



GPS Supervisor Training for MA DPH Bureau of Substance and Addiction Services (BSAS) 2024



REPORT



Learning Impact Report: GPS Supervisor Training Spring 2024

MA DPH Bureau of Substance and Addiction Services (BSAS)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2019, GPS Group Peer Support (GPS) has contracted with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Bureau of Substance and Addiction Services (BSAS) to provide facilitator training to the BSAS workforce. Through this endeavor, over 650 BSAS-affiliated providers and recovery coaches have been trained in the GPS model of group-based support. As a result, GPS Support Groups focused on recovery from substance use disorder are available to diverse populations across the Commonwealth through BSAS-affiliated programs.

GPS is a mental health wellness intervention that mitigates the long-term effects of stress, strain, and trauma. Incorporating elements of mindfulness-based stress reduction, cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, peer-to-peer support, psychosocial education, and other evidence-based modalities, GPS is designed for the rapid implementation of essential mental health support during times of stress, crisis, and change. The GPS model has been successfully implemented among diverse populations including parents dealing with postpartum depression, residents of rural areas living with chronic conditions, people dealing with substance use

disorder, refugees, survivors of war, and people facing oppression based on their racial, sexual, gender, religious, or other identities. It can be delivered by mental health clinicians or trained, non-clinical workers with relevant lived experience. Since its founding, GPS has focused on the needs of communities that face high barriers to behavioral health care, including individuals in recovery.

The GPS Supervisor Training delivered in June 2024 was successful, with all participants reporting that they would recommend the training to a colleague. Pre- and post-training surveys found statistically significant increases in confidence levels across all measured areas of learning. Participants also reported that the GPS training was unique, helpful, and powerful.

TRAINING CONTENT AND OVERVIEW

- The GPS Supervisor training took place over 4 weeks. Each training session was 2 hours and took place once a week on Thursday.
- Training was conducted virtually on Zoom
- Participants were required to attend the first session live. The remainder of the training was available as live sessions or recordings.
- Training dates: June 6th-27th, 2024
- Total training hours 8

Training Schedule

Week 1: Intro to GPS + GPS group experience

Week 2: Overview of GPS model

Week 3: Integrating GPS into Recovery Programs

Week 4: Supervising Staff

In this training, participants learned:

- How GPS increases engagement and reduces challenging situations in groups
- GPS's trauma-informed foundational principles & evidence-based modalities
- Key components of the GPS model
- GPS's approach to supporting peer specialists
- Adaptation of GPS for unique populations
- How to best support your team in implementing GPS
- How to utilize the GPS model in staff meetings and supervision

TRAINING PARTICIPANTS

Demographic Information for Training Participants

Among participants ages 18 to over 70, White participants made up 40% of the training, while 40% were Black, African American, or African, 10% Hispanic/Latino(a), 10% Caribbean, and 1% mixed race. Of participants 64% identified as women and 28% identified as men. While 85% of participants said that they communicated with the staff they supervise in English, 15% spoke to staff in Spanish and 8% in Arabic. Further, 40% of participants identified as a person with a disability or other chronic condition. Almost the entire group (90%), identified as someone in recovery.

All of the participants (100%) have experience leading groups, either currently or in the past. This training was accessible to a wide range of educational backgrounds, as only 27% had master's degrees, and the remaining participants had varying amounts of higher education (bachelor's degree 9%; associate's degree 18%; some college 27%), and 18% reported having a GED or high school degree.

Participants work with or supervise a variety of populations, including parents, folks in postpartum, students, those in recovery, healthcare workers, youth, faith based groups, incarcerated individuals, the elderly, immigrants/refugees, those with mental health or physical health needs, and LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC communities.

EVALUATION METHODS

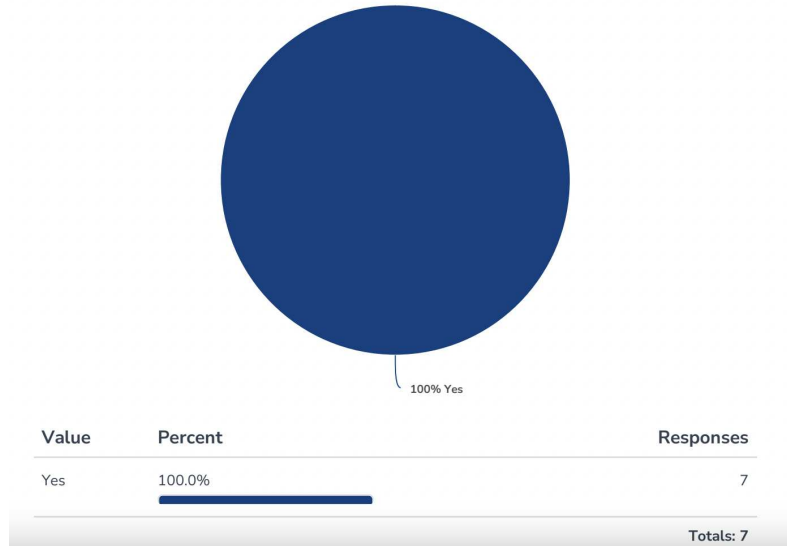
Training participants were asked to complete pre- and post-training electronic surveys. The surveys were anonymous. The pre survey included demographic information, as well as questions about their work, their experience running support groups, and their confidence levels in the various aspects of running support groups which would be covered in the training. The post training survey included some of the measures from the pre survey to measure change (specifically confidence measures), as well as several debriefing questions regarding the participants' experience in the training: what was helpful, what wasn't helpful, and their experience around equity and inclusion within the training.

EVALUATION RESULTS

Participants recommend this training to their colleagues.

Participants surveyed in the June 2024 training overwhelmingly responded that they would recommend the training to their colleagues (100%).

Would you recommend this supervisor training to your colleagues?



Training Experience

When asked questions about their experience in the training, expertise of trainers, the GPS Group Peer Support model, and GPS support groups, participants overwhelmingly responded positively.

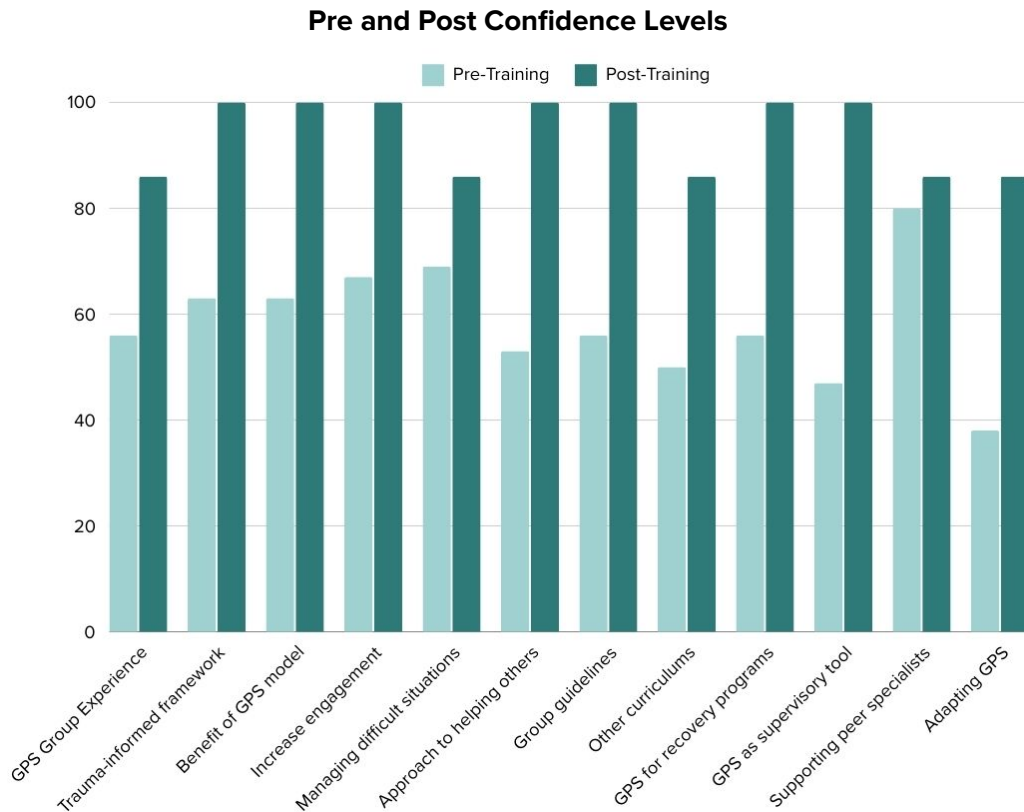


Confidence In Understanding and Implementing Group Support

The graph below shows the change in confidence levels of participants before and after the training.

The following areas were measured (abbreviated below):

- GPS group experience
- GPS trauma-informed framework
- Benefit of the GPS support group model
- Increasing engagement in a support group
- Managing difficult situations
- GPS's approach to helping people in recovery adopt new skills through expression of emotion
- GPS Guidelines
- Implementation of GPS with other curriculums
- Implementation of GPS in recovery programs
- GPS as a tool for supervision
- Supporting peer specialists
- Adapting GPS for unique populations

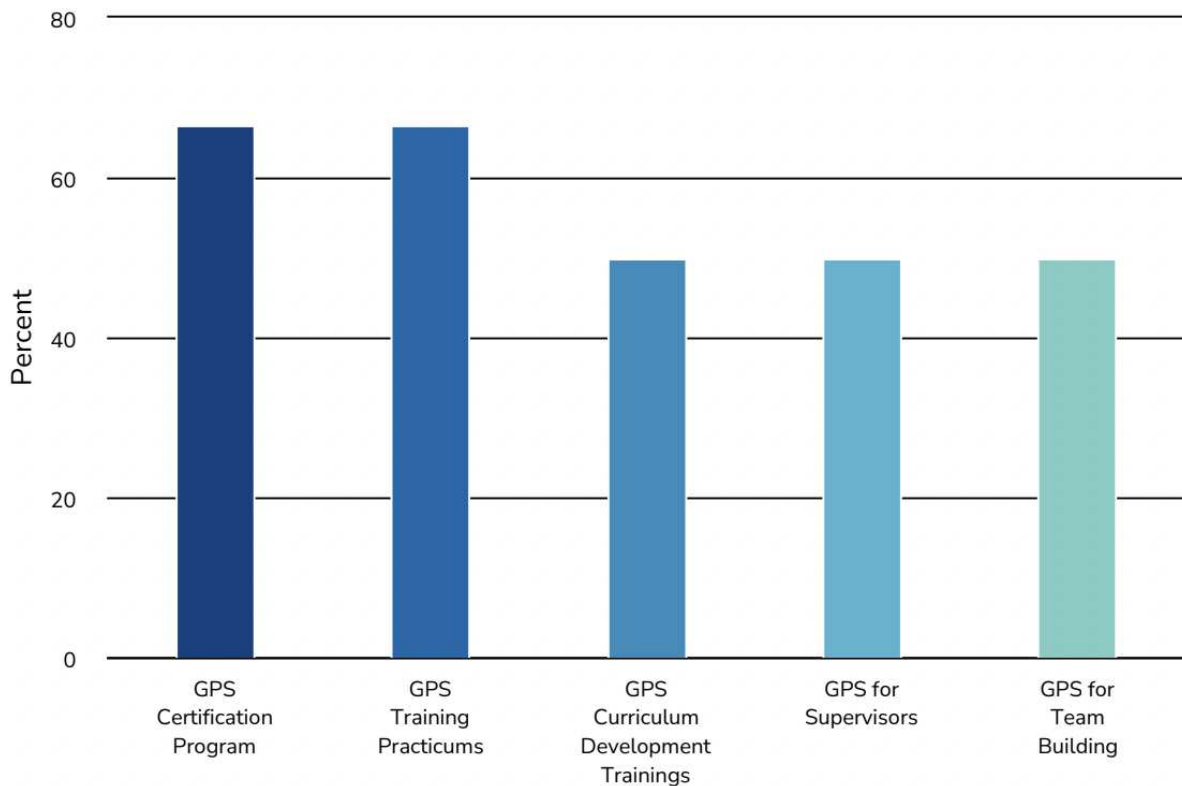


Measuring Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

GPS Group Peer Support has a strong commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Across all of its programming, it is crucially important that everyone feels seen, heard, and validated. In order to ensure that our training is meeting the needs of the diverse population we serve, participants were asked several questions on this topic. When asked if the training created a safe space for people of all identities, 40% of participants agreed that it had done so. A total of 50% of participants agreed that diverse perspectives were actively sought and valued during the training sessions. When asked if GPS takes appropriate action to address issues related to discrimination or bias, 50% of participants agreed. Finally, 57% of respondents felt that the training had helped them to better understand the intersection between trauma and race, culture, ethnicity and identity.

Interest in Future Learning Opportunities with GPS

The graph below shows that participants indicated a strong interest in attending future GPS training programs.



Qualitative Responses

Areas that participants learned or improved in the most:

- *Telling our truth — it can help to normalize it as a practice.*
- *I think discussing how we show up and our truths was super important*
- *Mindfulness and its benefits*
- *Listening, leadership, and supervision*

Participants found the training useful to them in multiple ways:

- *Learning new tools to adopt as a new supervisor.*
- *Team work*
- *Improving listening skills*
- *Self care was awesome*
- *How I can change my view of things and try something new*

Final thoughts on the GPS Supervisor Training from participants:

“I appreciated hearing from different trainers and their experience and thoughts. I think just being able to be transparent was huge.”

“You can't help to be more mindful and open minded. I especially enjoyed the ability to rest and have time for selfcare.”

“I could tell all the GPS staff were engaged the entire time. It made me feel invested in the program.”

IMPACT AND NEXT STEPS

The positive impact on individuals who are trained in the GPS model is clear. Their confidence levels in all areas of group facilitation increased. Their commitment to running trauma informed support groups in their community grew. Their desire for additional professional development and training in the GPS model was also indicated. All of the participants were already running or supervising support groups, and yet, they were still eager and ready to implement the GPS model in their groups. The GPS model and facilitation training fills a previously unfulfilled need for group facilitation structure that is trauma informed, accessible, and culturally adaptable. The more we build the capacity for peer support in the recovery communities, the higher quality of care we will be able to provide.

About GPS

GPS Group Peer Support (GPS) is a mental wellness intervention that mitigates the long-term effects of stress, strain, and trauma. Incorporating elements of mindfulness-based stress reduction, cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, peer-to-peer support, psychosocial education, and other evidence-based modalities, GPS is designed for the rapid implementation of essential mental health support during times of stress, crisis, and change. The GPS model has been successfully implemented among diverse populations. It can be delivered by mental health clinicians or trained, non-clinical workers with relevant lived experience.

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