



MASStrong

GPS

GROUP PEER SUPPORT FOR
HEALTH CARE WORKERS



LEARNING IMPACT REPORT

GPS Facilitator Training September 2025

GroupPeerSupport.org

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GPS training is a deeply transformative experience. It not only provides practical tools to understand the impact of trauma and create safe, intentional group spaces, but it also supports personal growth. Each module is thoughtfully designed to strengthen listening skills, mindful presence, and trauma-informed facilitation. **It's a training that truly makes an impact** and expands your ability to support others with clarity and purpose.

— Participant in the September 2025 GPS Facilitator Training

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The September 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 64% average increase in confidence** across all facilitation skills, with **a significant 57% increase** in their ability to create trauma-sensitive environments. An overwhelming **100% of participants would recommend the training to colleagues**, underscoring the program's relevance and effectiveness.

Despite **68% already leading support groups, 61% 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, the majority of 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. **Eighty-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 September training reached deep into community-based support networks, with participants coming from a variety of fields, including recovery counseling, mental health, parent and family support, and healthcare. The range of participants was striking—counselors, educators, clinicians, recovery coaches, supervisors, care coordinators, program directors, case managers, social workers, executive directors, and more all came to the table. This breadth of roles and entry points speaks to the wide accessibility of GPS facilitator training and the way it resonates across disciplines, uniting people with a shared commitment to fostering healing and connection.

With varied backgrounds and experiences represented in the June cohort, the training fostered an environment where participants felt heard, valued, and empowered.

Eighty-nine 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 September 2025 training reinforced the essential role of peer support in addressing emotional well-being, stress, and trauma. With **100% 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.

“
I feel more equipped, more confident, and clearer in how I can support others in a compassionate and transformative way. This journey has been truly nourishing, and it inspires me to keep learning and evolving every day.

— Participant in the September 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 September 2025 GPS Facilitator Training prepared 46 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:** Participants 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.



This training was incredibly informative and empowering. The GPS model is extremely useful and powerful and can be used to help create more solidarity among groups of individuals and provide support to many who are suffering now and not having much needed outlets to process and release what they are dealing with.

— Participant in the September 2025 GPS Facilitator Training



INCREASING CAPACITY TO SERVE A RANGE OF INDIVIDUALS

The September 2025 GPS MASStrong Facilitator Training brought together individuals across various communities, united by a shared goal of expanding access to peer support.

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. In this particular training, 65% of participants that attended work in the recovery field, 34% work with the disability community, 34% work with Hispanic populations, and 18% work with healthcare workers.

The range of participants represents 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 September 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 66 participants from 30 different organizations. Participating organizations from Massachusetts focused on parent support, mental health, healthcare, and recovery programs, and included Anchored in Recovery, Center for Human Development, Choice Recovery Center, Crossroad Counseling, Duffy Health Center, Gandara Center, The Happier Life Project, Haven Advocacy, Latinx Community Center for Empowerment (LCCE), Massachusetts General Hospital, Moms Do Care Beverly, New England Behavioral Health Services Inc., Needham Public Health, North Suffolk Community Services, Riverbend, Southcoast Health, University of Massachusetts, and many more.

EVALUATION RESULTS

Participant Feedback and Training Impact

High Recommendation Rate

The September 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:

- **96%** 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.
- **98%** rated the GPS model itself as “excellent/good,” reflecting its applicability and relevance to their professional roles.
- **93%** praised the quality of online support provided during the training, emphasizing the program's adaptability to a virtual format.

Increased Confidence in Group Facilitation

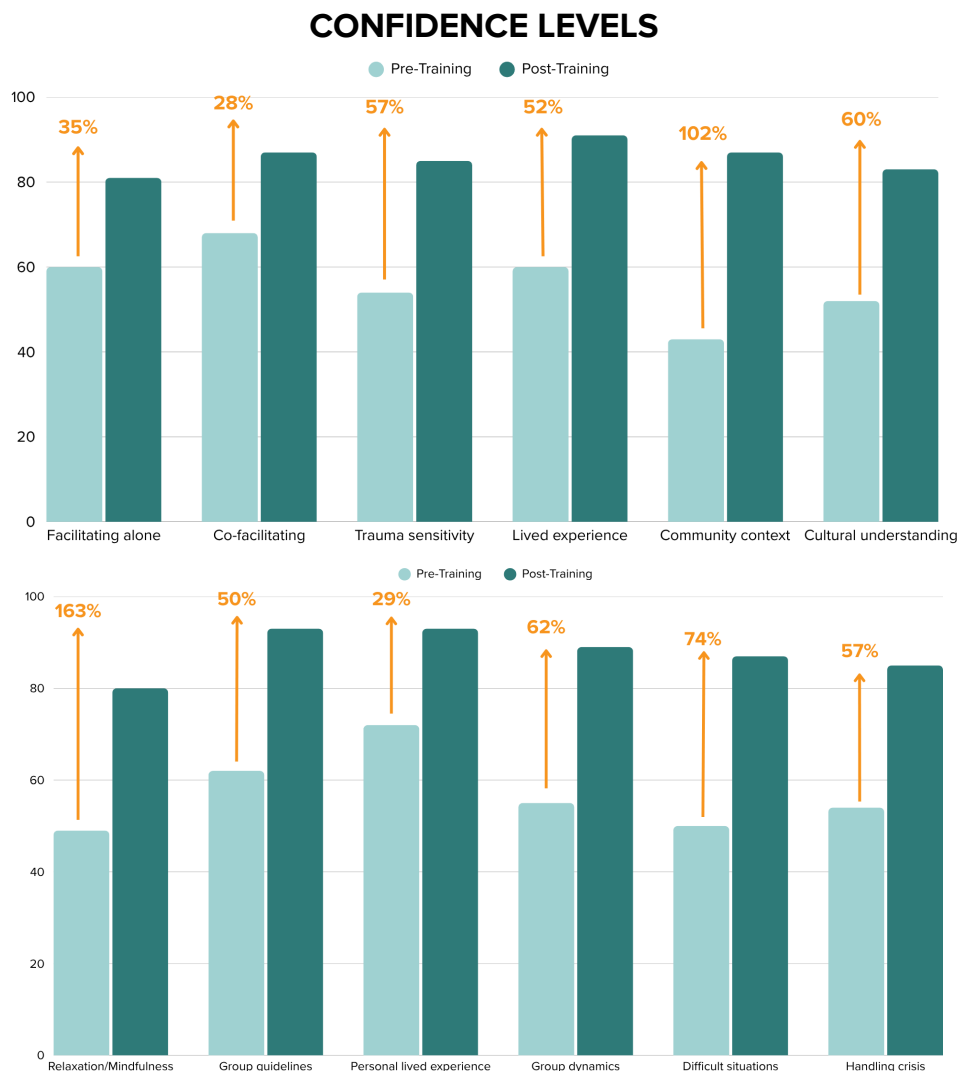
The training significantly boosted participants' confidence across all measured competencies.

Pre- and post-training comparisons revealed:

- Confidence increased by a minimum of **28%** across all skill areas, with a **notable average increase of 64%**.
- A significant **57% 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.



I used to move through my day without really noticing how I felt, but this training helped me slow down and observe myself with more kindness. I've learned to breathe, to pause before reacting, and to handle stressful situations with more balance and calm. It also helped me listen better to others and create a more positive energy around me.

— Participant in the September 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.

A Strong and Accessible Model

GPS Facilitator Training continues to be a cornerstone of the model's impact and sustainability. Participants describe it as both deeply practical and profoundly meaningful — a training that balances structure with heart, clarity with reflection. By combining clear explanation of the GPS model with opportunities for hands-on practice and thoughtful dialogue about language, trauma, and justice, the training helps facilitators embody the GPS approach in real and lasting ways. The result is a growing network of facilitators who lead with confidence, empathy, and a shared commitment to creating spaces of connection, resilience, and healing.

“This training is refreshing approach with a model that is both simple to follow and attentive to complex dynamics and the unjust and traumatizing social conditions of these times.”

“Each part of the model was well explained and clearly included and in sequence that is most meaningful. Breakout sessions allowed us to practice which is helpful.”

“The structure of the model is very helpful. I also like all of the conversations we had about language and how to be trauma-informed.”

Deepening Trauma-Informed Practice

For many attendees, the GPS Facilitator Training offered more than new tools—it reshaped their understanding of what it means to lead with compassion and awareness. Participants described the experience as eye-opening, giving them a stronger grasp of trauma-informed principles and how to weave them into every aspect of group facilitation.

“ This training deepened my understanding of trauma and highlighted the importance of creating safe, intentional group spaces. ”

“ The trauma-informed explanation and all of the reasoning behind the model was helpful. It was very good to have that context and understanding to make sure the integrity of each practice is maintained. ”

“ GPS helps equip those of us who want to support members of our community with useful and adaptable skills and frameworks to create trauma-informed peer support spaces that are so needed. ”

Real Life Impact

GPS Training has a powerful ripple effect, shaping not only how participants understand the GPS model but also how they show up in their day-to-day work. Trainees consistently report that the skills and insights gained are immediately applicable in their communities — enhancing their ability to create safe, trauma-informed, and transformative spaces. Whether supporting people experiencing homelessness, mentoring youth, or fostering connection in other care settings, participants leave the training equipped with practical tools and a renewed sense of purpose. The impact extends far beyond the training itself, strengthening the capacity for healing and connection in every space facilitators touch.

“ Each module offered practical insights directly applicable to my community and mentoring work, strengthening my ability to facilitate through a trauma-informed and transformative approach. ”

“ Being able to enact guidelines to help create a safe space for people to share and connect was very useful. This is important because people experiencing homelessness are in a constant state of survival. ”

“ The ability to learn and connect was significant. I work with young people and I have already started implementing groups in to each session ”

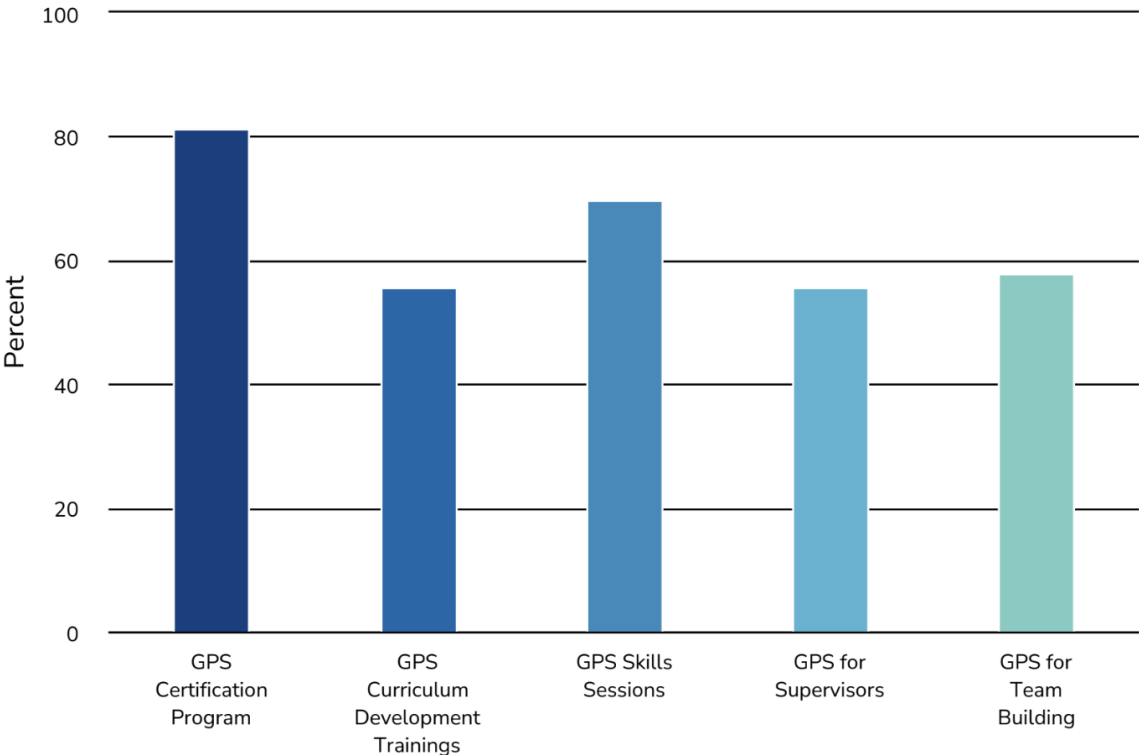
The insights shared by participants underscore the profound impact of the GPS Facilitator Training on their professional development and practice.

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, **81% of respondents are interested in strengthening their skills** by taking the GPS Certification Program.



TRAINING PARTICIPANTS

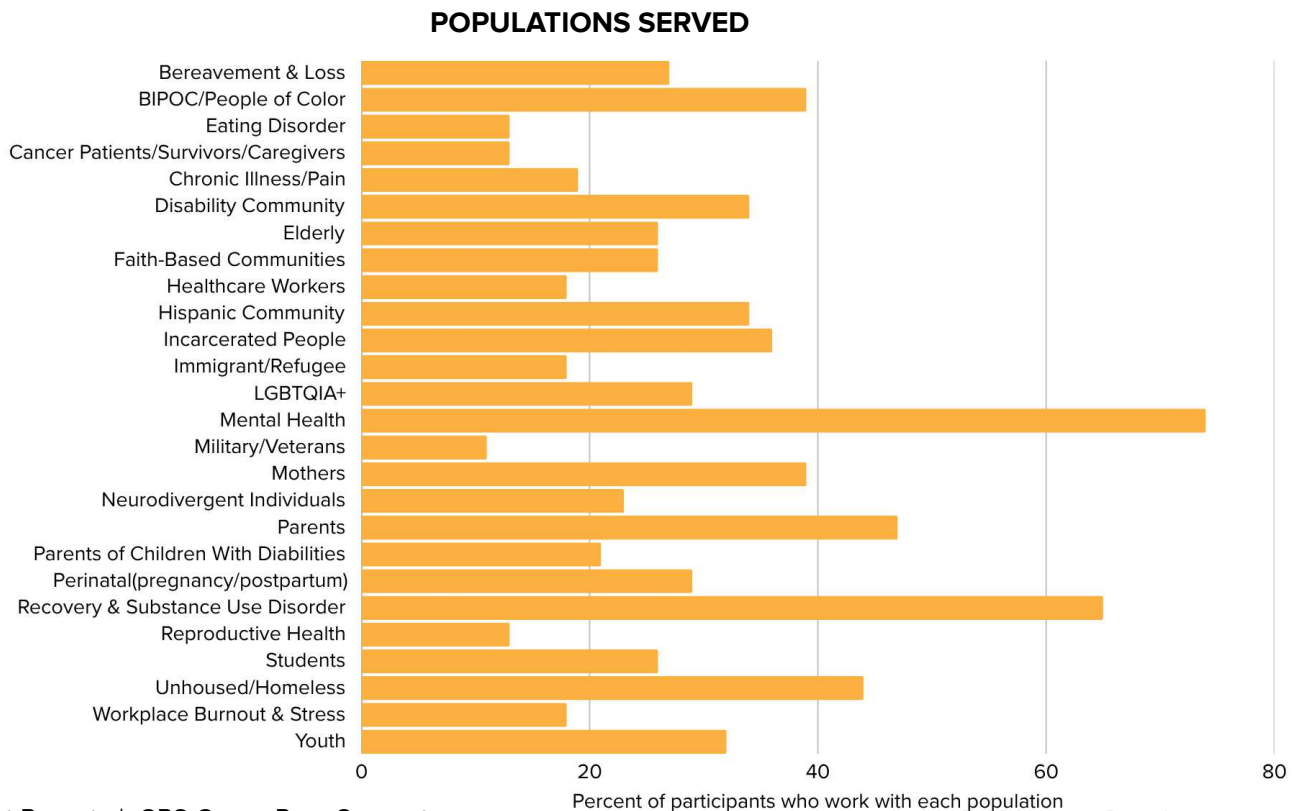
Participant Profile

The range of backgrounds, experiences, and expertise of the September 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.

Participants in the September 2025 facilitator training included individuals from mental health services, substance use/recovery programs, PTSD and trauma 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.**

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: 93%** of participants agreed that the training successfully created a safe and supportive environment for individuals of all backgrounds.
- **Encouraging Varied Perspectives: 93%** of respondents affirmed that a range of viewpoints were actively sought and valued throughout the training sessions.
- **Ensuring Fair Treatment and Addressing Bias: 86%** of participants agreed that GPS fosters an environment where everyone is treated with respect and consideration.
- **Understanding Trauma and Identity: 83%** 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 September 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. MASStrong participants will receive GPS toolkits to support them in facilitating groups for their communities. Additional opportunities for certification and extended learning are also available.

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.

ADDENDUM

TRAINING OVERVIEW

The September 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 September 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:** 72% identified as women, 22% as men, and 3% as nonbinary. The high percentage of female participants reflects the strong representation of women in caregiving and peer support roles.
- **Racial and Ethnic Background:**
 - 47% White
 - 20% Hispanic/Latina/o/x
 - 13% Black/African American
 - 2% Asian
 - 5% Mixed race
 - 2% Indigenous

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.

- **27% hold a master's degree and 5% hold a doctorate**, demonstrating a strong foundation in professional expertise.
- **30% hold a bachelor's degree**, indicating a high level of academic preparation among participants.
- **20% have completed some college**, reflecting a range of educational backgrounds suited for peer support work.
- **12% have a GED or high school degree**, 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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