



# LEARNING IMPACT REPORT

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## GPS Facilitator Training Spring 2025

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“ This training was especially valuable because it deepened my understanding of how to facilitate group dynamics in a way that fosters connection, safety, and mutual support. **I learned practical tools** for holding space in group settings, managing challenging behaviors with compassion, and encouraging participation from individuals at various stages of readiness.

— Participant in the Spring 2025 GPS Facilitator Training ”

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Spring 2025 GPS Facilitator Training was a transformative experience for participants, equipping them with the skills, confidence, and tools to lead trauma-informed support groups. [GPS Group Peer Support](#) facilitator trainings are designed to create welcoming spaces and uplift varied perspectives. Over three 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 notable 114% average increase in confidence** across all facilitation skills, with **an astounding 137% increase** in their ability to create trauma-sensitive environments. An overwhelming **98% of participants would recommend the training to colleagues**, underscoring the program’s relevance and effectiveness.

Despite **59% already leading support groups, 73% 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 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 involved with CPS, parents of children with disabilities, and parents who are pregnant or postpartum. One participant shared that they “...work with parents of young children and think this model could be incredibly valuable with our population.” Another noted that they “...work with young women in early recovery. This training is very useful for the kinds of groups they will be participating in as they gain the necessary life skills they will need in order to be healthy members of society.”

With a range of backgrounds and experiences represented in the Spring cohort, the training fostered an environment where participants felt heard, valued, and empowered. **Ninety-two percent 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 Spring 2025 training reinforced the essential role of peer support in addressing emotional well-being, stress, and trauma. With 98% 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 training is incredibly valuable for anyone working in peer support, especially if you’re interested in leading or co-facilitating groups. **It gives you a solid foundation** in what it really means to hold space for others in a group setting not just by sharing your own lived experience, but by learning how to guide discussions, manage group dynamics, and promote mutual support among participants.

— Participant in the Spring 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 Spring 2025 GPS Facilitator Training prepared 82 participants over three 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, substance use/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 INDIVIDUALS

The Spring 2025 GPS Facilitator Training brought together a committed group of **82** individuals across various communities, united by a shared goal of expanding access to peer support.

**Seventeen participants** came to the training via the [Massachusetts Department of Public Health Bureau of Substance and Addiction Services \(BSAS\)](#), continuing a longstanding collaboration through which GPS has trained over a thousand BSAS-affiliated providers, peer-leaders, and recovery coaches. **Ten of the seventeen BSAS participants** completed the training in a timely manner, have received their certificates, and are now prepared to lead recovery-focused peer support groups throughout Massachusetts.

**Twenty-nine people** signed up through GPS's partnership with [Perinatal Support Washington \(PSWA\)](#)—a statewide nonprofit leading efforts in perinatal mental health. For over six years, PSWA has leveraged the GPS model to build a welcoming, effective support network across Washington. These individuals participated in the training to be able to lead perinatal peer support groups.

The remainder of participants signed up via GPS's **MASStrong** program – a statewide initiative committed to improving the mental health and well-being of healthcare workers in Massachusetts. Supported by the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Trust Fund, MASStrong equips professionals with tools to build resilience and foster workplace wellness, while also mitigating the rising mental health costs that directly impact organizations. Between BSAS and MASStrong, **38% of participants that attended work in the recovery** field in Massachusetts.

**Together, these three groups represent the reach and adaptability of GPS's Facilitator Training program**, which empowers individuals to lead peer support groups in a range of communities, reinforcing a collective investment in mental health and healing. The Spring 2025 Facilitator Training equipped facilitators to create safe, confidential spaces where anyone, from parents and healthcare workers, to those in recovery, can connect with both empathy and understanding.

This training drew **82 participants** from **40** different organizations. Apart from BSAS and PSWA, participating organizations focused on parent support, mental health, and recovery programs, including the Gandara Center, Edward Kennedy Community Health Care Center, Institute for Health and Recovery, Riverside Community Care, Boston Children's Hospital, Health Resources in Action, Springfield Family Doula Services, Latin American Health Alliance, Skirball Cultural Center, ServiceNet, First Steps Together, Healthy Families Oregon, and many more.

I now have a safety net to support me in leading groups as a trauma-informed Facilitator. My doubts and questioning of whether or not I was creating a safe group have all dissolved knowing I have learned the GPS model.

**I feel much more confident in leading groups.**

— Participant in the Spring 2025 GPS Facilitator Training

## EVALUATION RESULTS

### Participant Feedback and Training Impact

#### High Recommendation Rate

The Spring 2025 GPS Facilitator Training received universal endorsement from participants. Among those who completed the post-training survey, **98% 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.”
- **94%** rated the trainers’ expertise as “excellent/good,” highlighting their proficiency in delivering the material and fostering an engaging learning environment.
- **94%** 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

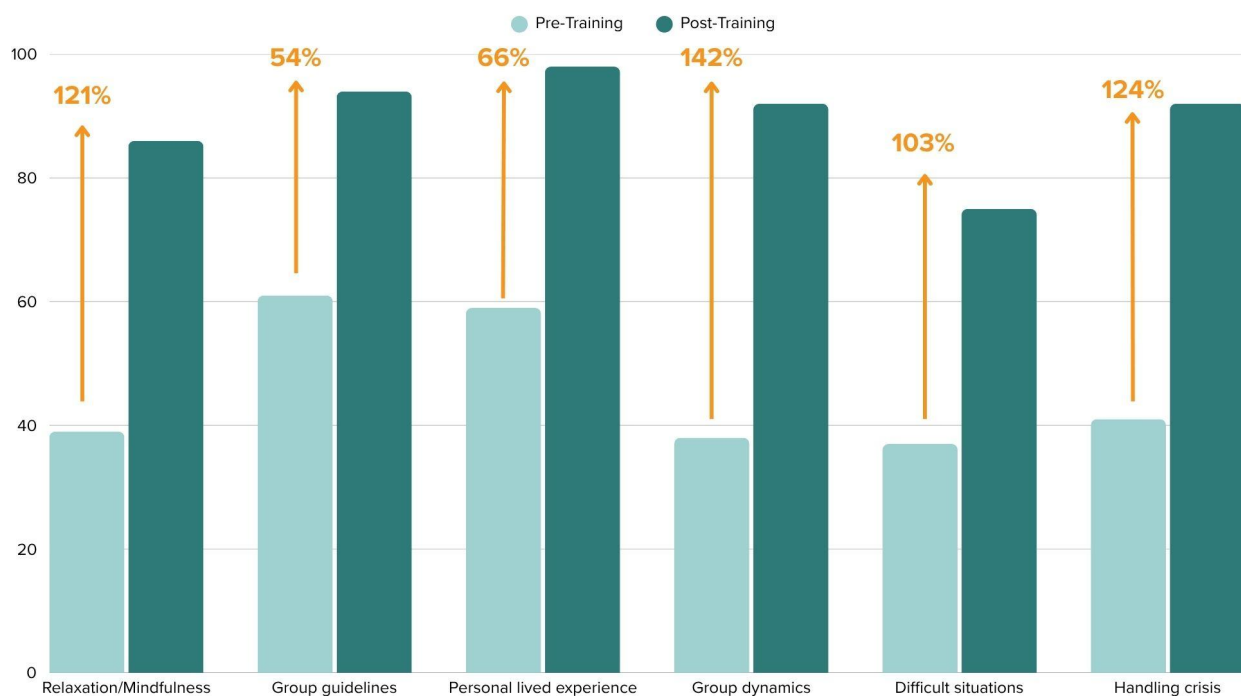
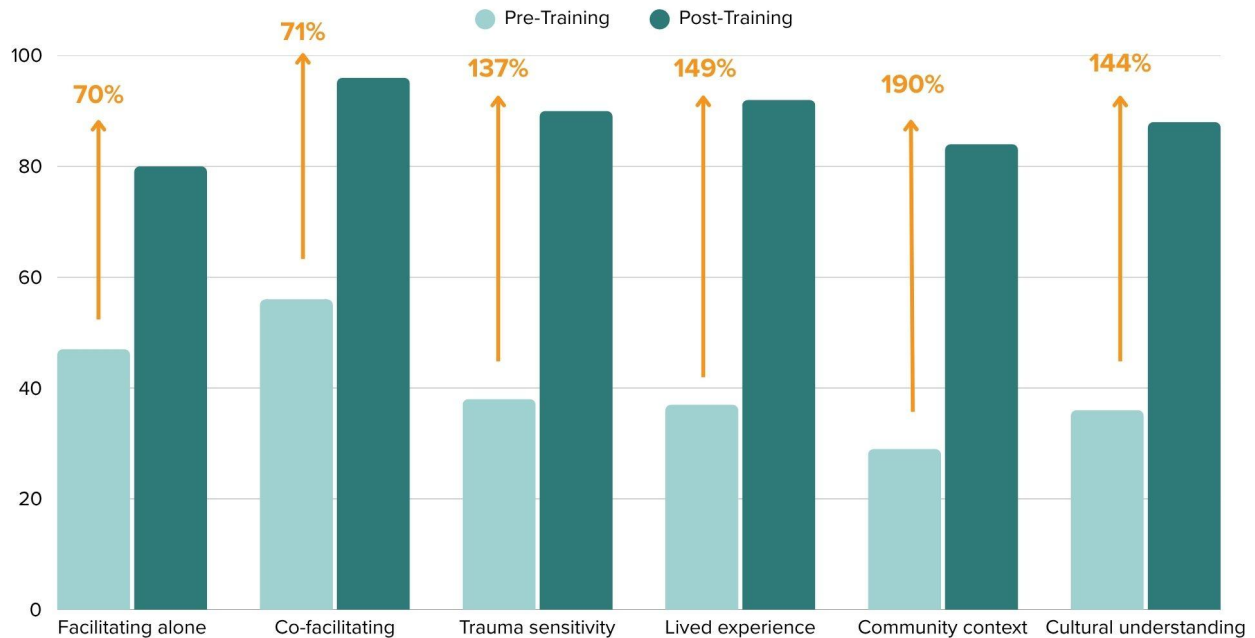
**The training significantly boosted participants' confidence across all measured competencies.** Pre- and post-training comparisons revealed:

- Confidence increased by at least **54%** across all skill areas, with a **notable average increase of 114%**.
- A significant **137% 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



“  
This training is one of the best trauma-informed trainings I have been to and it will improve my practice with individuals and groups immensely. I appreciated the intention that guides the process and actual practice of trauma-informed care in every step.

— Participant in the Spring 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 appreciation of having a training that dives deep in the importance of being trauma-informed and how to create a space that is welcoming and helpful to everyone seeking support.

“  
It feels like GPS has created a well researched program that truly helps people who are or have experienced trauma.”

“  
I learned how to manage difficult situations; managing group dynamics, how to create a trauma sensitive setting by using trauma-informed skills in leading a GPS group”

“  
I love the thought that has gone into developing a trauma-informed approach to group that can be used in a wide variety of settings.”

## Practical, Adaptable Training That Impacts Real Work

Participants noted that the GPS model, along with the training, will be valuable for how they will run groups in the future. They also noted that the training had an impact for how they will approach their current jobs.

“ The trauma informed approach will be really helpful for me in my work as a recovery coach and certified peer specialist. ”

“ I work with parents of young children and think this model could be incredibly valuable with our population. ”

“ I work with an organization that facilitates weekly peer support. I feel better equipped to support my staff and leaders and one day hope to lead my own GPS group. ”

“ The GPS model is highly trauma-informed and adaptable to many different contexts. ”

“ I attended thinking this would help me support my community, but now I can't wait to implement some of these practices to my weekly staff meetings and make them a safer space during these completely overwhelming times. ”

“ I now have a clear understanding of a structure that can be used in each group that will be beneficial to all involved. ”

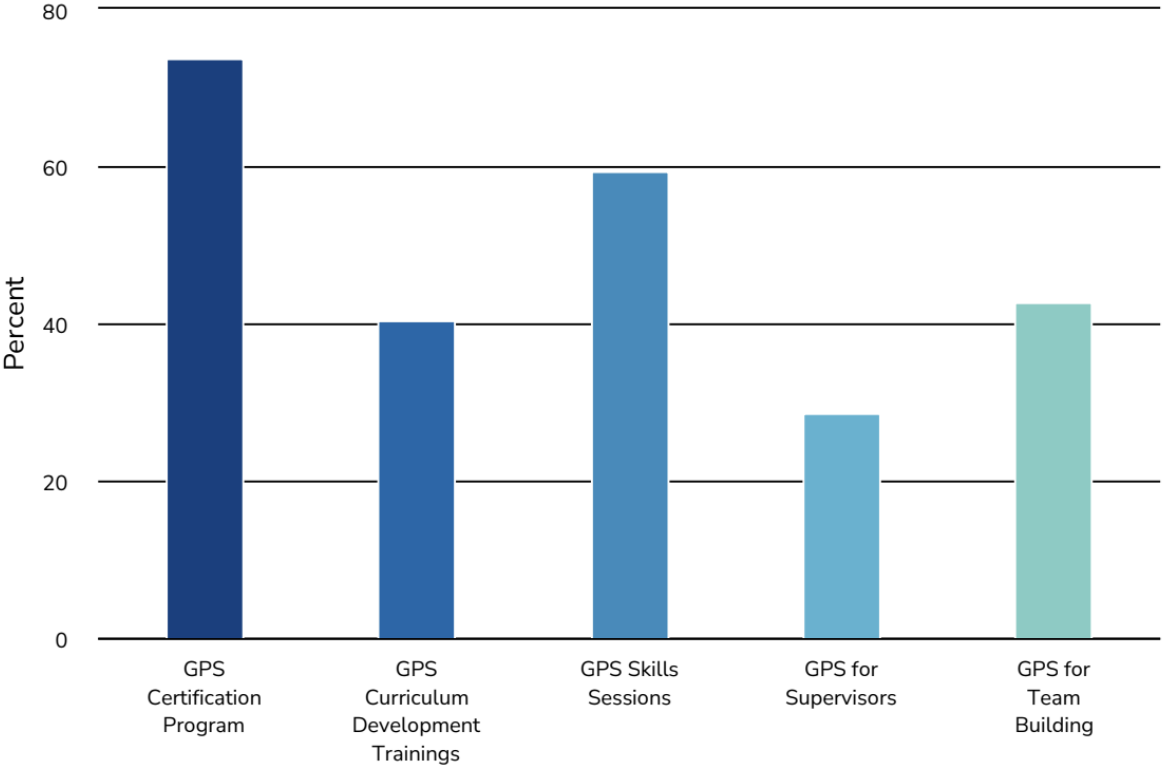
### **The insights shared by participants underscore the profound impact of the GPS Facilitator Training on their professional development and practice.**

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, **74% of respondents are interested in strengthening their skills** by taking the GPS Certification Program.



“ Before this training, I had a general idea of what group support looked like, but now **I feel more confident** in my ability to create a space where participants can share openly, feel heard, and support one another. I learned the importance of setting clear group agreements, establishing trust, and balancing the roles of being both a peer and a facilitator. It was especially eye-opening to see how much thought goes into things like group pacing, transitions, and redirecting when needed, all while staying grounded in peer support values.

— Participant in the Spring 2025 GPS Facilitator Training

## TRAINING PARTICIPANTS

### Participant Profile

The range of backgrounds, experiences, and expertise of the Spring 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 Spring 2025 GPS Facilitator Training attracted a group of 82 participants, each bringing unique experiences and backgrounds to the program. The participants included professionals from mental health services, substance use/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.**



As a Peer Specialist, group work is an essential part of creating opportunities for shared experiences, building community, and reducing isolation. **This training helped me recognize how to draw from my own lived experience** in a group setting to model vulnerability, hope, and recovery, while also being mindful of boundaries and self-care. It also enhanced my confidence in creating a structured, person-centered space where all voices can be heard and respected, and where individuals can empower each other in their recovery journeys.

**— Participant in the Spring 2025 GPS Facilitator Training**

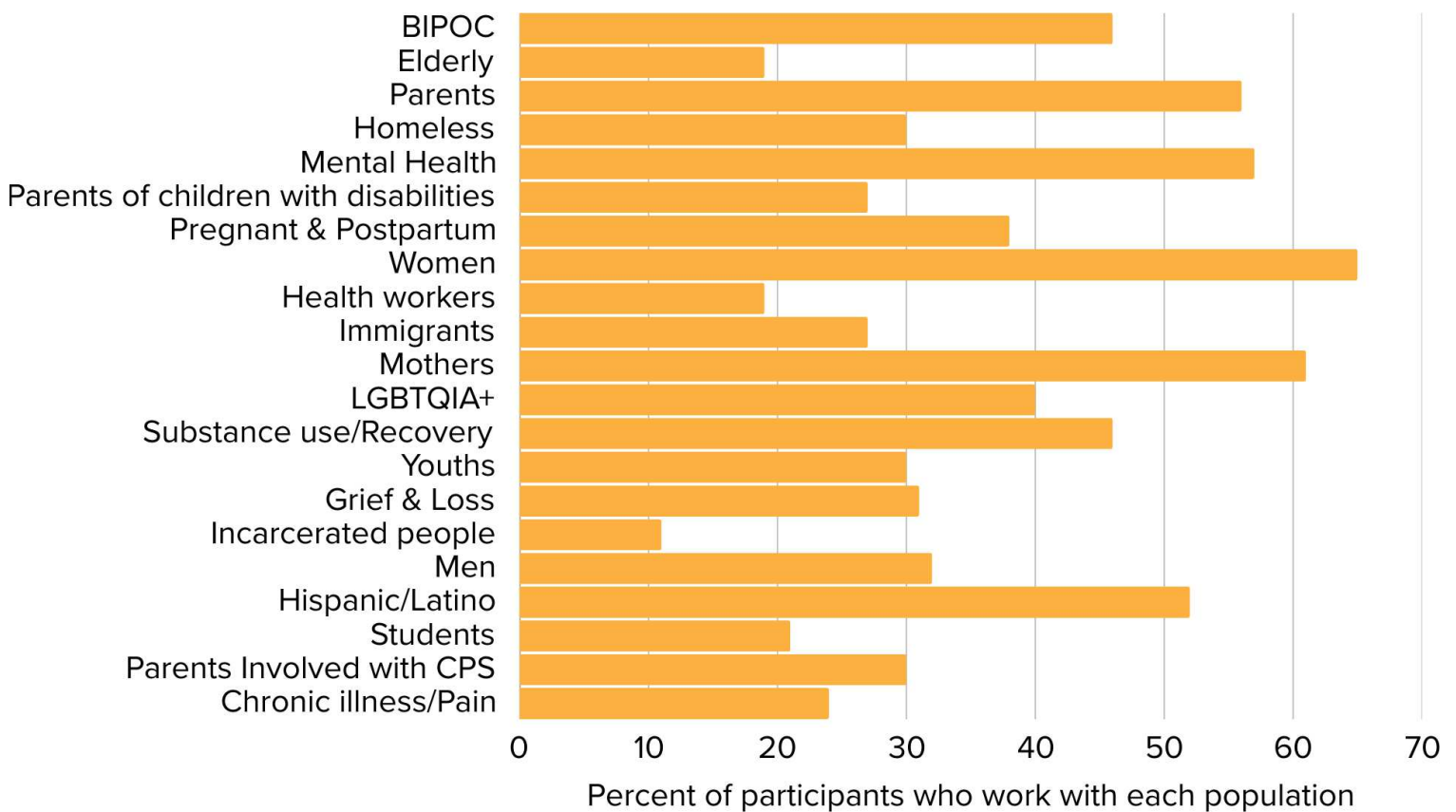


The Spring 2025 GPS Facilitator Training demonstrated the accessibility of peer support facilitation by bringing together participants from various educational and professional backgrounds. Some entered with minimal formal education and no prior facilitation experience, while others held advanced degrees 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.

### POPULATIONS SERVED



## 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: 92%** of participants agreed that the training successfully created a safe and supportive environment for individuals of all backgrounds.
- **Encouraging Varied Perspectives: 88%** of respondents affirmed that a range of viewpoints were actively sought and valued throughout the training sessions.
- **Ensuring Fair Treatment and Addressing Bias: 88%** of participants agreed that GPS fosters an environment where everyone is treated with respect and consideration.
- **Understanding Trauma and Identity: 87%** 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 Spring 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 Spring 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 three 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.
- **Recorded Modules:** While attendance at live sessions was encouraged, in order to meet the varied needs of participants, recorded versions of the modules were made available, allowing for flexibility and accessibility.

### 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 Spring 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 70 years old.
- **Gender:** 75% identified as women, 19% as men, and 5% as nonbinary. The high percentage of female participants reflects the strong representation of women in caregiving and peer support roles.
- **Racial and Ethnic Background:**
  - 57% White
  - 26% Hispanic/Latino(a)
  - 7% Black/African American
  - 5% Asian
  - 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.

- **33% held master's degrees**, demonstrating a strong foundation in professional expertise.
- **28% held bachelor's degrees**, indicating a high level of academic preparation among participants.
- **12% had associate degrees**, reflecting a range of educational backgrounds suited for peer support work.
- **15% 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.

## **Contact Us:**

**Website:** [GroupPeerSupport.org](https://www.grouppeersupport.org)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/grouppeersupport>

**Instagram:** [@grouppeersupport](https://www.instagram.com/grouppeersupport)

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