability or disability. People are also treated differently based on gender. Gender inequality is not giving someone choices, rights and opportunities based on their gender. Gender equality means that girls and boys, women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and potential. Gender equality is when people equally value the similarities and the differences of each gender.

Draw two large squares next to each other on the flipchart. Make sure there is plenty of room to write both inside and outside of the boxes. Write "Act Like a Man" directly above one square and "Act Like a Lady" directly above the other square (see page 34).

Ask participants to name the most important personality characteristics for being a man. Write the responses on the flipchart in the "man" box. If participants get stuck, ask questions such as, "How are men supposed to act?" or "If we were watching a movie, what would the leading man in the movie be like?"

Repeat this discussion focusing on the personality traits of a lady. Write down responses in the "lady" box.

Act Like a Man

Act Like a Lady

Ask the group if the words in one box feel better, more powerful, more capable. Ask the group if they have ever heard phrases like, “You throw like a girl” or “You run like a girl.” Ask if that usually is said as a compliment or if it is said more times as a put down. Show the short video clip:

Always like a girl - www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjJQBjWYDTs

Ask the group if the opposite gender has the ability to do the same things or act the same way. Ask the group if there are some jobs that people may not be able to do because of their gender. Discuss whether the reason is they cannot do them or they would not be allowed to do them? If participants get stuck, try suggesting jobs like these below.

- Mowing grass
- Washing dishes
- Babysitting
- Doctor
- Teacher
- Soldier
- Nurse
- Painter
- Preacher / Priest
- Astronaut
- Fire Fighter
- Police Officer

Remind the participants that each person, male or female, has the right to be treated with respect. Each person is unique and special and has different qualities and characteristics. They have the right to be respected and free from harm. A person’s gender does not influence the way they should be treated and the opportunities they should be afforded.

Conclusion: Thank you all for coming and for participating in today’s session. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

MEETING 9: SEXUAL VIOLENCE 101

Objective: Understand what sexual violence is and your rights as a human being.

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Handout 5: “Sexual Violence and You”
- DVD – Our Rights, Right Now: Women with Disabilities and Sexual Violence: An Education Program
- DVD player
- Paper easel
- Markers
- Handout – Local Resources Including Rape Crisis Centers

Introduction (5 minutes): PREPARE THE DVD AHEAD OF TIME. Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today’s agenda. SUMMARY IS READ OUT LOUD. Last time we talked about using gender inequality. This week we’re going to talk about using our personal and group power against sexual violence. This can be a hard topic to talk about, but talking about it can help us support each other to prevent sexual violence and help each other if we need it. Remember that we don’t repeat what other people say outside of this room. We’re going to start by watching a short DVD.

Watch DVD (4:41): PLAY DVD SECTION ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE/ASSAULT. STOP WHEN THE NARRATOR SAYS “You do not need to live in fear. You are not alone. You have rights!”

Activity (10 minutes): PREPARE PAPER EASEL AND MARKER. Ask the group: after watching that clip, can you list what sexual violence is? Then ask: Do you have any questions about sexual violence? ANSWER QUESTIONS FROM THE GROUP. WRITE THE LIST ON THE PAPER. The list might include:

- Sexual abuse
- Sexual assault
- Rape
- Sexual harassment
- Child abuse
- Incest

Watch DVD (5 minutes): PLAY THE REST OF THE DVD ABOUT “RIGHTS.”

Activity (10 minutes): PREPARE PAPER EASEL AND MARKER. After watching this video, can you say what your rights are? WRITE ANSWERS ON THE FLIP CHART. REVIEW THE LIST. EMPHASIZE THE RIGHT TO SAY “NO!”

Discussion (30 minutes): Now let’s discuss how to know if someone is being sexually abusive. There are three primary ways to know if someone is being sexually abusive.

1. Is it sexual? – We’re going to start by talking about what makes someone’s actions or touches or speech sexual. PREPARE PAPER EASEL AND MARKER. I’ll write your ideas about what makes actions or words sexual on this chart. Questions that can prompt the group to describe sexual conduct include:

- Is it sexual if people are using sexual words?
- Is it sexual if people are kissing and hugging?
- Is it sexual if people are touching private parts?
- Is it sexual if someone is partly or all the way undressed?
- Is it sexual if someone takes pictures of someone else naked?
- Is it sexual if people show each other pornography (naked pictures in magazines, on cell phones, on DVD’s, or on the computer)?

2. Who is doing it? – Some people should never have sexual contact with you. Who are those people? WRITE THE GROUP’S ANSWERS ON A NEW PAPER EASEL PAGE.

- Family
- Teachers
- Employers
- Supervisors
- Doctors, dentists
- Counselors
- People who have power over you (Who are these people?)

These people should not be sexual toward you because they have power over you. If one of these people wants you to engage in sexual activity, ask a trusted family member or friend for guidance. It is important to use your power to say no and ask others to help you if someone with power over you wants to be sexual with you.

3. Did you consent?

Now we're going to talk about consent. Consent means to say "yes," freely, without any tricks, threats, bribes or force. Consent should be spoken verbally or signed. If it is not communicated, it is not consent. Consent includes things like saying "yes" or "okay." It means agreeing to do something. If you don't give verbal consent for someone to touch you, they should not.

Sometimes abusers get consent by using threats, tricks or bribes. When someone gets consent by using a threat, trick or bribe, that isn't really consent because it wasn't given freely or willingly. PREPARE PAPER EASEL AND MARKER. Let's list examples of each. USE THESE EXAMPLES TO SPARK GROUP DISCUSSION.

Threats

1. "If you don't show me your breasts, then you won't get to go to the movie."
2. "I'll tell your mom you lied if you don't lie down here with me."

Tricks

1. "We are going to play doctor and doctors touch private parts."
2. "If you come with me we can have special time together but you can't tell anybody."

Bribes

1. "I'll buy you ice cream if you kiss me."
2. "If you touch my penis, I'll buy you a new video."

Conclusion (5 minutes): DISTRIBUTE PENS, PENCILS AND **HANDOUT 5: "SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND YOU."** Remember that there are three primary ways to identify sexual abuse and sexual violence: Sexual behavior? Who is doing it? Did you freely consent? Many services in the area are available for women who have experienced sexual violence. LIST LOCAL SERVICES AND PEOPLE WHO WILL HELP. Give handout with information about local services. Remember that you have the right to get help! Thank you all for coming and for participating in today's session. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

(Adapted from *Our Rights, Right Now! Women with Disabilities and Sexual Violence Education Guide*)

MEETING 10: SEXUAL ASSAULT EXAMS

Objective: Understand what a sexual assault exam is and to know your rights

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report form
- Computer with Power Point program
- Power Point slides and notes: Picture Guide to the Exam Following Sexual Assault — for Self-Advocate
- Victims Rights for Survivors of Sexual Assault Handout
- Speculum (if available)
- Paper easel
- Markers

Introduction (5 minutes): PREPARE THE COMPUTER WITH THE POWER POINT SLIDES AHEAD OF TIME. Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. (Person's name) recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will quickly read that for approval and then we will get to today's agenda. SUMMARY IS READ OUT LOUD. Last time we talked about sexual violence. This week we are going to talk about the exam that a victim can get at a hospital following a sexual assault. This is another hard topic to talk about, but it can help you understand what happens and help you to make decisions for yourself in this situation. Remember that what we say in this room stays in this room. We are going to look at some slides on a Power Point presentation. NOTE: It may be best to invite a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) or a victim advocate from the rape crisis center to facilitate and/or attend this session.

Power Point (35 minutes): Before starting the Power Point, let the group members know that this topic could bring back some memories that are painful and if anyone needs to step out or talk with someone, that is ok. Let the group know that the easel is there to record any feelings, thoughts or questions they may have.

Go through the Power Point slides one at a time. Be sure to go over the statements in the notes as well as what is written on the slide. After each slide ask if there are any questions. Allow time for each person to express questions, feelings, concerns, experiences, and preferences as the class continues.

It is anticipated that the presentation will elicit lots of questions and discussions. Empower the women to consider what other topics they need to learn more about, such as birth control, sexually transmitted infections, and their bodies. If you don't know the answer to something, you can say, "I do not know. Who would like to help me research that for a future meeting?"

Victim Rights (10 minutes): Go over the handout. Ask for volunteers who may want to read parts of the handout. Allow group members to discuss any thoughts or feelings they may have. Have the group discuss how they might support each other if one of them were assaulted and chose to go to the hospital for an exam.

Conclusion (10 minutes): Review thoughts, feelings and questions recorded. Ask the group if there is any follow-up needed to help us know our rights and to feel safer. Thank you for participating in today's activities and discussion. We will use the mission, vision, and core values to guide the work we do in this group and in the community. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.



MEETING 11: SELF-CARE AND ASSERTIVENESS

Objective: Members will feel more confident and use assertive communication to build pride and respect.

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Blank paper
- Markers, pens, pencils
- Computer for watching YouTube clip/projector
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yIO1_VQF3c
- Handout #6: “My Self-care”

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of last week’s meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today’s agenda. SUMMARY READ OUT LOUD. Last week we talked about sexual violence and your rights as a human being and woman. This week we are going to talk about the ways that you communicate with your words, your body language, your physical appearance, and your emotions. Show that you are confident and sure of yourself. When you are confident, you are better able to assert your right to safety and to feel good about yourself, even if you have experienced sexual violence.

Icebreaker (20 minutes): *Purpose: Promote positive body image and confidence*
GIVE EACH PERSON ONE PIECE OF PAPER AND MARKERS/PENS/PENCILS.
GIVE DIRECTIONS.

1. **Draw a picture of your body on the piece of paper.** It doesn’t matter how realistic or artistically appealing the picture is. This is a time to NOT be a perfectionist.
2. **After drawing the picture, make a list of all the things you like/love/appreciate about your body.** This “things I like” list can be infinitely long, and MUST contain at least FIVE things. Each person can also list ONE (but not more than one) thing she doesn’t like about her body.

AFTER 8 MINUTES OF ARTISTRY AND LIST-MAKING, SHOW THE GROUP YOUR PICTURE, AND EXPLAIN YOUR LISTS. It’s important that each thing on the “like” list is explained, instead of just stated. (i.e., “I like my eyes because they are the same color as my mom’s eyes...”)

PROCESSING THE ACTIVITY: Many times, as women, we put down our bodies and think about what beauty SHOULD be. But look at your lists of what's beautiful - every woman has a unique list of "liked" features that typically vary from the "ideal" that you see in magazines and on TV. You are all beautiful! It's okay and healthy to have mixed feelings about our bodies... it's just awesome to imagine that the feelings could be mostly positive instead of mostly negative!

(Adapted from <http://www.ayearwithoutmirrors.com/2012/05/best-positive-body-image-group-activity.html>)

Self-Care Worksheet (20 minutes): DISTRIBUTE **HANDOUT 6: "MY SELF-CARE."**

We just did an exercise about body image and what you like about yourself. Now let's look at how well we are taking care of ourselves. Take 10 minutes to fill out this worksheet with number ratings (3 means you're doing it well. 0 means you're never doing it). Then we'll take 10 minutes to talk about areas where we each could improve based on the low scores.

- Which areas are you very good at taking care of yourself?
- Which areas do you need to do more often?
- How does taking care of your body help you to assert your right to safety and to move forward if you have experienced sexual violence?

Taking care of yourself, physically, psychologically, emotionally, spiritually, relationally, and professionally will help you to feel better about the person that you are. If you love yourself, your friends and support systems, and your job, you will radiate confidence and security.

Practice Assertiveness (25 minutes):

Part of self-care and building self-esteem is being assertive. You are assertive when you are clear, honest and direct about what you want and need and what you don't want or need in your life. When you are assertive you speak up for yourself. You tell the truth – your truth about what you want. You say what you need. And you don't go along with what others want just to please them.

OUR RIGHTS, right now

Let's watch a clip about assertiveness (7:37 minutes): PREPARE COMPUTER FOR CLIP. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yIO1_VQF3c

PREVIEW THE MAIN POINTS FROM CLIP:

Assertive communication is the ability to honestly express your feelings or opinions and to clearly say what you want and don't want. Assertive communication is not aggressive or angry; it's just clear and direct. Assertive behavior is clear and direct communication.

Clear, direct communication is the key to getting what you want. But what does that sound like? Here are five ways to help you become more assertive.

1. Act and speak assertively - Avoid adding a lot of extra words to your opinions and feelings. For example: I am not prepared to support that idea.
2. Use I statements. Take responsibility for yourself and your feelings. For example: When you interrupt me I feel angry.
3. Focus on the facts and talk about the problem. For example: You have come home late the past few nights - I am concerned.
4. Allow time to cool down before talking. For example: I see that you are frustrated and I understand your reaction - let's talk again tomorrow.
5. Keep repeating your request and avoid arguing. For example: Here is my receipt - I would like to return this dress and get my money back.

DISCUSS.

- What did you take away from that video?
- What do you remember?
- What do you want to practice saying?
- How to practice being assertive

(Adapted from *Discovering Your Personal Power: A Real Life Curriculum for Self-Advocates*)

Conclusion: Thank you all for coming and for participating in today's session. Remember to take home your picture of yourself and think about all your positive features. And remember to take care of yourself and communicate assertively so that you radiate confidence! Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

MEETING 12: SAFE PLACES AND PEOPLE

Objective: Participants will identify what makes places and people safe and to identify particular safe places and people in their lives

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- 3X5 notecards
- Blank paper
- Markers, pens, pencils
- Glue sticks
- Scissors
- Paper easel
- Magazines with lots of people and places

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today's agenda. SUMMARY READ OUT LOUD. Last time we met, we talked about how you care for yourself. We talked about how the confidence that you have in yourself can be communicated through your body language and appearance. We talked about our actions and assertive communication. This week we are going to talk about safe places and safe people. You have the right to feel safe. Part of being safe is being assertive about your rights and your body.

Icebreaker (15 minutes): *Purpose: To get the group to start talking about personal relationships.*

HAND OUT A NOTECARD AND PEN/PENCIL TO EACH PERSON. This icebreaker is called "You write a question." On the notecard in front of you, write one question related to the topic of friendship. For example, "What do you value most in a friend?" or, "Who was your best friend growing up and why?" Then I'll pile all the cards face down in the middle of the group and each person will draw one and answer the question.

Discussion (20 minutes): We are going to start by talking as a group about safe places and safe people. What makes a place or a person safe?

Examples:

- A safe place is somewhere that you know nothing bad or scary can happen to you.
- A safe person is someone that you trust and can tell if something bad or scary ever happens to you.
- A safe person is someone you can trust to listen to you, protect you and take care of you.
- A safe place is somewhere I feel accepted, valued, and loved.

PREPARE PAPER EASEL AND MARKER. Now describe what types of **places** make you feel safe and I'll write them on the easel.

Examples:

- A place that is private.
- A place where I know people.
- A place with a door that I can lock.
- A place where everybody is nice.
- A place where a policeman is present.

Now describe the kinds of **people** that make you feel safe and I'll write them on the easel.

Examples:

- People who listen to me.
- People who understand me.
- People who treat me nice.
- People who talk to me like an adult.

Activity (20 minutes): HAND OUT PAPER, SCISSORS, MARKERS, GLUE STICKS, MAGAZINES. Now, at the top of your paper, write the names of people in your life who you feel are safe people. Think of people that you feel you can trust to believe you and protect you.

Examples: family, relatives, friends, counselors, spouse, ministers, school or agency staff

After you've listed a few people at the top of your paper, look through the magazines and cut out pictures of people who remind you of your safe people.

Next, we're going to do the same thing but with safe places. First, write the names of places where you feel safe at the top of your paper. Think of places where you feel like nothing or nobody can harm you.

Examples: home, room in home, church, school, library

After you've listed a few safe places, look through the magazines and cut out pictures of safe places.

Discussion (10 minutes): When you don't feel safe or when something bad or scary happens to you, you can tell your safe people and go to your safe places. Let's take the situation of going for a walk. What are ways that you can keep yourself safe and avoid situations that may be unsafe?

Examples:

- Ask a friend to come along.
- Have a cell phone.
- Have a whistle.
- Bring a dog.
- Stay in areas with lots of people and good lights.
- Tell someone where you're going and when you expect to return.

Remember, even if you have a safety plan, unsafe things can still happen. Safety planning can help prevent abuse, but it is not a guarantee. This doesn't mean it is your fault. It is never your fault if someone else chooses to do something bad to you.

(Adapted from Our Rights Right Now!: Women with Disabilities and Sexual Violence Education Guide)

Conclusion: Thank you all for coming and for participating in today's session. Remember to take home your papers about safe people and safe places and to practice safety planning in your everyday activities. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

MEETING 13: INTERNET SAFETY

Objective: Discuss how to be responsible and safe while using the Internet or Social Media

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Flipchart
- Markers
- Internet access would be great if possible

Introduction: Welcome back to the Empowerment Group. SEND AROUND SIGN IN SHEET. (Name of person) recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today's agenda. MINUTES READ OUT LOUD. Last time we talked about safe people and places. Today we are going to talk about ways to be safe on the Internet and other social media sites like Facebook and Twitter.

Warm up: (10 minutes) The Internet is where you can find information on everything. It's not always true, but you can find information out there on anything. Do you all use the Internet?

What do you all think are the top five visited websites in the world? (list changes slightly each year, but currently it's Google, Facebook, Yahoo, YouTube, Wikipedia). Raise your hands if you have ever visited those websites. Why do you visit those websites? Write down the answers on the flipchart.

Do you know what social media means? Please tell me all the social media sites you know about? How many of you are on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, SnapChat, etc. (insert names of sites that might be newly developed) How many minutes do you spend each day on each social media outlet? Record the answers. The Internet can be fun and interesting. Like anything though we need to know how to properly use the Internet.

Activity: (15 minutes) So now that we know that you are visiting the Internet, let's discuss behavior on the Internet. Is it possible to have privacy on the Internet? How do you keep things private in your life? Write down the group's answers. Pick out a specific YouTube video, (perhaps the YouTube video created by a disability service agency or a recent popular viral video) and show them how many people have

seen that video. Compare the number of people who have seen the video to the number of people in the community the self-advocates live in.

Explain the term “viral” to the group and how one picture can be seen by people you don’t know. If the presenter feels comfortable sharing details of her own social media site, discuss posts that shows how many people saw a picture you posted?

Ask the group if they know what privacy settings are on social media sites? Explain there are multiple settings when establishing an account. (Refer to the social media information guide posted at www.illinoisimagines.org)

Since we know that material or things we post on the Internet or see on the Internet might be seen by other people we don’t know, what should you put on social media sites?

Think about what you would do in public and how many of the things you post on the Internet are public. So if you wouldn’t want to stand up and share your post with people at a restaurant, you don’t want to post that same information online.

Ask the the group for things they wouldn’t do in a restaurant (eg., Take a naked photo, etc.) Consult page 49 in the picture supplement guide for ideas. Explain how easy it is to share things online.

Getting Help: (10 minutes) We talked about how to keep things private, but there are some things you shouldn’t keep private that happen online.

Have any of you been asked to do something sexually you didn’t want to do online or has someone made sexually suggestive comments to you online?

If that happens, you should tell someone like a parent or guardian, staff member or a friend about the request. Being sexually harassed online is wrong in the same way that being harassed face to face by someone is wrong. You don’t need to keep secrets about being sexually harassed. If it happens, print out what was said to you and show it to someone so that you have evidence that it happened.

Conclusion: Thank you all for coming and participating in today’s session. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you again.

Meeting 14: Helping a Friend Who Discloses

Objective: Discuss how to respond if a friend tells you about being sexually abused or assaulted; come up with questions for Meeting 15 (Interview local rape crisis center).

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Paper easel
- Markers
- 1 Red and 1 green marker/colored pencil for each participant
- Handout 7: “Ways to be Helpful”
- Handout 8: “Disclosure of Sexual Violence”
- Brochures about rape crisis centers or computer to look at rape crisis center’s websites
- Flip chart
- Computer to take notes on brainstormed questions

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today’s agenda. SUMMARY READ OUT LOUD. Last time we talked about Internet safety. This week we are going to talk about how to respond if a friend tells you that they have experienced sexual abuse or assault. It could be something that just happened or something from the past. When someone starts talking to you about this sort of thing it can mean that they are seeking your support and your help. It can be a really hard thing to talk about, because many times the abuser is someone who that person knows and trusts.

Discussion (20 minutes): So what do you do if your friend is opening up to you and telling you about being abused or assaulted? PREPARE PAPER EASEL BY WRITING EACH OF THE FIVE STEPS FOR ALL TO SEE AND TALK THROUGH EACH OF THEM.

Provide privacy: Make sure you’re in a private place to talk so that your friend can say body parts and other terms that are not usually spoken of in public.

Listen and provide compassion, empathy, and support: The first response to a disclosure of sexual harm should focus on the needs of the person disclosing. Make sure your friend knows that:

1. you believe her;
2. you're not judging her;
3. it is not her fault.

Explain options: After you have listened to the story and feelings of your friend, you can help her find help. The local rape crisis hotline is always a good place to start. They will walk her through steps like calling the police or going to the hospital. Remind her that rape crisis workers are experts on advocating for victims of sexual assault.

Ensure safety: Ask your friend what will help her feel safe. It is normal for her to be afraid, but tell her that she can get help and that it can get better!

Take care of yourself: Helping someone in need can be stressful. Set aside time for yourself so that you don't feel overwhelmed by her problems. Get help if you need it - you don't have to know everything or do it all.

You don't have to be an expert about sexual violence. That's okay! Your friend is coming to you for support. You can help her by listening and helping her to get the expert support and care that she needs from crisis centers, disability providers and others. Be patient. Someone who experiences sexual violence may have depression, anger and other effects for a long time.

Activity (15 minutes): **DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT 7: "WAYS TO BE HELPFUL" AND RED/GREEN MARKERS.** This handout lists several healthy and unhealthy replies to a friend that tells you about the sexual assault or abuse that happened to her. Let's go through the list together. Circle the healthy (good) responses in green and draw a line through the unhealthy (bad) responses in red. This list can give you an idea of what to say and what not to say if a friend discloses to you. **DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT 8 "DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE."** This handout comes from Illinois Imagines and provides more key phrases and things to remember.

Discuss (15 minutes): This has been a lot of information. What questions do you have? Are you worried about doing any of these things? How can I help you to feel confident in the role as friend to someone who discloses?

Brainstorm (15 minutes): Next week, I have invited a representative from the local rape crisis center to come to our meeting. We will have time to ask her questions about the rape crisis center and their services for people with disabilities. First let's look at some information I have for you about the rape crisis center. Pass out rape crisis center brochures or look at website together. Be sure to highlight the rape crisis center's name/contact information and services offered. Now that you know this, let's think of what else you want to know. If you think of more questions during the next meeting, you can ask those as well. PREPARE COMPUTER OR HAVE A PAD OF PAPER FOR NOTE-TAKING. I'll type/write the questions you come up with.

Examples:

- What services do you provide?
- How familiar is your center with people with disabilities?
- Do you have outreach efforts for women with disabilities who have experienced sexual violence?
- What other agencies does your center network with on a daily basis?
- Has your agency served any women with disabilities during the past 2-3 years?
- If yes, what types of disabilities did the women report? (cognitive, physical, mental illness)
- What have you learned from your experiences in providing services to women with disabilities? What went well? What could be improved?
- How can we work with you to help awareness of the problem of sexual violence against women with disabilities? How can you help us?

Conclusion: Thank you all for coming and for participating in today's session. If you have any more questions or need to talk about anything further, I will be available for a little while after the meeting. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

(Portions of this meeting are adapted from *Our Rights, Right Now! A Guide for Disability Service Agencies* (handbook and DVD))

Meeting 15: Interview with Local Rape Crisis Center Workers

Objective: Know more about the local rape crisis center and its services for women with disabilities; create partnership between this group and the center.

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Computer to take notes on brainstormed questions
- Handout 9 “We Learn Together” (partially completed by ally)
- Pencils/pens

Advanced preparation for ally: Ahead of time, the ally will need to have filled in the “Know” section of Handout 9: “We Learn Together” with information that you can find online about the rape crisis center serving your local area including services they provide, their history and their contact information. Fill in the “Want to Know” section with the brainstormed questions from meeting 14. Leave space for more brainstorming at the start of this meeting and then print out the worksheet for each participant. They can be actively thinking and writing during the interview. Meeting 15 should start by filling out the “Learned” section based on today’s interview.

Also, ask the representative from the rape crisis center to come to the meeting 15 minutes after the meeting start time to allow for initial prep of the group. Allow 45 minutes for the interview (introductions, description of services, questions from group members).

Introduction / Preparation (15 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today’s agenda. MINUTES READ OUT LOUD. I invited name of interviewee from the local rape crisis center to be here with us from time to time. Let’s review the questions for him/her that we started last meeting. DISTRIBUTE **HANDOUT 9: “WE LEARN TOGETHER”** AND PENS/PENCILS. I put some information about the rape crisis center on this form. I also put the questions we listed last time we met. Does anyone have any more questions to add?

At our next meeting, after we have interviewed name, we will fill out the “Learned” section together.

- What services do you provide?
- How familiar is your center with people with disabilities?
- Do you have outreach efforts that target women with disabilities who have experienced sexual violence?
- What other agencies does your center network and communicate with on a daily basis?
- Has your agency served any women with disabilities during the past 2-3 years? If yes, what types of disabilities did the women report? (Cognitive, physical, mental illness)
- What have you learned from your experiences in providing services to women with disabilities? What went well? What could be improved?
- How can we work with you to help awareness of the problem of sexual violence against women with disabilities? How can you help us?

Interview (45 minutes)

1. Thank you for joining us at our meeting today. As you know this is a group that meets to talk about women’s rights, the problem of sexual violence against women with disabilities, and how to take charge of our lives going forward to prevent sexual abuse and assault. Let’s start by introducing ourselves to you. Each woman can go around the room and tell name of interviewee your name and how long you’ve lived in this city.

2. Please introduce yourself to the group—tell us what your position is and how long you’ve worked at the center.

3. Tell us about what the rape crisis center does.

4. We’ve prepared some questions for you. I’ll let the women in the group ask you those questions. Facilitate as the women ask their questions.

Conclusion: Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us. We appreciate your willingness to work alongside our group. And thank you all for coming and for participating in today’s session. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again. I will collect your “We Learn Together” handouts and distribute them at the next meeting so that we can fill in the “Learned” section together.

After the Meeting: Decide who will keep the copies of Handout 9 to bring to the next meeting.

Meeting 16: Surrounding Yourself with Support Systems

Objective: Members will be more aware of current support systems in their lives and how they can expand those supports with disability service providers.

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Handout 9: “We Learn Together” that was collected from participants after last meeting
- Pens/pencils
- Post-it notes
- Handout 10: “The Top Ten Things I’d Like to Tell Disability Service Providers About Sexual Violence”

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today’s agenda. MINUTES READ OUT LOUD. Last time we interviewed staff from the local rape crisis center. I hope that that meeting was helpful in understanding the support systems available to you and your friends outside of disability services. We will use what we learned from the last meeting to fill in the “Learned” section of the handout that we’ve been using for the last two meetings. After that, we will talk about continuing to build the support systems that you need to live a full life.

Icebreaker (10 minutes): *Purpose: To get the group talking and listening (this is a meeting with more static listening than dynamic conversation).* We are going to start today’s meeting with a game called “Life is good because...” We’ll go around the circle and each person will share an ending to the statement “Life is good because...” You could finish it with a good thing that happened to you today or this week or a more general statement about why your life is good.

Activity (15 minutes): DISTRIBUTE **HANDOUT 9: “WE LEARN TOGETHER”** THAT YOU COLLECTED AFTER THE LAST MEETING AND PENS/PENCILS TO ALL PARTICIPANTS. Let’s take a few minutes to remember our interview during the last meeting with the staff from the local rape crisis center. We asked a lot of questions and got a lot of answers. What are a few things that you learned? Let’s discuss together while we fill in “The Learned” section of our handouts.

Discussion/Activity (15 minutes): So far in this group we've talked a lot about supports. We interviewed staff from the rape crisis center, which represents an outside support (a center with professionals that can help you if you experience sexual violence). Let's take a few minutes now and talk about personal support. Your personal support network is a group of people who come together to work with you to help you reach your goals. They also advocate for you when necessary, so that you can have the best quality of life.

PASS OUT POST-IT NOTES (3 to each person). When you think about a personal support network, who do you think of in your own life? What people come to mind who fill that role for you? On one Post-It note, write the name of the person that comes to your mind first. Maybe it's "Mom" or "Dad" or your sister or brother or husband or partner or boyfriend. Maybe it's your caseworker, special recreation coach or personal support worker. The person who comes to mind is probably someone that you know well and have known for a long time.

Support networks are always changing. People can always be added to your network to replace those people who cannot continue for whatever reason, or to simply make your support network bigger. Take another Post-It note and write the name of one person who has been recently added to your support network. Maybe it's someone you just met in this group and have been getting to know recently. Maybe it's a professional that has started helping you with some part of your life – a counselor, caseworker, rape crisis representative, or person from another center where you get help from.

Think about one person that you want to add to your personal support network. Remember that means a person who is committed to helping you achieve your goals. Write the name of that person or the title of that person ("counselor") at the top of the Post-It note. Leave space on the bottom. We'll come back to that later.

Discussion (20 minutes): We all need people in our lives to help us do things, to talk to, and who will help push us toward achieving our dreams and goals. One of those supports can be people from disability service providers. What is a disability service provider? These providers include Special Recreation or organizations that arrange social gatherings for you and friends with disabilities and help you perform at work, etc. These people can be support to you if you experience sexual violence as well.
DISTRIBUTE HANDOUT 10: "THE TOP TEN THINGS I'D LIKE TO TELL DISABILITY SERVICE PROVIDERS ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE."

This handout is a list of things that disability providers should know about you and how to help you if you've experienced sexual violence. Let's read through it together first, then we'll talk about if there's anything missing. READ OUT LOUD.

Do you agree with this list? Is there anything you want to add?

Example of possible missed item:

I want help! I don't want to be hurt anymore and I know that I can feel better about myself and my surroundings.

Wrap-Up (10 minutes): You can help people be more aware of how to help you. It might take a conversation or a letter or a phone call. Remember that each person and each organization does things differently in terms of offering you support. I am sure that they want to help you, but one person can't do everything. So don't expect them to do everything that you want them to. If you tell someone who works at an organization that works with people with disabilities that you've experienced sexual violence and want some help, they have to report the incident. But they may not provide counseling. And the rape crisis center may counsel you, but they may not help you get a new job. That's why it's a good idea to have a diverse personal support network with different people and organizations in it.

On the bottom of that last Post-It note that you wrote on, with the name of the person who you want to be in your support network, write one thing that you can do to add that person to your network. Maybe it's something like asking them to be your friend or call them to set up an appointment.

Conclusion: Thank you all for coming and for participating in today's session. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

Meeting 17: Group Decision Making

Objective: Members will learn to make decisions as a group and practice consensus building.

NOTE: This could take two sessions depending on the group members' experience with making group decisions.

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Blank paper or lined paper
- Pens/Pencils
- Paper easel
- Markers
- Handout 11: "We Make Decisions Together" (write each step of the process on its own page)

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today's agenda. MINUTES READ OUT LOUD. Last time we met, we talked about support systems. You wrote a few names on Post-It notes that were part of your support system. The list included people you knew well, people that you are getting to know, and someone who you want to be a part of your support system. Today, we're going to change the focus a little bit from individual support systems to another purpose of this group: to work together and make decisions that can change people or places in this community.

Icebreaker (15 minutes): *Purpose: Discover how working together can be more powerful than working individually.*

Nobody Has All the Candy Bars: DISTRIBUTE BLANK PAPER/LINED PAPER AND PENS/PENCILS. You will have 60 seconds to write down the names of all the candy bars that you can think of. WAIT 60 SECONDS. Now, I'm going to write one person's list on the flipchart. Then we will go around the circle to each person and see if they have any candy bars listed on their sheets that the person before them did not have. REPEAT UNTIL EVERYONE HAS HAD A TURN.

Processing: No single person is able to list all the candy bars! It takes everyone's contributions to make the longest list of candy bars. We can learn from this activity that everyone in this group has valuable things to contribute. When we make decisions, we should consider everyone's thoughts, views, ideas, and opinions.

Discussion (15 minutes): The activity we just did showed that a group is more powerful than one person when you're coming up with an answer to a question or when you're brainstorming solutions. What about in decision-making?

What was the most important decision you have ever made? HAVE VOLUNTEERS EXPLAIN THEIR DECISION AND HOW THEY MADE IT.

Do you see a pattern? Did most people make the decisions by themselves or with others involved?

Making decisions can be a personal process, but it can also involve many people. In this setting, we will need to make decisions as a group. We don't want just one person to make all the decisions. When we come across a problem that needs to be solved, we should all have the opportunity to share our thoughts and opinions on what the solution should be. Then the group can talk about the input and decide together on the best solution to meet the goal.

Activity (20 minutes): Let's do an activity to see what group decision making will look like. HAND OUT THE SIX PAGES YOU MADE WITH THE STEPS IDENTIFIED IN HANDOUT 11. Here are six steps that are useful to take if you are trying to solve a problem as a group. Your job as a group will be to decide the order that these statements are supposed to go in. I will tell you that the subject of the statements is Making Group Decisions. That's all I will say. Go ahead and see if together you can make a decision about the order these should go in. Then put them in that order and I'll see if you did it correctly.

To check:

- Name a problem.
- Describe the problem so everyone understands it.
- Name some solutions to the problem. What would fix this problem? Write all ideas down.
- Talk about the different solutions. Name pros and cons for each idea.
- Check for agreement about the solution(s). Do people like or dislike all the ideas to solve the problem? Which ideas have the most group support?
- Write down the best idea to solve the problem. Start planning to use that idea to solve the problem.

Processing: Was that an easy activity? Was it difficult? Why? Did you follow some of the steps that were on the sheets to make your decision about the order? Making group decisions should involve hearing everyone's contributions, talking about them and deciding which is best for the group as a whole, and then taking action on the solution. (Adapted from *New Futures Initiative*)

Discussion (5 minutes): Making decisions this way builds relationships in the group through discussion. One person shouldn't be making all the decisions for the group. Rather, each decision should come out of a conversation. When this happens, everyone can trust each other, even if you disagree with each other. Sometimes disagreements are good because they lead to different ways of thinking about the problem that one person may not have thought of by herself.

Let's practice making a group decision right now. Let's use a pretend situation. A group of girls at the local high school walks to lunch together every day. When they walk past the gym door, four or five boys whistle and yell at them. This makes the girls feel nervous and angry. Using Handout 11, let's come up with a solution. **WALK THROUGH THE PROCESS STARTING WITH 1) NAME THE PROBLEM AND ENDING WITH 6) WRITE DOWN THE BEST SOLUTION.**

GUIDE THIS PROCESS ALONG SO THAT THE GROUP KEEPS ON TASK AND STARTS MOVING TOWARD A SOLUTION OR ASK IF ANYONE WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER AS THE FACILITATOR. USE THE EASEL IF YOU NEED IT. GO!

Conclusion: Thank you all for coming and for participating in today's session. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

Meeting 18: Community Organizing

Objective: Learn how to make changes in our own organizations and community.

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting Report Sheet
- Blank Paper or Lined Paper
- Pens/Pencils
- Paper easel
- Markers
- Handout 12: People Making Changes
- Handout 13: Obstacles and Opportunities Match Game
- Handout 14: Empowerment Plan

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today's agenda. MINUTES READ OUT LOUD. Last time we talked about making decisions. We learned that everyone's ideas are needed, and we talked about how to keep working on a decision until everyone agrees. Today, we're going to talk about how we can make decisions as a group to push for change in our community.

Discussion about making change (15 minutes): SEND AROUND **HANDOUT 12: PEOPLE MAKING CHANGES**. To get us thinking about change, it is good to see some examples of people making change happen. In one of our earlier meetings, we talked about the history of people with disabilities. Well, there is also a history of people making changes. Let's look at some examples. Let's start with the top picture.

Top picture: women marching, suffragists, giving women the right to vote.

Middle picture: rally/speech, Martin Luther King Jr. and African-American activists, civil rights for African-Americans.

Bottom picture: rally in Washington DC, Justin Dart and disability activists, passing the Americans with Disabilities Act, giving people with disabilities civil rights.

What are other examples you can think of where people came together to make changes? Who were they? What did they do? What changes were they trying to make?

Keys to community organizing (30 minutes): People have been coming together to make changes for a long time. Sometimes they are working on changing laws in the country; sometimes they are working to change something in their community. No matter what they are trying to change, there are four steps groups need to follow.

- Decide what you want
- Learn who the decision makers are
- Learn how to use your power
- Celebrate

Let's work through each of those steps. First, a group has to decide what they want. This is what we practiced last week. It is important to talk about what you want instead of only talking about what's wrong. Sometimes people have a lot of passion about what is wrong, but it takes work to figure out the solution you want to see. **HANDOUT OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES MATCH GAME (HANDOUT 13)**. This sheet has some examples of problems and solutions. Let's try to match the problem with the solution.

It will be important for us as a group to identify problems and then work for solutions. Sometimes it is hard work to figure out what we want, but now that you have practice in making group decisions, you can practice that some more.

Once a group decides what they want to work on, the next step is learning who the decision makers are. The decision makers are the people with the power to give the group what it wants. For example, if you want more lights on the outside of this building, who makes that decision? That is the person we would need to talk with to get more lights. Sometimes groups make a mistake and try to get someone who isn't the decision maker to make the change. This can result in a lot of wasted effort.

Now comes step 3. Once a group decides what they want and learns who the decision maker is, they have to figure out how to use their power. Remember talking about using our personal power together as a group? Groups use their power by getting organized! Let's talk through how we can use our power. The first step is to ask the decision maker to make the change. You can't get what you want if you don't ask, right? Sometimes the decision maker will say "yes"! If so, the group should celebrate! If the decision maker says "no," then it is time to use our group power to push for the change we want.

It is a good idea to prepare for a meeting with a decision-maker. You can prepare by being very clear about the problem you want to fix, why you need a change and exactly what your solution is. Remember at our last meeting we talked about the high school girls having a problem with the boys at lunch hour? You came up with a solution you all agreed on.

Now let's think about problems faced by the women in this group. Let's focus on healthy sexuality and safety from sexual violence.

DISTRIBUTE **HANDOUT 14: "EMPOWERMENT PLAN."** WALK THROUGH THE EXAMPLE. Does everyone see how we went from naming a problem to asking the decision-makers to help with a solution? For our next meeting, let's each think about problems that we face each day that make us feel unsafe or nervous. We can start using our personal and group power to empower all of us to be safer and stronger.

Wrap-up (10 minutes): We will be talking next meeting about goals for this group, but let's use this last few minutes to think about some possible things we might want to change. Could I get a volunteer to write up the ideas on the easel?

Conclusion: Thank you all for coming and for participating in today's session. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

Meeting 19: Empowerment Plan

Objective: Identify changes the group is seeking and ways to achieve those changes as a group.

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Paper easel
- Markers

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to the Empowerment Group. SEND AROUND SIGN IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today's agenda. MINUTES READ OUT LOUD. Last time we talked about planning for change and identifying problems and solutions. Today we can start an Empowerment Plan for this group to continue working on into the future.

Warm up (5 minutes): Let's get ready to develop our Empowerment Plan by tapping into our personal power. Think a moment about what makes you feel safe and empowered. Call out your ideas and I'll write them on the easel. REVIEW THE LIST.

Empowerment Plan: Okay. Think about what makes you feel safe. Think about where you live, work and go to school. Let's also think about how you get to work or school. What needs to change to make these places safer for you? What needs to change to make it easier for you to get help or support if you feel unsafe or are abused? ENCOURAGE MEMBERS TO BE SPECIFIC. LIST ALL IDEAS ON EASEL PAPER. REVIEW THE LIST.

We can take these changes you want and create an empowerment plan for each of them. Let's try that with one. DISTRIBUTE **HANDOUT 15: EMPOWERMENT PLAN WORKSHEET**. PICK ONE CHANGE. Let's walk through this together. The problem is (pick one). Who can tell why this is a problem (record it)? What change do we want? Facilitate the group's description of the change that needs to occur. Who is the decision-maker (identify one or more people who can make the change)?

You can take every change on this easel paper and make an empowerment plan to make the changes you want. This is a way to use your personal and group power to create more safety and support for all of you. That's empowerment!

Conclusion: Thank you all for coming and for participating in today's session. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

After the Meeting: Decide who will keep the paper with all of the ideas for change. That person will bring the paper to future meetings for action.



Meeting 20: Connecting with Other Community Groups

Objective: Determine other groups to help the group sustain itself and be supportive when the group needs assistance.

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Handout 16: “Community Partners Obstacles and Opportunities” (Cut into individual boxes)
- Our action plan from last week
- New action plan

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today’s agenda. MINUTES READ OUT LOUD. Last time we met, we talked about empowerment planning. This week we will discuss how you can partner with individuals or organizations in the community that can help you to achieve your empowerment goals.

Activity (15 minutes): If you’re going to keep your group going and growing, you’ll need people in the community who know about the group and its mission and are willing to provide support — whether it’s a meeting space, a little financial backing, advertising, contacts or help with conflict in the group.

Let’s do an activity to start that will help us to identify some of the problems this group could face and some of the community supports that could help. PUT ALL THE INDIVIDUAL “PROBLEM” AND “WHO TO CONTACT” STRIPS IN THE CENTER OF THE TABLE. On half of these strips of paper there is a problem listed. On the other half of the strips there’s a resource listed who can help solve the problem. Your job as a group is to pair the problem with the community support that can assist. You’ll have 10 minutes to get the correct pairing.

Discussion (10 minutes): Now let's talk about what other problems you might encounter and how you'd find the supports necessary to get help solving them. Do you have any other ideas of problems that you could come across? EXAMPLES MAY INCLUDE SELF-ADVOCACY ASSISTANCE, ETC.

Many communities have an Illinois Imagines Collaboration Team. The local rape crisis center or disability agencies will know if your community has a group like this.

Several communities have resources that they've already compiled with the contact information for community resources. United Way is one place you could start to find a list.

What are ways that you could contact community organizations to ask for assistance and support?

- Phone calls
- E-mails
- Letters
- Personal contacts referring the group

The more people that you have in your group, the more brainpower you will have to solve problems. What are some ways that you can recruit more people to the group? Develop a blog (website) that advertises the group. Sometimes you can make it searchable so that people in the community looking for a group like yours could find it from a Google search. You can also give the web address to your community contacts who would be able to advertise it to women they encounter who might want to join the group.

Eblogger (works with Gmail): www.blogger.com

Wordpress: <https://wordpress.com>

Develop a Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/help/167970719931213/>

Think about adding goals for the group in advertising - Will someone start a Facebook group? Will someone start a blog? Make a poster/postcard/flier?

Conclusion: Thank you all for coming and for participating in today's session. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.



Meeting 21: Group Leadership and Structure

Objective: To begin thinking about how the group wants to be structured in terms of leadership models and to begin letting the group lead and facilitate themselves.

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Core values that the group came up with in Meeting 2
- Blank paper
- Markers, pens, pencils
- (Optional) Prize for memory game (candy bar, coffee, pop, etc.)
- Handout 17: “Leadership Roles”

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today’s agenda. MINUTES READ OUT LOUD. Last time we talked about setting goals and planning for your individual and the group’s future. But first, we’ll take about 30 to 40 minutes to talk about how what kind of group organizational structure you want in the future.

Memory Game (10 minutes): HAND OUT BLANK PAPER AND MARKERS/PENS/PENCILS. Do you remember during one of our first meetings when we came up with the core values for the group - the words that represented how we would interact with one another and with other groups and organizations? Let’s see how many of them you can remember. Write down as many of the core values as you can think of on the paper in front of you. I’ll give you three minutes. At the end of three minutes, we will compare your answers to the sheet where we wrote down our core values. The person with the highest number of core values that match will get a small prize (or simply wins)!

How are we doing with living up to our core values? Are there any that we should change or any that we should add based on how the group is functioning or wants to function in the future?

Discussion (30 minutes): As you all look toward the future of this group, you need to start asking tough questions about the leadership of the group and how you want to set up the group for the future.

Here are a couple questions to get the discussion going about the future. Remember that you'll want to answer these questions using your group decision-making skills:

Do you want or need to have other leaders?

Right now, you have me in a leadership role; do you want a "President" or "Chair" to take over this role? Do you want other leaders in the group? **PASS OUT**

HANDOUT 17: LEADERSHIP ROLES

If yes, who will fill these roles? Do you need to vote? Take volunteers?

Would you like to continue with an ally? If so, you'll need to find one.

Here are a few ideas adapted from *The Alliance Local Group Manual*:

- People who are involved in groups or activities like parent groups or church youth groups
- Family members of people with disabilities, including brothers, sisters, parents and others
- People who have connections to community resources who know lots of people or access to a meeting space
- A teacher or support staff at a local high school or college
- Members who have lots of skills and experience

How do you want to keep your focus on your empowerment goals and the changes you want to achieve?

How often will you meet from now on? When? Where?

Action Plan Check-In and Update (7 minutes): How are you doing with working toward achieving your personal goals? Turn to the person next to you and share your short-term and long-term personal goals that you set last meeting and how you're progressing.

Conclusion: Thank you all for coming and for participating in today's session. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again.

Meeting 22: Conflict Resolution and Keeping Up Energy

Objective: To teach the group what to do if/when they encounter conflict in the group; to teach methods of keeping energy levels high.

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Handout 18: “Learning from Different Ideas”
- Paper easel
- Markers, pens, pencils
- Action plan from last week
- New action plan

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today’s agenda. MINUTES READ OUT LOUD. Last time we talked about group structure. This week we’ll focus on different methods for resolving conflict when it occurs in this group and ways of staying motivated to achieve the group goals and your individual goals.

Conflict Discussion (25 minutes): Let’s start by talking about conflict in this group. Sometimes people in this group will disagree about things. When disagreements happen, it’s best to face the problems instead of trying to avoid them.

Here’s an example to illustrate that point. Pretend you hurt your ankle walking down the street. This is a big problem. You have two options. You can either treat it by icing, resting, elevating, and wrapping it up or you can leave it and not treat it. If you face the problem and treat it, it’s going to eventually get better and you’ll no longer be in pain. If you let it fester and avoid taking care of your ankle, your problem will only get worse.

Now let’s think about a problem the group might encounter: Pretend that one member of the group has volunteered to get in contact with the Rape Crisis Center to set up a time when the whole group can visit the center. She hasn’t completed her task for several weeks and keeps reporting that she hasn’t had the time. Another group member is getting frustrated because her action step task can only be completed after this group member completes her step. The frustrated group member can either voice her frustration and the group can work out the problem or she can keep quiet and the whole group will suffer because the goals aren’t being met.

What should the frustrated group member do? How should she voice her opinion respectfully? HAVE THE GROUP ANSWER THIS QUESTION BY SHARING IDEAS FIRST. THEN READ THE FOLLOWING WAYS THE PROBLEM MIGHT BE SOLVED.

Aggressiveness: Being mean—the frustrated group member could yell at the other group member, personally attacking her and making her feel bad in front of the group. This way of resolving the problem might make the group member who hasn't done her action task make the time to do it, but it will lead to mistrust and make other group members feel uncomfortable and scared.

Passiveness: Giving in — the frustrated group member could simply not say anything. The problem would continue happening and the group wouldn't be able to achieve their goals. This wouldn't solve the problem and the group wouldn't get stronger or more effective.

Assertiveness: Being strong — in an early meeting we talked about assertive communication. It's a way of talking and acting that helps people understand how you're feeling and why so that they can respond appropriately. In the above situation, the frustrated group member could point out the group is not moving toward achieving the goal. She can stress that everyone needs to work together in order for the group to function well. She could ask if the person who hasn't done her action step needs help and how the group can help her to get the task completed.

PASS OUT **HANDOUT 18: "LEARNING FROM DIFFERENT IDEAS" TO ALL PARTICIPANTS.**

Staying Motivated (15 minutes): PREPARE PAPER EASEL AND MARKERS. Now let's move to a little bit different topic — motivation and staying energized in this group. What motivates you? In other words, what encourages you to get something done? (Prizes or incentives, being recognized for your achievement, finding value in your work.) I'll write your ideas on the easel. There are a few different kinds of motivation. Let's look at some examples of the types.

Examples:

- “Growth” motivation: (Being motivated because you’re seeing change and progress and you want to keep going)
 - I’m motivated to work out because I see my body shape changing and my energy levels rising.
 - I’m motivated to keep coming to these meetings because I get support that I need from friends.
- “Avoidance” motivation: (Being motivated because you are trying to avoid something bad from happening)
 - I’m motivated to find a job because I am almost out of money and I won’t be able to pay my bills.
 - I’m motivated to get my action steps toward my goals done because I don’t want to let down the group.

The bottom of the handout 18 gives a few ideas to help you stay motivated toward reaching your goals, both individual goals and the group goals. Let’s take a look at them and brainstorm how these tips can help the group. We don’t ever want you to be bored and unmotivated!

Conclusion: Thank you all for coming and for participating in today’s session. Our next meeting will be date at time, place. I look forward to seeing you all again. Remember that the next meeting will be a celebration because I will be leaving you as the ally of this group.

Meeting 23: Moving Forward Celebration

Objective: To celebrate the progress made so far during the first 22 group meetings; To thank the ally for her service

Materials Required:

- Sign-in sheet
- Meeting report sheet
- Object for speaker to hold
- Blank pieces of paper
- Markers, pens, pencils
- Tape

Introduction (5 minutes): Welcome back to this group. SEND AROUND SIGN-IN SHEET. Name recorded a summary of our last meeting, so she will read that for approval and then we will get to today's agenda. MINUTES READ OUT LOUD. Last time we talked about resolving conflict in the group and how to stay motivated long-term. This week marks a turning point for this group - this is the 23rd meeting and the group now will move to a new leadership structure.

Final Icebreaker (20 minutes): *Purpose: To celebrate the progress of the group.* BRING AN OBJECT (RAIN STICK, STRESS BALL, OTHER OBJECT EASILY PASSED).

We're going to start this meeting with an activity. Pass the object around the circle. When you are holding the object, please share one reason that you're thankful for this group, something that you've enjoyed about these meetings so far, or a positive memory you have from one of the meetings.

Group Celebration Game (15 minutes): GIVE EACH MEMBER ONE PIECE OF BLANK PAPER, A MARKER, AND 2 PIECES OF TAPE (remember yourself!). (Have the members tape the blank piece of paper onto each other's backs.) Your job is to write one thing you like about each member of this group on the piece of paper on their back. You'll have to get up and move around the room in order to make sure you get to all the members. Try to keep your answers short, even to one word like "honest" or "sweet" or "team player" or "joyful" or "on time" or "positive attitude." At the end, you'll get to take off the paper on your back and see how the people in this group view you and what they appreciate about you.

Going Forward: You can see from this activity that your empowerment group has built a sense of connection and community. You have learned from each other and supported each other. As you move forward with your group, be sure to keep that spirit of mutual support and empowerment alive.

Conclusion: Thank you all for the opportunity to facilitate this group for 20 meetings. Next meeting, the group will be led by name. The next meeting will be date at time, place.

After the Meeting: Meet with leaders and review the process going forward. Pass along meeting materials. Provide copies of Handout 15 for the group to focus on in future meetings. Give the leaders you contact information if you are willing to provide ongoing consultation.

SECTION 3 RESOURCES

ILLINOIS IMAGINES
OUR RIGHTS
RIGHT NOW!



Resources

Videos

Check out YouTube for videos relating to empowerment and self-esteem or the group can design and make their own.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxxomUVsSik>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hcq_ELekscY

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W2zDc7Xr_WY

Music

Find and play songs relating to empowerment and self-esteem or the group can make up their own!

Des'ree "You Gotta Be"

<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/desree/yougottabe.html>

Whitney Houston "The Greatest Love Of All"

<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/whitneyhouston/greatestloveofall.html>

Mary J. Blige "No More Drama"

<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/maryjblige/nomoredrama.html>

Christina Aguilera "Beautiful"

<http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/christinaaguilera/beautiful.html>

Meditation

Search the internet for self-esteem meditation activities.

http://prtl.uhcl.edu/portal/page/portal/COS/Self_Help_and_Handouts/Files_and_Documents/SelfEsteem.pdf

<http://www.innerhealthstudio.com/self-esteem-relaxation.html>

<http://www.growing-self-esteem.com/meditation-self-esteem.html>

Chiji Processing Cards

Not simply pretty pictures on a deck of playing cards, Chiji Cards are a valuable educational tool for processing (or debriefing) during facilitation. Spread out among a group of people, the cards are 48 images that assist participants in creating their own metaphors.

Each person selects a card, shows the group and states why they selected the card they did.

<http://www.chiji.com/>

Empowerment/Self Esteem Collage

Make individualized empowerment/self-esteem collages by clipping pictures, words, and sayings out of magazines and newspapers (or use markers to draw or write pictures, words, or sayings). Glue the pictures onto colored construction paper and then have participants share their personalized collages with the group. Laminating the collages will help decrease wear and tear.

Make a group empowerment/self-esteem collage on a bulletin board using colored construction paper, markers, newspaper/magazine clippings, and other decorative items. Add to the collage as self-esteem and empowerment pictures, words and symbols are discovered.

Self-Esteem Scavenger Hunt

Engage group participants in finding all the items and completing the tasks, and sharing the experience with the group:

- Bring a photo of you enjoying what you were doing
- Clip a headline that mentions a woman you find inspiring
- Sing your favorite song lyric
- Find a favorite birthday card you received
- Write a thank-you note to a parent, mentor, friend, or teacher
- Call someone who you haven't talked to in a while
- Perform a random act of kindness
- Give someone a compliment in person, face-to-face
- Discover an interesting fact about a group member that you didn't know before

Volunteer

As a self-advocate once said, “When you are helping other people, you are helping yourself”. As a group, search for volunteer opportunities that everyone can participate in and then choose one.



SECTION 4

FORMS/HANDOUTS

ILLINOIS IMAGINES
OUR RIGHTS
RIGHT NOW!



Group Planning Worksheet

Why do we want to start the group? What's our **PURPOSE!!!**

Who do we want to invite to be part of the group? Who will invite them?

Name:

Who will invite:

Who do we need to ask for assistance in getting started? Who can help us?

How do we tell others about the group? (Who will do this?)

Where can we meet in the beginning? (Who will ask this?)

When can we meet? (Who will ask this? _____)

Everybody is Welcome!

**Come One,
Come All!!!**

Join our Empowerment Group!!

Why: Learn, Have Fun, Know Your Rights, Find your Voice

When: _____

Where: _____

Information:



Meeting Checklist

- Gather Materials
- Introductions
- Complete Agenda
- Set Next Meeting

Member Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Sign-In Sheet

Name (Print, First Names Only)

Meeting Report

Date: _____

Attendees:

Purpose of Meeting:

Meeting Highlights:

Next Meeting Date: _____

Planning for the Future

What do we want to do?

Who will do what?

How often should we meet?

Where can we meet?

How can we support each other?

Member Power and Ally Support

Group Members:

- Make a commitment to be involved in the group
- Say what you think
- Vote on issues
- Help each other get things done
- Treat fellow members with respect
- Listen to each other's ideas
- Encourage other members to be the best they can be
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Allies:

- Communicate with members directly
- Be honest
- Follow through
- Come to all the meetings
- Listen
- Don't make decisions without members
- Find ways to help everyone get involved
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Why Are We Here?

GROUP PURPOSE: (Why the group exists and what it will do)

CORE VALUES: (Values that form the foundation for the work that we do)

Power Play

Skits

- Sue is watching TV when her staff walks up and says, “Get up and do your chores right now!”

- Betty and Sharon are planning a surprise party for their friend Nancy. They both have some great ideas and are very excited.

- Judy’s boyfriend says, “You have to have sex with me or I am breaking up with you.”

- Jan is hurt that her friend, Carol, broke a promise. Jan says, “I feel sad that you said you were going to be here and you did not come or call me. I deserve to be treated with respect.”

- A women’s group decides they want to improve services in their community for people with disabilities who experience sexual violence. They work together to make a plan of what steps they can take.

- Linda is upset and shares with a friend, “Most of my friends are in relationships. What’s wrong with me? I feel like I am not good enough.” Her friend says, “I understand. I used to feel that way and then realized, I don’t need a boyfriend to feel good about myself.”

- Cathy wants to tell her parents that she is a lesbian. She is worried they will not like it, but knows she has a right to be herself. She speaks up for herself.

- Shelley reports her sexual assault to the police. The officer says, “I don’t think we can go to court because of your disabilities. Sorry, there is nothing I can do.”

- Diane and her friends are waiting at the bus stop when they hear an older man say, “Oh Baby! If I was 20 years younger, I would have some of that.”

Group Power Picture #1



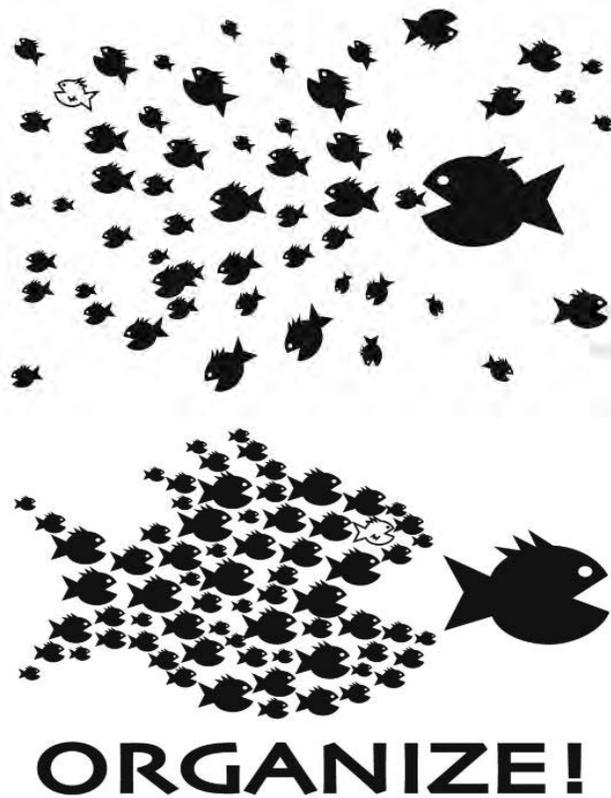
Group Power Picture #2



Group Power Picture #3



Group Power Picture #4



My Personal Power Pledge

I will speak up for myself.

I am unique; there is nobody else like me.

I am a person first.

I believe in my dreams.

I can learn new things.

I can help make changes.

If I don't succeed the first time, I will keep trying.

It's my life.

Nothing about me without me.

Signature

From: Discovering Your Personal Power © 2010

Sexual Violence and You

What is Sexual Violence?

Sexual violence has a lot of forms and a lot of names. Some people call it rape, sexual assault or sexual abuse. Sexual violence can include:

- Being forced to listen to someone talk sexually to you
- Being forced to look at or participate in sexual pictures or movies
- Being forced to kiss someone
- Being forced to look at or touch someone's private parts
- Being touched in a sexual way when you don't want to be touched
- Being forced, tricked or manipulated to have sex

Sexual Touch

Unless you say yes, it is wrong for someone to touch you in a sexual way. If this happens to you, tell someone. Keep telling until you get help.

No one should touch you sexually if:

- They are in your family
- They are staff
- You don't know them, or
- You say No

What can you do?

■ Say No

You have the right to say No to sexual contact. Say it loudly and repeatedly.

■ Tell Someone

If you are a victim of sexual violence—*tell someone*. You do not have to keep it a secret. Ask for help. It is not your fault. You didn't do anything wrong.

Who can you tell?

Tell someone you trust. The people you could tell might include:

- A friend
- A family member
- A support staff person
- A counselor
- A rape crisis center
- The police

What is a rape crisis center?

The rape crisis center is a place that helps victims of sexual violence. This help is free. They have 24-hour hotlines in case you need to talk to someone anytime. Workers will go with you if you need to go to the hospital or talk to the police after an assault. They also provide counseling services. The rape crisis workers will protect your privacy and will not tell anyone else about what happened to you.

Remember

Sexual violence is never the victim's fault. Never!

My Self-Care

Adapted from Saakvitne, Pearlman, & Staff of TSI/CAAP (1996). Transforming the pain: A workbook on vicarious traumatization. Norton.

The following worksheet for assessing self-care is merely suggestive. Feel free to add areas of self-care that are important for you. Rate yourself on how often and how well you are taking care of yourself these days. Look for things you want to change. Is there anything you would like to include in your life?

Rate the following areas according to how well you think you are doing:

- 3 = I do this well (e.g., frequently)
- 2 = I do this OK (e.g., occasionally)
- 1 = I barely or rarely do this
- 0 = I never do this
- ? = This never occurred to me

Physical Self-Care

- _____ Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch, and dinner)
- _____ Eat healthily
- _____ Exercise
- _____ Get regular medical care for prevention
- _____ Get medical care when needed
- _____ Take time off when sick
- _____ Do some fun physical activity
- _____ Get enough sleep
- _____ Take vacations
- _____ Other:

Psychological Self-Care

- Take day trips or mini-vacations
- Make time away from telephones, email, and the Internet
- Listen to my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, feelings
- Write in a journal
- Attend to minimizing stress in my life
- Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes
- Other:

Emotional Self-Care

- Spend time with important people in my life
- Give myself affirmations, praise myself
- Love myself
- Re-read favorite books, re-view favorite movies
- Identify comforting activities, objects, people, places and seek them out
- Allow myself to cry
- Find things that make me laugh
- Other:

Spiritual Self-Care

- Spend time in nature
- Cherish my optimism and hope
- Identify what is meaningful to me and notice its place in my life
- Meditate
- Pray
- Sing
- Contribute to causes in which I believe
- Read inspirational literature or listen to inspirational talks, music
- Other:

Relationship Self-Care

- Make time to see friends
- Call, check on, or see my relatives
- Spend time with my pets
- Stay in contact with faraway friends
- Make time to reply to personal emails and letters; send holiday cards
- Allow others to do things for me
- Ask for help when I need it
- Share a fear, hope, or secret with someone I trust
- Other:

Workplace or Professional Self-Care

- Take a break during the workday (e.g., lunch)
- Take time to chat with co-workers
- Make quiet time to complete tasks
- Identify projects or tasks that are exciting and rewarding
- Arrange work space so it is comfortable and comforting
- Get regular supervision or consultation
- Negotiate for my needs (benefits, pay raise)
- Have a peer support group

Overall Balance

- Strive for balance within my work-life and work day
- Strive for balance among work, family, relationships, play, and rest

Ways to Be Helpful

- I believe you.
- How are you feeling?
- Why didn't you fight them off?
- What were you wearing?
- What can I do to help?
- Can I go with you to counseling?
- Why did you go there?
- What do you need right now?
- Did that really happen?
- What would make you feel safe right now?
- What took you so long to tell me?
- He/she seemed like a nice guy/girl. I'm sure it wasn't that bad.
- What happened to you was not okay. I'm so sorry.
- Just forget it happened.
- We have a crisis center in town that can help you—on the phone or in person. Would you like to call them? I can help you with that.
- Maybe it was your fault.
- I don't really have time to listen to you.
- You are a wonderful friend, and I love you. I will support you in whatever way you need me to, now and in the future.

DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

How to Respond

- Provide Privacy
- Explain Options
- Support Choices
- Ensure Safety



DO

- Believe
- Support
- Respect
- Assist

DON'T

- Doubt
- Blame
- Judge
- Punish

SAY: I believe you. I'm sorry this happened to you.

ASK: How can I help you? What do you need right now?

TELL: We have a crisis center in town that can help you - on the phone or in person.

HELP: Would you like to call them? I can help you with that.

PROTECT: What would make you feel safe right now?
Let's make a safety plan.

Rape Crisis Hotline: 1-800-656-4673
www.dhs.state.il.us www.icasa.org

We Learn Together

Before you begin learning about this topic, fill in the “What I know” and “What I want to know” columns. After you have learned more about the topic, complete the “What I learned” column.

Topic:		
What I know	What I want to know	What I learned

THE TOP TEN THINGS I'D LIKE TO TELL DISABILITY SERVICE PROVIDERS ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE

By Shirley Pacey

As a survivor of childhood sexual violence and a professional in the disability services world for over thirty-five years, I have a passion for understanding sexual violence against people with disabilities. I have been honored to hear many stories and to support people at the hospital following an assault, as well as during court proceedings to pursue justice and through the twists and turns of the recovery process. I have learned so much from the brave individuals who have let me walk beside them and I want to share the 'top ten' lessons in hopes of empowering others. In the words of those deeply affected by sexual violence, we honor their voices.

We have been hurt. Sexual violence is a very real part of our lives. We feel shame and guilt and fear and confusion. It may not be in our record. No one may know that we suffer. It most likely happened many times and by more than one person. For some of us, it has been so common, we think it is just a part of life. If you work with people with disabilities, you know survivors of sexual violence, and probably many of them. The person in front of you today may be a survivor. If I choose to tell you what has happened to me, please...

Believe me. My healing begins with how you respond when I tell you what happened. Don't tell me I am lying. Don't say the person wouldn't do something like that. The person most likely to cause sexual violence is someone I know and trust, and you may know and trust them too. Believe me. Listen to my story. Help me to feel safe. Help me understand my choices. If I decide to go to the hospital or call the police, please...

Don't tell people my "mental age." They will think I am a child, and I am not a child. It is impossible to live as long as I have lived and still be a child. Don't let others believe myths about me. They may look to you for the truth, and I need you to believe in my abilities. Please educate them, and tell them that if they take their time, I can show them that...

I am more than my labels. My diagnosis does not tell you anything about me. I want you to know my *abilities* and talents and contributions. I want you to know my deepest dreams and even my purpose. When you know my strengths, you can help me to expand my life possibilities. You can balance out what has been taken from me. You can see me as a person, very much like yourself, doing the best I can. As you recognize that we are more alike than different, please know that...

My “behavior problems” may be a response to trauma. What you view as “inappropriate” or my “need for attention,” may actually be my way of coping with the trauma I have experienced. Certain smells, sounds, sights, tastes, and feelings can trigger my memories of the terror I felt when I was being assaulted. What you see and hear is behavior...so please look closer and listen with your heart. You may discover that...

I need your support to move forward. I need you to listen and be patient. I need to know that it wasn't my fault. I need to know that I am not alone. I need you to help me understand what has happened and how I can be strong again. Recovery is not a straight path, and I need you to help me when I stumble. I need you to help me find the right people who can best assist me. As we walk through this together, it would be good for us both to know that...

Sexual violence is not about sexual attraction. A lot of people think that sexual violence is about a person who can't control their sexual urges when they are attracted to someone. But that is a lie. Sexual violence is a way for someone to dominate another person – to use power to control another person. People who are taught to do what they are told are at higher risk for sexual violence. Don't teach me to be compliant. Empower me. I need to be able to say no to the safe people in my life if I am to say no to others. You might think I am especially vulnerable to violence but...

I am at greater risk for sexual violence because of others' attitudes and actions towards me than because of my disability. Now that's a mouthful! But it's true. When I am not given critical information because you think I can't understand – I am at greater risk. When systems cover up allegations, I am at greater risk. When people touch me all the time without permission, I am at greater risk. One lady said, “I've been seen naked by hundreds of people and no one has ever asked permission.” Now that's a problem, so please ask before you help. Some of my friends aren't able to talk the way that you and I do, so please...

Learn the indicators for sexual violence. If you know the indicators and observe closely, you may be able to help us, even if we don't talk very well. You may be the one who gives us the gift of safety. Or you may be the one who gives us the gift of unloading our burdens. Or you may be the one who helps us to heal. And for all of these things we say...

Thank you. Thank you for learning what you can about sexual violence. Thank you for recognizing that my 'behaviors' may be a response to trauma. Thanks for being patient with me as I try to recover from what has happened to me. Thank you so very much for believing me and helping me to express myself. You are there for me in so many ways...thanks for being here for me in this way too.

We Make Decisions Together

Name a problem.

Describe the problem so everyone understands it.

Name some solutions to the problem. What would fix this problem?
Write all ideas down.

Talk about the different solutions. Name pros and cons for each idea.

Check for agreement about the solutions. Do people like or dislike all the ideas to solve the problem? Which idea has the most group support?

Write down the best idea to solve the problem. Start planning to use that idea to solve the problem.

People Making Change



What are these people doing?

Who are these people?

What are they trying to change?

What are these people doing?

Who are these people?

What are they trying to change?



What are these people doing?

Who are these people?

What are they trying to change?



Obstacles and Opportunities Match Game

Instructions:

Draw a line from the OBSTACLE in Column A to the OPPORTUNITY in Column B

Column A: Obstacles

Unaffordable health care
Pollution
Hunger
Unemployment
Lack of transportation
Racism

Column B: Opportunities

Jobs programs
Affirmative action
More bus routes
Green energy
National health care
Food banks

Empowerment Plan

○ What is the problem?

Example: The women's bathroom door doesn't lock.

○ Why is this a problem?

Example: The women who come here for services don't feel safe in the bathroom and they can't be sure of having privacy.

○ What change do you want? How will the change you ask for be helpful?

Example: We want the janitor to fix the lock.

○ Who is the decision-maker?

Example: The janitor. If he/she doesn't fix it, we will talk with the director.

Empowerment Plan Worksheet

○ What is the problem?

○ Why is this a problem?

○ What change do you want? How will the change you ask for be helpful?

○ Who is the decision-maker?

Community Partners Obstacles and Opportunities

Problem	Who to Contact
We no longer have a place to hold meetings	The library, which has large conference rooms to reserve
We need financial assistance to pay for all the women to travel to meet with another empowerment group	Philanthropic groups in the community (Elks, Rotary, etc.)
We have questions about the current research surrounding women with disabilities and sexual violence.	Gender or Disability Studies professors at the local university or high school
We want to increase our membership	Disability service providers, rape crisis centers, women's shelters
A woman in the group is still experiencing sexual violence at home	Centers for women in transition or women's shelters, which shelter women and children experiencing domestic violence
The group's membership is dropping and the leadership is weakening	Illinois Imagines, which has resources for groups and can suggest helpful leadership tactics
We are struggling with conflict in the group and can't seem to work it out ourselves	A disability service provider / pastor / counselor / mediator who could attend a meeting to troubleshoot

Leadership Roles

(Adapted from New Futures Initiative: Beginning the Journey)

ROLE

NAME

Facilitator/President:

- Write agenda
- Create hopeful, upbeat, and safe atmosphere
- Help group make decisions
 - Help focus and order discussion topics
 - Bring out all viewpoints
 - Summarize and sort discussion
 - thoughts, agreements, disagreements
 - Restate final decisions
- Call on speakers
- Encourage equal participation
 - Draw out quiet people
 - Ask talkative speakers to be brief
- Encourage everyone to perform leadership tasks
- Stay neutral while facilitating

Public Scribe:

- Take visible notes on flip chart

Secretary:

- Keep group records in a file

Vibes Watcher:

- Watch the process of the meeting
- Point out tension,
 - distractions, weariness, boredom
- Look for unexpressed feelings and tensions,
 - and brings attention to them when appropriate
- Stop bad process (domineering, guilt-tripping,
 - interrupting, put-downs, space-out)
- Deal with outside distractions

Doorkeeper:

- Greet new members
- Tell latecomers what has already happened

Different Ideas and Opinions

Do not change your mind simply to avoid conflict and to reach an agreement and harmony. This is the submissive way to deal with problems when they arise. It won't make the group stronger.

Differences of opinion are natural and expected. Seek them out and try to involve everyone in the group's decision process. Disagreements can actually help the process—with a wide range of information and opinions, there is a greater chance that the group will hit upon more satisfying solutions.

Encourage discussion and dissent. Every option has its limitations—determine what they are during the discussion rather than after you begin the activity.

If, after thorough discussion, there seems to be an irresolvable sticking point, it may be time to seek out a neutral party to help the group.

Staying Motivated

1. Find the good reasons (reward, personal gain, feeling of accomplishment, step closer to bigger goal)
2. Make it fun
3. Take a different approach (tweak the way you're working on the goal)
4. Recognize your progress
5. Reward yourself

Our Action Plan!

