Module 3: Criteria for the Placement of Clients in Groups

Based on material in Chapter 3 of TIP 41, Substance Abuse Treatment: Group Therapy

Module 3 Goal and Objectives

Goal:

Provide an overview of how to match clients with groups, depending on clients' readiness to change and their ethnic and cultural experiences.

Objectives:

- Match clients with substance abuse treatment groups.
- Assess clients' readiness to participate in group therapy.
- Determine clients' needs for specialized groups.

Matching Clients With Groups

- The client's characteristics, needs, preferences, and stage of recovery
- The program's resources
- The nature of the group or groups available
- The client's ethnic and cultural experiences

Assessing Client Readiness for Group

- Begin with a thorough assessment.
- Inquire about all drugs used, social networks, and experience with and roles in groups.
- Obtain additional information from observation, collateral resources, and other instruments.
- Pay attention to relationships at the current stage of recovery.
- Recognize when a client is not suited for a group approach or a particular group.

Clients Who May Be Inappropriate for Group Therapy

- Clients who refuse to participate
- Clients who cannot honor group agreements
- Clients who are unsuitable for group therapy
- Clients in the throes of a life crisis
- Clients who cannot control impulses
- Clients whose defenses would clash with the dynamics of the group
- Clients who experience severe internal discomfort in groups

Primary Placement Considerations

- Women
- Adolescents
- Level of interpersonal functioning
- Motivation to abstain
- Stage of recovery
- Expectation of success

Diversity in a Broad Sense

- Defined as differences that distinguish an individual from others and that affect how an individual identifies and how others identify him or her
- Includes age, gender, cultural background, sexual orientation, ability level, social class, education level, spiritual background, parental status, and justice system involvement

Culturally Responsive Group Leaders

- Group Leaders
 Aware that cultural roles may conflict with treatment requirements.
- Anticipate a particular group's characteristics without automatically assigning them to all individuals in that group.
- Should be open and ready to learn all they can about their clients' cultures.
- Are conscious of how their backgrounds affect their ability to work with a particular population.

Diversity and Placement

- Address the substance use problem in a manner that is congruent with the client's culture.
- Appreciate that particular cultures use substances at specified social occasions.
- Assess the behaviors and attitudes of current group members to determine whether a new client would match the group.
- Understand personal biases and prejudices about specific cultural groups.

Four Processes That Occur Within Multiethnic Groups

- Symbolism and nonverbal communication
- Cultural transference of traits from one person of a certain culture to another person of that culture
- Cultural countertransference, the leader's emotional reactions to a client
- Ethnic prejudice

Preparing the Group for New Members

- Inform members in advance that people from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds will be in the group.
- Discuss the differences at appropriate times in a sensitive way to provide an atmosphere of openness and tolerance.
- Set the tone for an open discussion of differences in beliefs and feelings.

Preparing the Group for New Members (cont.)

- Help clients adapt to and cope with prejudice in effective ways, while maintaining their selfesteem.
- Integrate new clients into the group slowly, letting them set their own pace.
- When new members start to make comments about others or to accept feedback, encourage more participation.

Other Considerations for Practice

- Expectations of leaders
- Experience in decisionmaking and conflict resolution
- Understanding of gender roles, families, and community
- Values