



GPS

GROUP
PEER
SUPPORT

Learning Impact Report: GPS Facilitator Training Winter 2025



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This training has been indispensable for me. I went from feeling ill-equipped to feeling equipped. I came into the course with lots of questions, insecurities, and “what-ifs” about running groups, and I now feel confident that all of those questions were answered. The course was so thorough and so thoughtfully designed. Truly there was no stone unturned.

— Participant in the Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training was a transformative experience for participants, equipping them with the skills, confidence, and tools to lead trauma-informed support groups. [Group Peer Support \(GPS\)](#) facilitator trainings are designed to create welcoming spaces and uplift varied perspectives. Over four weeks, GPS delivered 20 hours of interactive training designed to enhance facilitation abilities, improve group dynamics management, and strengthen trauma-informed approaches.

The results were overwhelmingly positive. Participants reported **a 46% average increase in confidence** across all facilitation skills, with **an astounding 107% increase** in their ability to create trauma-sensitive environments. All **100% of participants would recommend the training to colleagues**, underscoring the program’s relevance and effectiveness.

Despite **50% already leading support groups, 75% had never received formal group facilitation training**. The training filled that gap, providing participants with a structured, evidence-based approach, enhancing their ability to lead peer support groups effectively and immediately apply GPS principles in their professional settings. In addition, many of the participants expressed a desire to continue their education in the GPS model, including pursuing advanced certification.

The training also fostered a deeper understanding of group dynamics, leadership, and trauma-informed support. **Ninety-three percent** of participants reported that they now have a solid understanding of how trauma affects individuals and groups, with many gaining a new appreciation for active listening and mindful facilitation.

The training had a profound impact on those in community-based support settings, including those working with folks in recovery, mental health support, and parents in a variety of situations, including parents of kids 0-5, parents of children with disabilities, and parents who are pregnant or postpartum. One participant shared that “...this training will help me better connect with parents.” Another noted that they “...learned how to get participants engaged, and help them feel safe in sharing.”

With a range of backgrounds and experiences represented in the Winter cohort, the training fostered an environment where participants felt heard, valued, and empowered. All **100% of participants** agreed GPS effectively prepares facilitators to navigate complex group dynamics, ensuring structured, meaningful group support.

By investing in GPS training, organizations expand access to high-quality, peer-led mental health support. The Winter 2025 training reinforced the essential role of peer support in addressing emotional well-being, stress, and trauma. With universal participant endorsement, measurable skill growth, and a commitment to creating safe, effective support spaces, GPS continues to set the standard for facilitator training.

More than professional development, this training was a transformative experience with lasting impact on both facilitators and the communities they serve.

“
This is a great training to complete, from start to finish. It was well led, and the trainers had a lot of experience. You will learn different ways to incorporate trauma-informed aspects for your group.

— Participant in the Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training

INTRODUCTION

The demand for high-quality, peer-led mental health support is rising. As communities face stress and trauma, the need for skilled facilitators to create safe, supportive spaces has never been greater. GPS Group Peer Support (GPS) meets this need by providing evidence-based training that equips individuals to lead structured, trauma-informed support groups.

- 1. Training Purpose & Scope:** The Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training prepared 20 participants over four weeks with 20 hours of interactive learning in group facilitation, active listening, and trauma-sensitive care.
- 2. A Range of Participant Backgrounds:** Attendees included mental health professionals, addiction recovery specialists, case workers and managers, program directors, parent group facilitators, and individuals with lived experience of trauma, all united by a shared goal of creating supportive peer spaces.
- 3. Practical, Immediate Application:** The training emphasized structure, consistency, and responsiveness, allowing participants to integrate GPS principles into their work immediately.
- 4. Trauma-Informed Care & Group Dynamics:** Facilitators learned to recognize and respond to group members' emotional and psychological needs while practicing active listening, de-escalation, and conflict resolution.
- 5. High Confidence Gains & Participant Endorsements:** Participants reported increased confidence across multiple measures, highlighting GPS's structured approach as a key factor in making group facilitation more manageable and impactful.
- 6. Ongoing Impact & Expansion:** Many participants plan to pursue advanced GPS certifications or introduce the model into new settings such as healthcare organizations and community centers.
- 7. Broader Mission:** GPS's structured, evidence-based training strengthens the peer support network, expanding access to trauma-informed mental health care and creating lasting community impact.

INCREASING CAPACITY TO SERVE A RANGE OF PARENTS

The Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training focused on preparing individuals to lead peer support groups for parents. For this particular training, GPS worked in partnership with The Parent Club, a Florida-based program in the Miami-Dade area that offers free workshops to parents on a wide variety of topics in the hopes of supporting parents and children alike. Working with the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine and Florida International University's Center for Children and Families, the Parent Club offers workshops in English, Spanish, and Creole, that support families across the developmental spectrum from prenatal and early childhood all the way through the transition to adulthood. The program received a five-year Children's Trust grant to help to supplement their offerings with the structured group support model that GPS provides.

Parenting can be a difficult journey for some, and can bring with it a variety of challenges. However, studies have shown that quality social support can make parents more positive, enhance both their mental and physical wellness, and even improve their parenting efficacy.¹ Parents with more support are found to be more nurturing and consistent in their parenting.² Unfortunately, many parents do not have adequate social support and often the support they do have may be limited or hard to access.

This training equipped facilitators to create safe, confidential spaces where parents can connect with empathy and understanding. GPS groups provide essential support during early parenthood, and facilitators gain the confidence to foster meaningful group experiences using evidence-based and culturally responsive methods.

The Winter 2025 training drew 20 participants from seven different organizations, including 11 individuals from The Parent Club. Other participating organizations focused on parent support, mental health, and recovery programs, such as the Gandara Center, the Helena Village Collective, Behavioral Health Network, and the CHD Two Rivers Recovery Center for Women.

¹ Yan Z, Yu S, Lin W (2023) Parents' perceived social support and children's mental health: the chain mediating role of parental marital quality and parent-child relationships. *Curr Psychol* (12):1-13

² Byrnes, H. F., & Miller, B. A. (2012). The Relationship Between Neighborhood Characteristics and Effective Parenting Behaviors: The Role of Social Support. *Journal of Family Issues*, 33(12), 1658-1687. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X12437693>

“
This training is jammed pack with great content, information, and peer support resources to help shape your group into the best group it can be!

— Participant in the Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training”

EVALUATION RESULTS

Participant Feedback and Training Impact

High Recommendation Rate

The Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training received universal endorsement from participants. Among those who completed the post-training survey, **100% indicated they would recommend the program to their colleagues**, underscoring the training's perceived value and effectiveness.

Positive Training Experience

Participants provided overwhelmingly positive feedback regarding various aspects of the training, including the expertise of the trainers, the GPS Group Peer Support model, and the overall training structure. Specific findings include:

- **100%** of participants rated the overall learning experience as “excellent/good.”
- **100%** rated the trainers’ expertise as “excellent/good,” highlighting their proficiency in delivering the material and fostering an engaging learning environment.
- **100%** rated the GPS model itself as “excellent/good,” reflecting its applicability and relevance to their professional roles.
- **100%** praised the quality of online support provided during the training, emphasizing the program's adaptability to a virtual format.

Increased Confidence in Group Facilitation

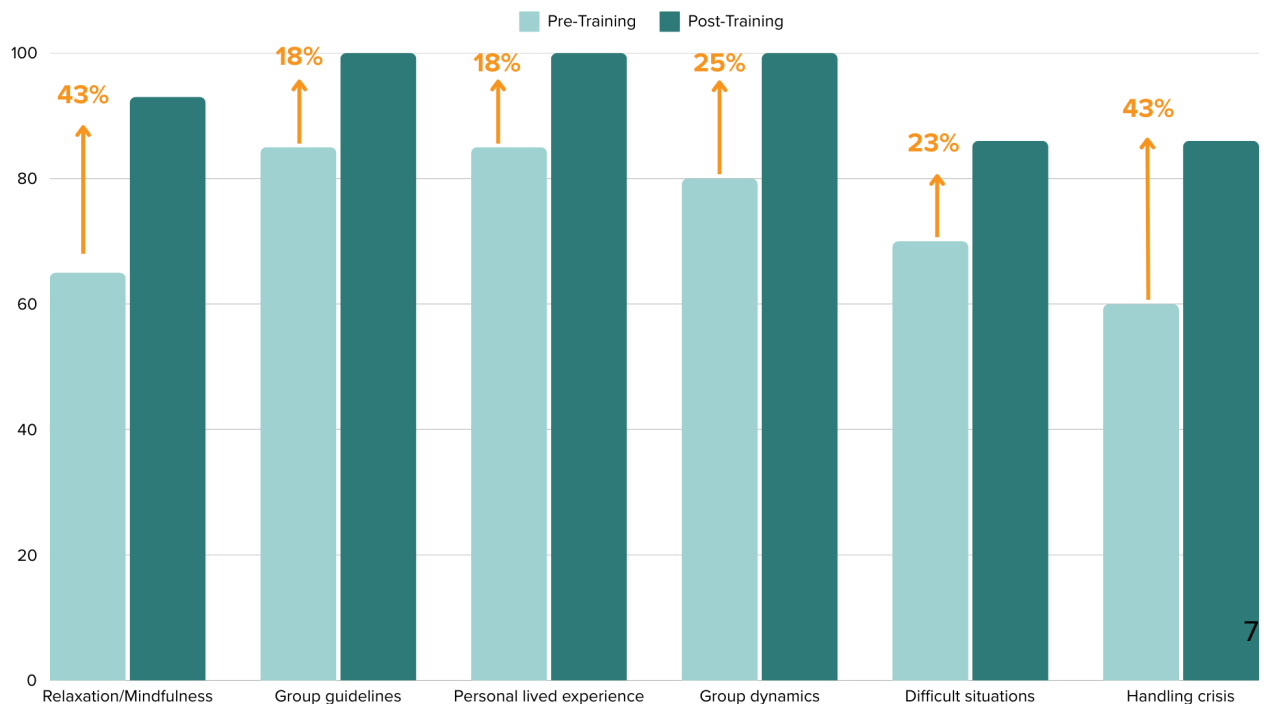
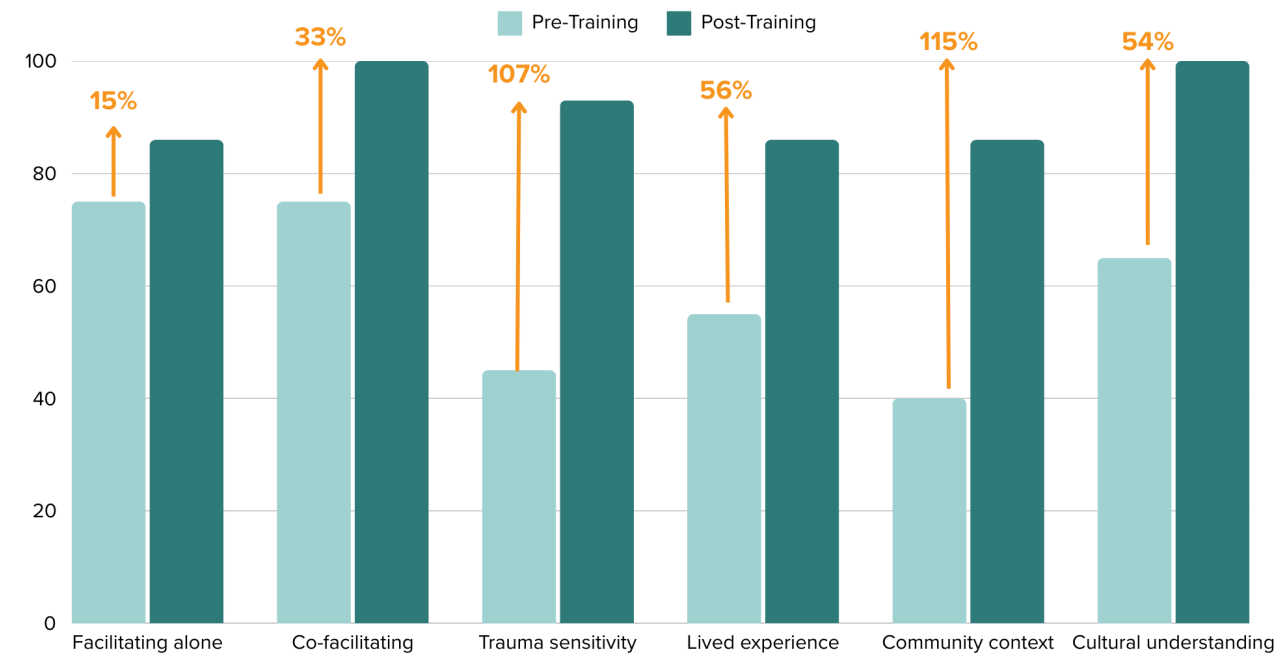
The training significantly boosted participants' confidence across all measured competencies. Pre- and post-training comparisons revealed:

- Confidence increased by at least **15%** across all skill areas, with an **average increase of 46%**.
- A significant **107% increase** in confidence levels when it comes to creating a trauma-sensitive setting and using trauma-informed skills in leading groups.

These findings demonstrate that GPS Facilitator Training not only equips participants with practical skills but also fosters a high level of confidence in applying these skills within their professional contexts. This data reinforces the training’s efficacy in preparing facilitators to lead trauma-informed, culturally responsive group sessions effectively.

For [a detailed explanation of specific areas measured](#), please refer to the addendum at the end of this report.

CONFIDENCE LEVELS



“
The training provided the skills needed to conduct a support group in a competent, controlled manner. The manual will be very valuable in creating consistent support groups moving forward.

— Participant in the Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training
”

PARTICIPANT INSIGHTS AND FEEDBACK

The GPS Facilitator Training has proven to be a transformative experience for participants, offering practical tools and strategies to enhance their professional effectiveness and confidence. Feedback highlights how the program’s trauma-informed approach aligns seamlessly with participants’ existing practices while introducing new methods for group facilitation, cultural competence, and creating safe, supportive spaces for healing.

The Value of Building Core Skills That Are Trauma-Informed

Participants highlighted the importance of preparation, structure, and active listening in effective facilitation, along with the training’s comprehensive focus on trauma-informed skills, cultural competence, and group facilitation.

“
This training has been indispensable for me. I went from feeling ill-equipped to feeling equipped. I came into the course with lots of questions, insecurities, and “what-ifs” about running groups, and I now feel confident that all of those questions were answered.
”

“
This training provided the tools and skills to reinforce the importance of creating a safe space for a person to share and return without feeling uncomfortable.
”

Practical and Adaptable Training

Participants noted that the GPS model, along with the training, will be valuable for how they will run groups in the future.

“ I learned some new strategies that I can apply to my work. **I feel more confident now** in applying some concepts, ”

“ I work in the substance use field, so it is very important to keep groups trauma-informed, and this training gave me a refresher and new ways to do that. ”

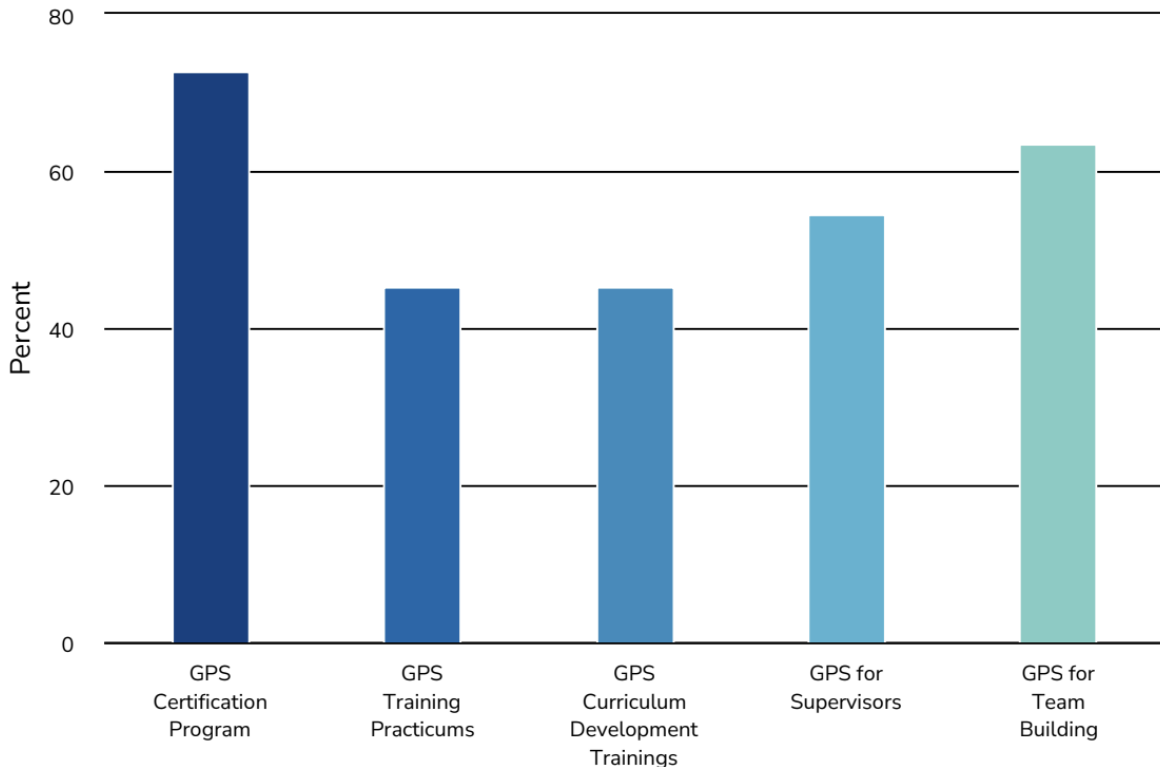
“ The training **pushed me to think differently** and gave me key strategies that I can implement in my work. ”

The insights shared by participants underscore the profound impact of the GPS Facilitator Training on their professional development and practice. By equipping facilitators with trauma-informed frameworks, culturally responsive tools, and practical strategies for group dynamics, the program empowers professionals to create environments that foster healing, resilience, and meaningful connection.

The overwhelmingly positive feedback reinforces the training's essential role in enhancing the quality of care provided to a range of different communities.

Interest in Future Learning Opportunities with GPS

Participants indicated a strong interest in attending future GPS training programs. Most notably, **73% of respondents are interested in strengthening their skills** by taking the GPS Certification Program.



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— Participant in the Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training

TRAINING PARTICIPANTS

Participant Profile

The range of backgrounds, experiences, and expertise of the Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training participants demonstrates the broad applicability and relevance of the program. By including individuals from various professional sectors, educational backgrounds, and facilitation experience levels, GPS ensures that its training is both accessible and impactful, fostering a more inclusive and skilled network of facilitators.

The Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training attracted a group of 20 participants, each bringing unique experiences and backgrounds to the program. The participants included professionals from mental health services, addiction recovery programs, parent support networks, and peer-led advocacy groups. **For [a more detailed demographic description of participants](#), please refer to the addendum at the end of this report.**



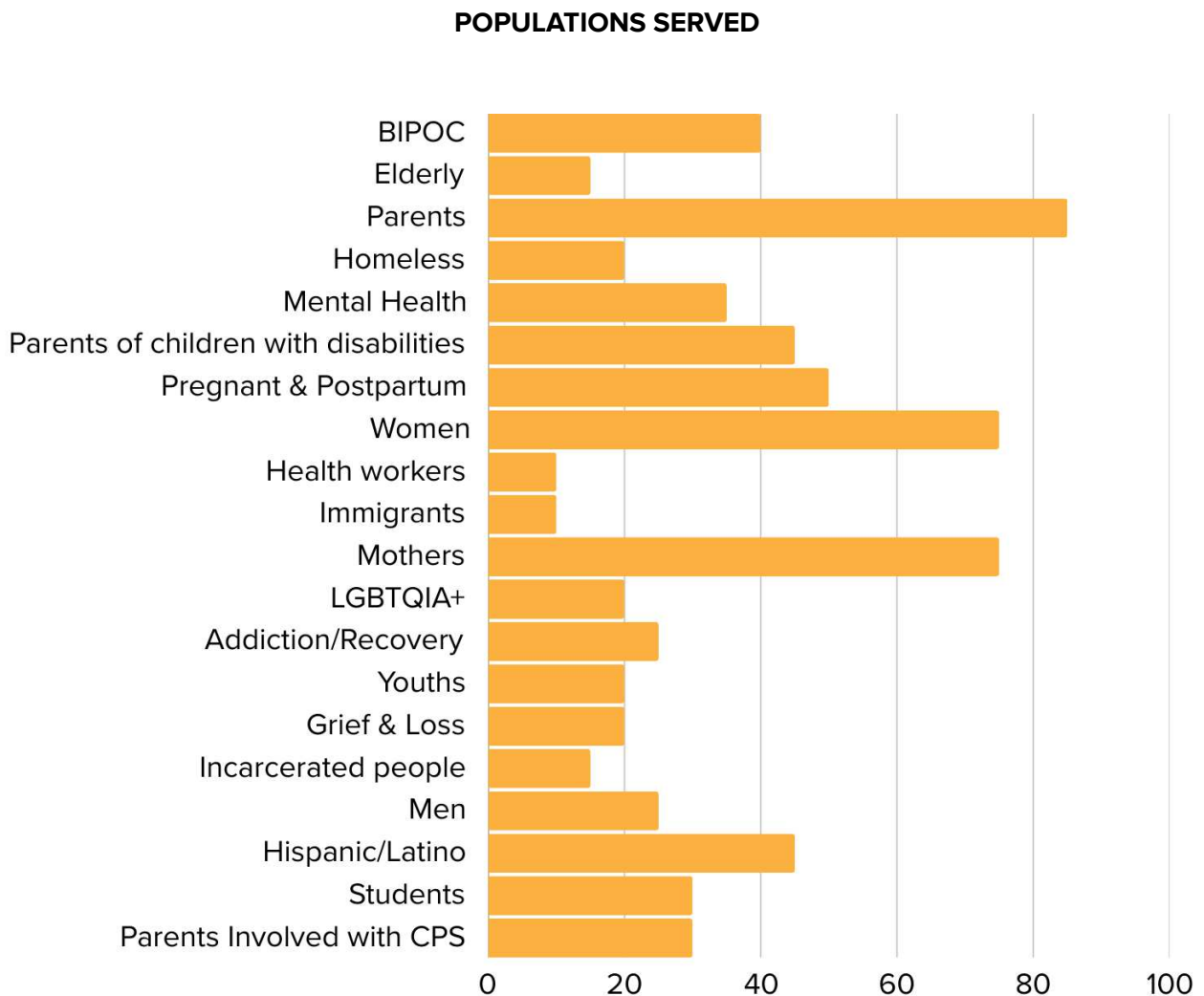
This training is beneficial even for people who have been facilitating groups for a long time.

— Participant in the Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training

The Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training demonstrated the accessibility of peer support facilitation by bringing together participants from various educational and professional backgrounds. Some entered with minimal formal education and no prior facilitation experience, while others held advanced degrees and extensive leadership roles in group settings. This inclusivity reflects the participant experience emphasizing that despite different educational and experience levels, all attendees could build essential skills, refine best practices, and gain confidence in leading trauma-informed groups.

Participants consistently highlighted the value of GPS’s structured approach, which provided a clear framework for both beginners and seasoned facilitators. By fostering a welcoming and supportive learning environment, GPS continues to expand access to high-quality, trauma-informed peer support across a range of different communities, strengthening the reach and impact of group facilitation.

This training embraced a wide range of perspectives and experiences, emphasizing and addressing the range of needs of both facilitators and the communities they serve.



Commitment to Inclusive and Fair Support

GPS Group Peer Support is dedicated to fostering an environment where all participants feel seen, heard, and valued. Our programs are designed to create welcoming spaces, uplift varied perspectives, and remove barriers to participation. To assess how well we meet these goals, participants were asked targeted questions about their experiences during the training.

Key findings include:

- **Creating Welcoming Spaces: 85%** of participants agreed that the training successfully created a safe and supportive environment for individuals of all backgrounds.
- **Encouraging Varied Perspectives: 85%** of respondents affirmed that a range of viewpoints were actively sought and valued throughout the training sessions.
- **Ensuring Fair Treatment and Addressing Bias: 78%** of participants agreed that GPS fosters an environment where everyone is treated with respect and consideration.
- **Understanding Trauma and Identity: 86%** of respondents reported that the training deepened their understanding of how trauma intersects with a variety of factors including lived experiences, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and sense of self.

These results highlight GPS's ongoing commitment to ensuring its programs are welcoming, fair, responsive, and impactful for the communities it serves.

IMPACT AND NEXT STEPS

The Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training has demonstrated a significant positive impact on participants, enhancing their confidence in all aspects of group facilitation, particularly when it comes to running perinatal support groups. Participants reported increased commitment to leading trauma-informed support groups in their communities and expressed strong interest in pursuing further professional development in the GPS model. Many were already facilitating groups prior to the training, yet they embraced the opportunity to incorporate the GPS framework into their practice with enthusiasm and readiness.

The GPS model addresses a critical gap by providing a structured, trauma-informed, accessible, and culturally adaptable approach to group facilitation. Expanding the capacity for peer support within various communities not only empowers facilitators but also elevates the quality of care and support provided to individuals in need. By investing in programs like GPS, we strengthen the foundation of support services and enhance outcomes for a range of populations.

ADDENDUM

TRAINING OVERVIEW

The Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training was structured to ensure that participants received a comprehensive and engaging learning experience. This section provides a detailed breakdown of the training curriculum, key learning components, and the interactive methods used to reinforce facilitator skills.

Structure of the Training Program

The training was delivered virtually over four weeks, consisting of:

- **Live interactive sessions:** Engaging workshops facilitated by experienced GPS trainers.
- **Role-playing and practice exercises:** Opportunities for participants to apply newly learned skills in a supportive environment.
- **Small group discussions:** Facilitated conversations to deepen understanding and refine facilitation techniques.
- **Facilitator demonstrations:** Trainers modeled best practices, offering practical examples for effective group leadership.

Key Learning Modules

Each session was carefully structured to build upon the previous content, reinforcing a strong foundation for group facilitation:

1. **Introduction to GPS & Group Facilitation:** The fundamentals of leading a peer support group and understanding the GPS model.
2. **Creating a Trauma-Sensitive Environment:** Techniques to establish safety, trust, and empowerment within groups.
3. **Effective Communication and Active Listening:** Skills for ensuring meaningful, engaging, and trauma-informed groups.
4. **Managing Group Dynamics:** Strategies for handling challenges, conflicts, and ensuring equitable participation.
5. **Mindfulness and Grounding Techniques:** Practical exercises to support emotional regulation and focus.

6. **Facilitating Welcoming and Supportive Conversations:** Encouraging openness and meaningful connection in group settings.
7. **Navigating Difficult Situations:** Tools for handling crises and responding to group challenges effectively.

EVALUATION METHODS

To assess the impact and effectiveness of the Winter 2025 GPS Facilitator Training, a structured evaluation process was implemented. Participants were asked to complete **anonymous pre- and post-training electronic surveys**, providing valuable insights into their experiences, confidence levels, and the training's overall impact.

1. Pre-Training Survey:

- **Purpose:** Collected baseline data to understand participant demographics and gauge their initial confidence levels in group facilitation.
- **Key Components:**
 - Demographic information (e.g., age, gender, language proficiency, and educational background).
 - Professional context, including prior experience running support groups and current roles.
 - Confidence levels across various group facilitation skills that would be addressed during the training.

2. Post-Training Survey:

- **Purpose:** Measured changes in confidence levels and gathered feedback about participants' experiences in the training.
- **Key Components:**
 - Reassessment of confidence levels using the same metrics from the pre-survey to quantify growth.
 - Debriefing questions to evaluate participants' perceptions of the training's relevance, usefulness, and effectiveness.
 - Open-ended feedback on specific aspects of the training, including the GPS model, trainer expertise, and applicability of skills learned.

This dual-survey approach provided a comprehensive evaluation of the training, highlighting its strengths, areas of improvement, and the measurable growth in participants' skills and confidence. The findings serve to refine future training sessions and validate the efficacy of the GPS Facilitator Training program.

Participants were surveyed about their confidence levels both before and after the training. The following areas were measured:

- **Facilitating groups alone:** Participants self-evaluated their ability to independently lead group sessions, reporting significant increases in confidence and competence after the training.
- **Co-facilitating groups with another leader:** Participants assessed their collaborative leadership skills, noting marked improvement in their ability to co-lead group sessions effectively.
- **Creating a trauma-sensitive setting and using trauma-informed skills in leading groups:** Participants evaluated their capacity to establish safe, supportive environments, demonstrating enhanced proficiency in applying trauma-informed practices post-training.
- **Including content related to the lived experience of group members:** Participants reflected on their ability to incorporate members' lived experiences into discussions, with notable growth in ensuring relevance and authenticity.
- **Discussing the community context of individuals in group:** Participants assessed their understanding of how social, cultural, and environmental factors influence group members, showing significant gains in integrating these contexts into discussions.
- **Cultural understanding and implementation in leading groups:** Participants evaluated their cultural competency, reporting substantial improvements in recognizing and addressing the diversity of group members effectively.
- **Leading relaxation/mindfulness exercises for groups:** Participants self-rated their ability to facilitate relaxation and mindfulness techniques.
- **Explaining group guidelines:** Participants assessed their competence in establishing and communicating group guidelines, noting enhanced clarity and effectiveness after the training.
- **Sharing personal lived experience appropriately as a facilitator:** Participants reflected on their skill in sharing personal experiences appropriately, reporting increased confidence in using this technique to build trust and connection.
- **Managing group dynamics:** Participants evaluated their ability to navigate group interactions and address conflicts, showing significant growth in maintaining a positive and productive atmosphere.
- **Managing difficult situations:** Participants assessed their readiness to handle challenging scenarios, with improved strategies for managing resistance, disruption, or emotional distress.
- **Appropriately attending to individuals in crisis:** Participants self-rated their ability to respond to crisis situations within a group setting, demonstrating increased confidence and preparedness after the training.

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The range of differences of the participants emphasizes the importance of culturally responsive facilitation, ensuring that GPS-trained facilitators can support a wide range of communities.

The demographic diversity of participants enriches the learning experience, ensuring a variety of perspectives that enhance the depth and relevance of peer support facilitation.

- **Age Range:** Participants ranged from 18 to over 60 years old.
- **Gender:** 85% identified as women, and 10% as men. The high percentage of female participants reflects the strong representation of women in caregiving and peer support roles.
- **Racial and Ethnic Background:**
 - 45% Hispanic/Latino(a)
 - 35% White
 - 10% Black/African American
 - 5% Mixed race

Educational Background

Participants came from a variety of educational backgrounds, highlighting the accessibility of GPS training to individuals with different levels of academic preparation while fostering a shared commitment to peer support.

- **30% held master's degrees,** demonstrating a strong foundation in professional expertise.
- **40% held bachelor's degrees,** indicating a high level of academic preparation among participants.
- **20% had associate degrees,** reflecting a range of educational backgrounds suited for peer support work.
- **5% had completed some college,** showing that formal education levels varied, making the training accessible to individuals with different learning experiences.

ABOUT GPS

GPS Group Peer Support is a strength-based, trauma-informed, and welcoming approach to group therapeutic care, offering consistent mental health support during times of stress, crisis, and change. This evidence- and trauma-informed model has been successfully implemented across a range of populations and settings, delivering impactful results. By incorporating mindfulness-based stress reduction, cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, peer-to-peer support, and other evidence-based modalities, GPS effectively mitigates the long-term effects of stress and trauma. The model allows for rapid replication in an easy-to-learn format for both peer specialists, people with lived experience, volunteers, and lay leaders, as well as professionals. GPS trainings are interactive, ensuring participants gain a comprehensive understanding to begin using this proven, impactful approach in their communities. GPS's innovative, scalable, and replicable approach aims to foster a supportive environment where individuals can find the resources and strength to move through difficult times with confidence and resilience.

A Note About Language Usage:

GPS is committed to using respectful and widely accepted terminology when referring to individuals and groups. Throughout this material, we have aimed to use terms that reflect how people describe themselves. We recognize that language evolves over time, and we remain committed to updating our manuals, curriculums, and reports as terminology shifts to better reflect the preferences of the communities we serve.

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