Groups Guide

Conducting Groups for Incarcerated Survivors of Sexual Abuse

JUST DETENTION
INTERNATIONAL

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 3

Introduction 4

Services for Incarcerated Survivors and PREA 7

Deciding to Run a Group 14

Pre-Planning 21

Getting Started 72

Group Strategies 88

Group Examples 119

Resources 123

Notes 124

Acknowledgements

The *Groups Guide* was made possible thanks to contributions from advocates nationwide, and in particular the incredible people at FORGE, the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, and Women's Center-High Desert, Inc.

We are also deeply grateful to the incarcerated survivors who shared their stories of healing with us. All of the recommendations in the guide were informed by the experiences of incarcerated people who participated in group sessions with JDI staff and other advocates. The participants' willingness to talk openly about the trauma they have endured, and about how they are coping, will help so many in their journey to healing.

This project is supported by Grant No. 2016-TA-AX-K033 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this manual are those of JDI and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

About Just Detention International

JDI is a health and human rights organization that seeks to end sexual abuse in all forms of detention. Founded in 1980, JDI is the only organization in the U.S. — and the world — dedicated exclusively to ending sexual abuse behind bars. We hold government officials accountable for prisoner rape; challenge the attitudes and misperceptions that allow sexual abuse to flourish; and make sure that survivors get the help they need.

1. Introduction

Groups are a powerful counseling tool for survivors of sexual abuse in any setting, including prisons and jails. When survivors are able to come together to share their experiences and offer one another support, it can have a profound impact on their healing. A well-managed group expands a survivor's support system, decreasing the sense of isolation that is so common in the aftermath of sexual assault. Groups can also shift the culture of silence around sexual violence — especially behind bars, where speaking out can be taboo.

Just Detention International developed this guide for rape crisis counselors who want to offer group counseling to incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse and sexual harassment. The guide is intended to help rape crisis counselors gain the skills and build their confidence in working with incarcerated survivors. With a few tweaks, many of the strategies that are effective in the community can be applied in detention. By applying a strategy that is adaptable, counselors can tailor the group experience to better meet incarcerated survivors' needs and help them develop a sense of agency. Flexibility is essential when working in corrections facilities, given the unanticipated challenges that arise. In addition to information on the group process, this guide covers how to get a program started, and legal and ethical considerations.

A Word about Language

The words and phrases in this guide are widely used in the corrections and advocacy fields. However, language can vary across jurisdictions, so be sure to check in with your local partners to make sure you have a common understanding of the meaning of words you are using.

In this guide, we use the word *survivor* to describe anyone who has experienced sexual abuse or sexual harassment. We use the term *corrections facility* to refer to any type of building where people are held in custody and *corrections officer* or *corrections official* to refer to a person who works in such a facility. *Corrections facility* can mean either a place that houses adults or a place that houses children; some corrections facilities house both adults and children.

We will occasionally use the terms *men's facility* or *women's facility,* though it should be noted that, across the country, many women are housed in men's facilities and vice versa. This is due to the fact that people who are transgender are often housed according to their assigned gender at birth, and not their gender identity. In addition, non-binary and intersex people are housed in both *men's facilities* and *women's facilities*.

The term *sexual abuse* is used to refer to any form of unwanted sexual contact, including exploitation, and *sexual harassment* to refer to any unwelcome lewd, sexual, or demeaning comments, requests for sexual activity, and any derogatory language about someone's body, sexual orientation, or their gender.

PREA is the Prison Rape Elimination Act, a federal civil law passed in 2003. The national *PREA standards* are regulations that corrections facilities in every state and territory of the United States must follow to prevent, detect, respond to, and monitor sexual abuse and sexual harassment.

We use the terms *rape crisis center* and *service provider* to refer to organizations that provide direct, specialized emotional support and advocacy services to survivors of sexual abuse; *rape crisis counselor* or *advocate* refers to a person who works at such an organization.

2. Services for Incarcerated Survivors and PREA

Sexual abuse in detention is an international human rights crisis. In the United States, federal research has found that roughly 200,000 people are sexually abused each year in prisons, jails, and youth detention facilities.[i] In about half of all cases, the people who commit the abuse are staff.[ii] In response to this crisis, and as a result of years of advocacy by human rights organizations and prisoner rape survivors, Congress passed PREA. Signed into law by President George W. Bush in September 2003, PREA called on the Department of Justice to develop standards that would be binding on corrections facilities.

The national PREA standards, which were released in May 2012, require that facilities provide basic crisis and ongoing care to incarcerated survivors of sexual abuse. Under the standards, facilities have to provide care to people who have endured abuse in their custody; if the abuse happened before the person entered their custody, the facility must offer an evaluation with a mental health provider. While it is not required that group modalities be offered, groups can help facilities meet, and even exceed, key provisions spelled out in the standards. Groups are a way to provide ongoing care (standard 115.83); they can be used to ensure reasonable and private communication with a provider (115.53); and they serve as a method for delivering crucial information to incarcerated people about their rights and how to get help (115.33).[iii]

The Benefits of Groups

Groups for incarcerated sexual abuse survivors can create a healing space within an environment that is usually antithetical to healing. They also decrease isolation and lead to a shift in culture inside facilities. Further, the presence of an outside organization in a facility can be beneficial; in addition to programs, organizations bring a new perspective, and in particular, an openness to discussing trauma. Rape crisis counselors can model how talking about sexual abuse and sexual harassment is possible and healthy, and can lead to safer facilities.

There are many different kinds of groups — including therapy, support, self-help, and educational — but they share common healing factors and have benefits for incarcerated survivors. Yalom (1995) identified eleven therapeutic, or curative, factors of groups — characteristics of group intervention that are cultivated by the group facilitator. These eleven factors can help any person who is in a group, but they are particularly important for sexual abuse survivors, and perhaps even more so for survivors who are incarcerated.

Hope	Survivors must be able to feel a sense of hope that healing is possible, that the current crisis they are experiencing will not last forever. When a survivor shares connections with other group members who are also working to heal — and who may have made strides in doing so — and receives positive feedback and encouragement from a group facilitator, it can provide hope.

Universality	Feeling alone is a common emotion among sexual abuse survivors; for incarcerated survivors, the sense of isolation is often more pronounced. When survivors learn that other people have similar trauma reactions, the feelings of isolation decrease.
Imparting of information	Survivors of sexual abuse are affected by rape myths. Particularly harmful are the messages that blame survivors — and especially survivors in prison — for their abuse. Another common belief is that survivors should just "get over it." Group facilitators can share information about typical reactions to sexual abuse and sexual harassment, the healing process, and available resources.
Altruism	When group participants offer support or insight that helps another member of the group, it can help them recognize their positive qualities. Helping others can be a form of healing for incarcerated survivors, who often struggle with feeling unworthy.
Corrective recapitulation of the primary family group	Many incarcerated survivors did not receive unconditional positive regard or learn communication and relationship skills at home. The group setting can help incarcerated survivors experience unconditional positive regard within a

	pseudo-family dynamic and help them learn how to interact with a group on a range of subjects, including ones that can be difficult to discuss.
Development of socializing techniques	The group setting gives incarcerated survivors a safe place to share their feelings and express their concerns — to be vulnerable — while also providing opportunities to be supportive and to listen. Learning such social skills has benefits beyond the group; survivors can take these skills back to their housing units and model them for others.
Imitative behavior	During group sessions, the group facilitator, and often group members, can model behavior — including giving supportive statements about the healing process, correcting harmful self-talk, and active listening. Survivors benefit both from being on the receiving end of such supportive behavior and incorporating it into their own behavioral repertoire.
Interpersonal learning	Incarcerated survivors learn from their interactions within the group. Many survivors of sexual abuse get through each day by compartmentalizing and setting aside the more difficult reactions to the abuse. While such compartmentalizing can be an essential survival skill, addressing such feelings in a contained

	environment offers an opportunity to heal. Survivors can achieve a better understanding of themselves and their feelings through their interactions with others.
Catharsis	In corrections facilities, open expressions of feeling are often not safe or welcome. Staying in control and escaping notice are daily necessities for most prisoners, perhaps especially survivors, who can feel on the edge of crisis most of the time. The group facilitator can create a safe and structured space — which is rare behind bars — for survivors to express strong feelings and share their distress.
Existential factors	Most people grapple with the meaning of life and their place in the world; survivors of sexual abuse often struggle to make sense of their experience and to regain a feeling of safety. When a person can join with others who have shared similar experiences, a common outcome is acceptance that life is sometimes random and does not always make sense. Simply being in a group with others who are also realizing and accepting that fact is healing. Incarcerated survivors have so much to accept, and that they are often encouraged (forced) to take accountability for this experience can be a real relief.

Cohesiveness	Members of a group feel a sense of belonging, acceptance, and validation; they value the group, and feel valued by it. Group cohesion must be in place for the group to function and for all the other healing factors to take hold. Cohesiveness allows group members to feel safe enough to share and engage in self-exploration — actions that provide relief from the tension that most incarcerated survivors carry with them.

"For the time I was in group, I forgot that I was in prison."

— Participant in JDI Blooming Within These Walls group

Before starting a new group program, most facilities will request to see a group curriculum or an outline and a description of the expected benefits of the group. Some things to include in the description are:

- When trauma survivors receive rape crisis services, they build coping skills, have an outlet for processing difficult feelings, and are better able to participate in other programs and mental health services.
- Groups for sexual abuse survivors promote conflict resolution, good communication, and pro-social behavior.

- Participation in such a group supports positive re-entry by helping people to create connections with community organizations and practice seeking help while they are still inside.

Rape crisis centers that also run group programs in their local communities can include data about their broader groups program — including the demand for groups, an analysis of evaluations, and any other measures of progress of the effectiveness of the groups program.

3. Deciding to Run a Group

Why run a survivors' group in a detention facility?

There are many challenges to providing services inside corrections facilities. Before embarking on this work, a service provider agency, or individual, should reflect on why they are doing it. The answer should be simple — survivors of trauma are overrepresented in corrections facilities and once inside, many face yet more abuse. All survivors deserve to receive competent, nonjudgmental, supportive services from trained rape crisis counselors. Yet for some agencies, the answer is not always that simple. Not all rape crisis programs have board or leadership support to provide services inside corrections facilities. Many worry that their staff will not be safe or that they will inadvertently help someone who may have committed a terrible crime. Before deciding to start a group, or any services inside a corrections facility, agencies and individual advocates must look at their own bias against incarcerated survivors — and people who have been arrested more generally — and be aware of how any biases affect decisions around services. Consider the following points:

- Survivors and prisoners are not mutually exclusive groups. There are many survivors of sexual abuse and sexual harassment inside prisons, jails, youth facilities, community confinement facilities, and immigration

facilities all over the country and just like survivors in the community, they need services.

- Women's prisons are likely the largest concentration of survivors of sexual abuse anywhere.
- When survivors do not get help and perpetrators of sexual abuse inside corrections facilities are not held accountable, the rape crisis movement's long-term goal of ending sexual violence is compromised.
- Most groups offered inside women's facilities are for survivors of domestic violence, and most that run inside men's facilities are for "anger management" or other batterers' intervention programs; survivors of sexual abuse are left out of both.

Agencies and individual advocates should think about and talk through the reasons they want to do a group and the reasons they might not, and examine if the things stopping them are based on myths and biases about who is incarcerated and about incarcerated survivors.

What Type of Facility is Right for a Survivors' Group?

There are thousands of detention facilities across the nation. In the United States, facilities are operated by the federal government, states, counties, cities, territories, tribal governments, and private corporations. They hold people for a few hours to a lifetime, for things ranging from lacking documentation to violent crimes. While there is lots of variation, a rough guide to types of detention facilities follows.

Prisons: Generally run by the federal, state, or territorial government, prisons hold people who have been convicted of crimes and sentenced to more than a year.

Jails: Generally run by county or tribal governments, jails hold people who are awaiting trial and are not given or cannot afford bail, people who have been convicted and sentenced to under a year (or two, in some instances), or are in the middle of a court proceeding. There are some jails that are run by the federal, state, or territorial government.

Lockups: Generally run by local law enforcement agencies, lockups hold people immediately upon arrest and usually for under 72 hours.

Youth facilities: Operated by states, counties, territories, and tribal governments, youth facilities hold young people for anywhere from a few hours to several years.

Immigration detention facilities: Operated by the federal government — which often contracts with private facilities or local facilities, like jails — immigration detention facilities hold people for anywhere from a few hours to years for documentation/visa issues, awaiting deportation proceedings, and in some cases, criminal convictions.

Group interventions can be successful in any kind of detention facility. Indeed, groups can be particularly effective for incarcerated survivors, who often are extremely isolated. The characteristics of the facility — including size, length of stay, age of the population, and languages spoken — will play a role in determining the type of group you will choose to offer. For example, there is generally no problem in offering a 12-week, closed group in a prison, because

prisoners often serve lengthy, and typically fixed, sentences. On the other hand, people in a pre-sentence unit of jail do not know how long they will be there, and thus will be better served by an open support group design.

How to Get a Group Started: Details, Details, Details

Once an agency has determined that they will provide group services inside a local corrections facility, they should complete an assessment of their resources and capacity, taking into account the three primary stakeholders: the rape crisis agency and staff, the people who live inside the facility, and the facility staff.

Incarcerated Survivor Group: Service Provider Assessment

1) Does the rape crisis center currently have the capacity?

    i. Ideally two facilitators who can dedicate approximately four to eight hours each week

    ii. A supervisor who is experienced in running groups and who can provide guidance and support for group facilitators

    iii. Support of the agency leadership and Board of Directors

    iv. Financial support for time, transportation, and supplies for the group

    v. Are individual services, including in-person or telephone counseling and medical or legal advocacy, a possibility as well?

2) Is there an established relationship between the rape crisis center and officials at the facility?

    i. Is the RCC providing other services (hotline, forensic exam accompaniment, individual services)? If there is no relationship and there are no current services, consider how to begin a relationship and if groups are the right place to start — they might be. Corrections facilities are used to community volunteers offering groups of many kinds, so do not assume that if you are not already providing individual or other services that the facility will not be open to groups.

    ii. Is there a written MOU? If so, can it be amended to include group services if they were not included in the original MOU? If not, what would be needed to develop a written agreement?

    iii. How successful has other work with the facility been? What challenges have come up? Does the RCC have enough experience with the facility to anticipate further challenges that might arise?

    iv. What would be the best type of group to offer first, given the dynamics of the facility? Would a short-term or educational group be the best place to start?

3) Does the rape crisis center have the expertise to run a group inside a corrections facility?

    i. Does the center offer groups in the community?

1. If yes, for how long? What have been the challenges; what has worked? If not, consider that inside a corrections facility might not be the place to start.

ii. Are there staff or volunteers available who have the ability and expertise to run a group inside a detention facility?

1. Are there experienced group facilitators? Are there staff or volunteers who have done work in the corrections facility?
2. Does the rape crisis center offer group supervision or does it have a supervisor who can provide such support?
3. Can the group facilitators commit to being present for an entire series of a group — in other words, will the group have consistent facilitators?
4. Do the facilitators have the flexibility and willingness to deal with disruptions in schedule, emerging needs of group participants, and unexpected terminations?
5. Are the facilitators comfortable going into a corrections facility and working with prisoners? Have they received support in examining their own motivations and biases, and has the agency discussed what support the facilitators need to do their job?

4) Has the rape crisis center assessed the corrections facility's readiness for a survivors' group?

i. Have the RCC staff met with facility leadership? Have meetings included mental health and program staff? Does the facility have a community liaison who has been included in discussions? What is the process for getting a group approved?

ii. Do the facility staff understand the purpose of the group? Do they support it? Do they understand and support the need for confidentiality in the group?

iii. Have the RCC staff met with people who live in the facility? Is there an "Inmate Advisory Council," peer mentor group, or similar inmate leadership group that can provide insight and guidance on language needs, how to frame and advertise the group, how to recruit, and what services would be most helpful?

iv. Has the RCC talked with both facility staff and people who live inside about what kinds of groups work well, how facility culture and dynamics might affect the group, and when (what day and time) groups work the best?

4. Pre-Planning

This guide includes information on several stages of planning. The planning phases of any program inside a corrections facility may be lengthy and can be derailed by complications and misunderstandings. Within the planning sections of the guide, there are instructions based on experience JDI and rape crisis centers around the country have gained by running group programs inside.

Before contacting the facility where the group will be run, the rape crisis program staff should develop a plan that includes the type of group, the suggested number of sessions and the length of the sessions, the target population, and the benefits and risks of group as a modality. Rape crisis centers must also be ready to talk about their qualifications and training, legal and ethical requirements, and their plan for supervision of group facilitators.

Be patient and persistent — the planning stages of any program inside a corrections facility can take much longer than what might be anticipated.

Types of Groups that Work Inside Corrections Facilities

The benefits of group as a modality for incarcerated survivors can be realized in several different group structures and types, as long as some key factors are present.

- The group must be a safe place for survivors
- The facilitators and survivors must build trust and have a deep respect for confidentiality
- The group must run safely within the rules of the facility and at the same time, be a place apart from the daily stressors of life inside the facility
- The group participants must have a sense of agency within the group

What Type of Group is the Right Fit?

In deciding what kind of group to offer, consider what types of groups work in the community — not because there are no differences, but because it is important to consider the group facilitators' experience and to build on their strengths. Also, consider the agency's resources as identified in the assessment.

Be flexible and realistic in this planning phase. For example, determine if there are enough trained and dependable group facilitators to offer a 12-week group. If a 12-week group would tax the agency resources, consider offering a six- or eight-week group while also working to identify additional resources.

Take the characteristics of the corrections facility into account as well. Some facility factors to consider are:

- The population size: In a very large facility, the demand for a group might be very high once the word spreads. Figure out how you would manage a waiting list and how many group series you can commit to

offering. If you already offer services, consider the current demand for them. In a small facility, the challenge might be that everyone in the facility wants to participate. Consider the dynamics of the facility and how they might inform your plan.

- The length of stay of people incarcerated there: If people are there for years, longer interventions make sense. If lengths of stay are very short, consider a shorter or open model. Learn how stable the population is as well. If the length of stay is unpredictable, an open group might make sense.

- Other programming or special mission of the facility: Some corrections facilities or units are specifically for people with mental illness, people who are in an educational program, people who have longer sentences and high-security levels, or people who are enrolled in addiction programs. Take the needs of the people and the mission of the facility into account when planning. For example, suppose you are doing a group in a unit for people with significant mental illness. In such a case, it makes sense to have a high level of structure within the group sessions and to anticipate that there may be fluctuating participation.

- The facility or unit's security level: Security level will affect the level of privacy you can have during groups, where and how group participants will sit, and what you can bring in and leave behind in terms of materials and resources. Some high security units, like disciplinary units or protective custody units, might have a rapid rate of turnover. On the other hand, some like long-term secure housing (also called "close custody") hold people for long periods of time and often have few

programming options. Learn about the particular unit and take the security dynamics into account.

- What the people who live there want: consider the assessment that was completed with people in the facility. Did the inmate advisory council have any feedback about what kinds of groups tend to work best? Ask people who live there what kinds of programming is needed, what makes a successful program, and what challenges they anticipate.

The need to be both flexible and persistent cannot be overstated. It is possible that a center would start a closed group and then find that group members are transferred to other units, are assigned to competing work or programming assignments, or that a long lockdown in the facility disrupts the plan. Be ready to change strategy and offer open-ended or short-term groups if needed.

For example, Just Detention International provides individual counseling and offers therapeutic art workshops inside a California state prison. At one point, the waitlist for receiving individual services or joining an art workshop group was over a year long. In response, JDI started a four-week support group for people on a waitlist for other sexual abuse survivor services. The group was led by counselors who also provided other services, was open to anyone on the wait list, and focused on building coping skills.

Types of Groups

Psycho-educational:

Psycho-educational groups are structured groups intended to educate and inform. Groups sometimes have an overall topic and arc, or sometimes have a topic of the day.

Group formats that have a consistent structure and where the goal is to impart information on different topics are particularly common and effective in youth facilities. A rape crisis program might be able to fold groups about coping skills, healthy boundaries, self-care, and understanding the effects of trauma into daily life skills groups.

This structure can create a feeling of safety for participants. Expectations can be made clear, and because open discussion between group members is not the primary interaction, the group process can seem more predictable. The structure and ability to plan might also make corrections facilities more comfortable with this approach than with more open formats. Because many rape crisis centers already use a psycho-educational approach with youth in educational and community settings, they already might have a model or curriculum that could be adapted.

Psycho-educational groups work well in facilities with little privacy, due to security levels or physical layout. This model can also be useful in facilities where the membership will have turnover — especially like in a jail. Facilitators can ensure that each session stands alone to accommodate new members as needed.

If the facility has never run survivors groups before, a psycho-educational approach might be a non-threatening way to get started. They are a great option for facilities with a high degree of tension or where showing vulnerability is especially dangerous. A psycho-educational group allows survivors to get peer support and learn about common reactions to trauma, coping skills, and their rights without putting them in the possibly dangerous position of expressing feelings. For example, many group facilitators JDI spoke to in researching this guide suggested that psycho-educational groups are ideal and safest for men and boys in detention because there is less pressure to show emotional vulnerability.

A final benefit to psycho-educational groups is that the rape crisis counselors can work with the facility to incorporate the information that is required for comprehensive inmate/resident/detainee education under PREA standard 115.33/132/233/333. Officials and group facilitators would have to work together so that the information is in line with the facility's needs and is presented to the participants in a trauma-informed manner — in other words, presented as information and options to survivors, not as instructions and advice.

Psycho-educational groups provide many of the same benefits as any group and can be extremely healing and informative. However, consider that they do not offer all of the benefits of the more open format groups. For example, the facilitator will have to guard against becoming overly instructive. People in detention are used to being taught, instructed, directed, and commanded – if the group recreates this dynamic, it will not provide people with an experience that is qualitatively different from other programs. Facilitators in psycho-educational groups must also be careful about seeming paternalistic

or condescending. Finally, the psycho-educational group is not as flexible as other formats and might not offer room for the kinds of processing, control, and empowerment that many incarcerated survivors are missing.

Open-Ended Support Group:

An open-ended support group runs continuously, and membership is fluid or rotating. It is also referred to as a continuous group because it runs weekly without a set beginning and end date.

Participants might be asked to commit to a specific number of sessions, but the group needs to be able to lose and gain members and still continue to function.

The open-ended support group format is highly flexible and adaptable. The format is suited to corrections environments because it allows for participants who cannot commit to eight to twelve weeks of participation. The support group structure also allows facilitators to be highly responsive to group needs. For example, suppose there is a major event that is traumatizing in the facility or for one of the participants (a suicide in the facility, the death of a family member). In such a case, the group facilitator can pivot from the original plan and make space to process feelings around the event.

The format is familiar in many corrections facilities. Groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, faith-based groups, groups on parenting from behind bars, or wellness programs often run on an open-ended support group structure. Flexibility, however, does not mean there is no structure, and it will be important for group facilitators to convey that to both facility staff and group participants.

"I used to run a group in a county jail for women survivors of sexual assault. We met every week, except for holidays or occasional short, scheduled breaks. The maximum number of group members was eight, and when we lost someone because they had received the benefit they could from the group, no longer felt it was right for them, or they left the jail, we invited a new member to join. I kept a waitlist and would invite someone to join when we had what we called an empty chair. We kept a running list of topics that the group wanted to discuss. I chose the topic each week and would bring in handouts or resources related to the topic. We also had fifteen minutes set aside for open discussion because some new trigger or issue was bound to come up every week, and if we didn't make time to talk about it, it would come up anyway. It worked really well in the jail setting. There was a structure, but it was open, so the people in the group had some say about the topics. They could also choose to leave if they were done, and it didn't let anyone down. It worked well in the jail as well because you never knew when someone would leave unexpectedly and for the people who stayed a long time, it offered some stability."

— Linda, group facilitator

Open-ended groups are a promising model for helping incarcerated survivors. That said, they are not recommended for facilities or groups that are currently unstable or volatile. They would probably also not be best in a facility where there is minimal turnover, where facilitators might need to offer services to a large group of people. The facilitator should also work with facility mental health staff to understand the needs of potential group members because

open groups might not work for people who find change distressing and need a high degree of stability. Facilitators will also have to be thoughtful about confidentiality in an open group, making sure that guidelines are clear and care is taken to build group cohesion and trust when new members join. An open group format could also work well within special programming units, benefiting from their inherent structure. For example, some facilities have units that are drug and alcohol programs, mental health treatment programs, educational programs, or 'character' or 'honor' dorms. Such units generally have guidelines about interactions and group behavior, and an open support group could provide an important healing tool for sexual abuse survivors in those settings.

Closed Counseling Group:

A closed counseling or therapy group is more structured than an open-ended support group. Generally, the counselor or therapist leading it will have a particular clinical orientation and plan interventions for each group. These groups are closed and time-limited, meaning the membership is stable and the group lasts for a set number of sessions. There is a screening process that not only assesses each individual's appropriateness for the group but also looks at the overall group composition. Facilitators will likely need to work with mental health staff to form such a group in a detention setting.

The group facilitators do not have to be licensed therapists. Skilled rape crisis counselors and group facilitators can lead closed counseling groups and do in centers across the country. Perhaps more than with other types of groups, the curative factor for closed counseling groups is the relationship and interactions between group members. The model's structure and stability

means that the group develops a unique dynamic and character once it becomes cohesive. The closed counseling group also lends itself to goal-setting and to creating an arc. The group facilitator can work with the group in the early sessions to determine their goals and then create a plan for the group that works through topics related to the goals in a thoughtful order. In short, the group arc can have a beginning, middle, and end.

Closed counseling groups can provide profound healing experiences within the arc described above. In the early stages, the group members must build trust and begin to see themselves as part of a group, not as an individual in a room with others. For many survivors, and particularly incarcerated survivors, experiencing a real sense of trust and belonging is transformative. In the working stages of the group, members must work through challenges, support each other, and learn to balance taking what they need with giving what they can. Through these processes, survivors can build communication and coping skills that are invaluable in their healing. Ending the group provides another opportunity for healing. Many survivors, and even more so incarcerated survivors, have had everything taken from them, been isolated, or sent away from people and places they love. For some, the group closing might be the first time they have experienced an ending with space for them to process feelings of loss, plan for how to cope with the loss and maintain the achievements, and hear from others what they appreciate and will miss about being with them in group.

Example from the field:

A group within a youth facility for survivors of childhood sexual abuse. The group facilitators work with mental health staff in the facility to screen and invite participants. Participation in the group is written into residents' treatment plans. Each group session includes: an introductory exercise or round; work on a specific topic; assigning of homework; and a closing exercise or round. The group facilitators develop a series of exercises and discussions on various topics and choose them based on the group members' needs and goals.

Within each of these models, facilitators can incorporate exercises, guided discussions, writing, movement, or art. For example, an open-ended support group might use art as a tool for expression. A psycho-educational group might open with a mindfulness exercise. A closed counseling group might end each session with five minutes of journaling. The real key to running groups inside corrections facilities is balancing the need for structure and stability with a flexibility and openness that will empower survivors.

Tips from the Field, JDI Art Group Facilitator:

Before starting your group, you will have to:

- Find out what you can bring inside the facility. Be prepared not to have your phone, money, purse, electronic calendar, and electronic contacts

lists. Bring hard copies of important contact information or emails, a paper calendar, business cards, a pen, and a notebook. Lock up your valuables in your car or leave what you can at the office.

- Make sure any handouts or materials are approved before you show up for group. You might need to have an email or a signed approval from your facility contact. Bring everything you need with you and bring extras. Be ready to have facility staff go through all of the items you want to bring in at the front gate.
- Ask about the use of staples, paperclips, and other materials. Staples and paperclips are usually not allowed. In some cases, prisoners can only use pencils and will likely be required to return them to you after the session. In most cases, you will not be able to bring in glue, glitter, or scissors, but rules vary, so ask your contact about what to expect.
- If you need to bring in a computer or a camera, request approval as early as possible. Some places will allow computers or cameras for special circumstances, but they always have to be approved and usually checked in and out. If you plan to document anything in your group with photos, check with the facility. They will probably have to review each photo, and you can rarely take a photo of someone's face.
- For your comfort, bring snacks and water (but don't eat outside snacks in front of group participants, and remember you usually cannot bring outside food in for the group participants). Wear comfortable clothes and layers. Remember that a 90-minute group might mean being at the facility for much longer than that by the time you have checked in, set up, run group, and checked out.

- The more you need to bring in, the more complicated your requests, the longer approvals will take, and the greater chances of a mix up at the front gate. As much as possible, keep it simple.
- Get to the facility early. Treat it like going to the airport — you might get through security in ten minutes, or there might be a huge line. Make sure to leave time for unexpected delays, lost clearance paperwork, and missing supply lists.

Getting Ready: Planning the Group

Planning content is a key step. Determine if the group will have a particular focus. For example, the group might be for all survivors of sexual abuse or for survivors of sexual abuse in detention. Some facilitators find that separating groups for survivors of childhood sexual abuse from groups for survivors of sexual assault as teens or adults makes sense. Remember that there is more than one right way to do it. When thinking about the group content, consider the following:

- Do the facilitators have the experience and skills to run a group for survivors of all kinds of sexual abuse and sexual harassment together?
- If the plan is to use a structured model or curriculum, is it flexible enough to accommodate the full range of needs and concerns of people who have experienced a broad range of types of abuse?
- If you think that an experience-specific group will work better, do you have the resources to offer more than one type of group, i.e., one for

survivors of childhood abuse and then one for survivors of abuse within intimate relationships? Where will you place someone who has experienced both?

- Can the facility (both staff and potential group members) tolerate a group specifically for survivors of sexual abuse inside detention? Will it be safe for people to come forward for such a group?

Once the decision has been made about the group's focus, the next decision is the format and whether or not to use a set curriculum.

While this guide is not a curriculum, and JDI's approach is not to use a pre-packaged curriculum, we want to acknowledge that there are pros to using a structured curriculum.

Pros to Using a Curriculum:

- Structured curricula are familiar to facility staff
- The detailed instructions and guidance can make group facilitators feel more confident
- The structure can help the participants to stay on-task
- The structure will feel safe for some participants

Pros to Not Using a Curriculum:

- The facilitator can offer some control and agency to group participants
- The facilitator can customize the group to participants' needs

- The facilitator can give participants more space to use the group for what they need to heal
- The group will be a different experience than is usually available, and that stands apart from most of the rest of the programming they receive; therefore, it has the potential to be more transformative
- There is more room to recognize survivors as the experts in their own experience and not to risk the facilitator stepping into a teaching or expert role

Some additional things to consider in using a published curriculum are:

- What is the cost?
- Is the curriculum evidence-based? If not, does it bring enough benefit to make the cost worth it?
- Is specific training required for the staff that will be facilitating this curriculum? If so, is there an additional cost for training, and are the staff being trained likely to remain with the center long enough to ensure that the training costs were a wise investment?
- Do the staff have the capacity to learn and facilitate this curriculum? If so, is running a pre-packaged curriculum necessary — is that making use of their expertise?

Some rape crisis programs or state coalitions might choose to develop and publish their own curriculum instead of purchasing a published one. Before choosing this route, examine if the staff have the capacity, skill, and resources to develop such a curriculum. Determine if the plan will be to publish it, and if

so, if it will be peer reviewed. If such a curriculum will be developed or already exists, JDI encourages group facilitators to use this guide to customize the curriculum for work with incarcerated survivors.

It is important to remember that using a published curriculum does not remove the responsibility for monitoring and managing group dynamics, providing emotional support for and information about healing from sexual abuse, and being responsive to survivors' needs. In other words, the group facilitator must still be a skilled rape crisis counselor and group facilitator, even with a detailed road map.

Remember that the lack of a published curriculum does not mean the absence of a plan. Instead, it can work well to develop a proposed agenda for each session and for the arc of the group as a whole. Facilitators should always plan an opening and a closing for each group and have a strategy for the middle — to do an exercise or facilitate a discussion. However, the plans can be made between groups based on the needs that were raised in the previous session. It can be helpful to prepare a road map for the first few sessions, for example:

One strategy is to prepare a road map for the first few sessions. While a formal, structured curriculum is not always the most therapeutic strategy for sexual abuse survivor groups, having a consistent structure for the flow of group sessions can be helpful and increase the participants' comfort.

Counseling Group Example, Sessions one through three:

Session One

The first session should include introductions, a warm-up or ice-breaker exercise, a discussion of group norms or agreements, and a plan to involve participants in planning for the rest of the group.

00:00 – 15:00 Introductions

- Introduce facilitators: My name is ____________. I work for the local rape crisis program and we are not a part of the facility or the mental health department here. We are an independent organization that is working with the facility to offer services to survivors of sexual abuse. I have been working with survivors of sexual abuse for five years and have done several groups.
- Introduce the group: This is an eight-week, closed counseling group. That means we will be together once a week for the next eight weeks and we will not have any new members. The groups will each have a beginning, a middle, and an end. We will have discussions and times to share openly as well as times when we do exercises. Today, we will come up with group agreements and plan how we are going to work together. We want to remind everyone that this is a group for survivors of sexual abuse and we will be talking about and working on healing from sexual abuse. If anyone feels after the end of this session like this is not the group for them, please check in with one of us.

- Introduce participants: You might already know each other's names, but I would like to take a moment to learn from everyone what name they would like us to use during group and what pronouns you use. By what pronouns you use, I mean please tell us if you go by he, she, they, or something else.

15:00 – 25:00 Intake and Informed Consent

- Hand out intake or sign-in sheets and give people time to complete them. Read questions aloud in case someone in the group has limited reading skills. Check if anyone needs help completing the form.

- Review the informed consent form. Make sure that people understand that the group is voluntary. Go over limits to confidentiality and privacy related to mandated reporting, the setting, and any supervision or monitoring the facility will do.

25:00 – 40:00 Warm-Up discussion

- Sometimes called an ice-breaker, a warm-up discussion is intended to help the group to start interacting and communicating and to establish the group as a safe place to share. The first warm-up discussion should be non-threatening and something the group facilitators can share without crossing professional boundaries.

- Say to participants: Today, I'd like to learn a little bit more about you. Please share with the group one thing about you that makes you unique. Anyone can start and then we will go around and ask

everyone to share. It can be anything you like – it can be small and simple or more significant to you.

40:00 – 50:00 Group agreements and norms discussion

- Each group develops a unique set of norms and interaction styles. It is important to help the group members feel some agency over the group by allowing them to discuss what is important to them. There are some things that are not negotiable and facilitators should be clear about what is not up for discussion.

- Facilitators can introduce the discussion by saying something like: We will be together for many weeks and we need to agree on how we are going to work together. Group agreements can help us make sure we all have the same understanding of what is expected here. This is your group, so we are going to ask you to come up with the agreements. That said, there are a few things that are not negotiable, including:

  - Everyone has the same right to be in this group and to share their experiences.

  - Maintain confidentiality — what is said in this room stays in this room.

  - Respect each other — we must treat each other with respect during group. That means no violence and no cruelty.

- Believe each other — we must believe each other. Everyone here is the expert on their own experience and we are here to support each other.
- This is a drug, alcohol, and tobacco free environment. No one can come to group intoxicated in any way.

That's it for the non-negotiables. Now let's discuss what other things you need to know to feel safe and as comfortable as possible participating in this group. Some points that usually come up are:

- Participation. How do we make sure everyone gets time to talk and no one talks too much?
- Listening. How do we want to show people we are listening? Does everyone have the same understanding of listening?
- Giving advice. As a facilitator, I won't give advice, but sometimes people ask for it. What are people's thoughts about advice?
- Attendance. This is a closed group and everyone is asked to come every time. Inevitably, someone might have to miss a group. How many groups should a person be allowed to miss and how can we make sure someone knows if someone has to miss a group?
- Other details — depending on the time of day and how long the group meeting will be, the group should discuss if it is okay to eat or drink things other than water in the group and if there is a need to take a break.

50:00 – 65:00 Topics and goals discussion

Remind participants that this is their group. Assure them that you have activities and discussions planned, but also want to make sure this group meets their needs. Remind participants that the overall topic of the group is healing from sexual abuse. Within that framework, ask participants to think about and share some things they would like to accomplish or topics they would like to cover. Note that this discussion is for planning purposes and if an important topic comes up later, it can be added if there is time – this list is not set in stone. Facilitators should write the ideas generated in this discussion down on a board or easel and repeat back the idea as they write both to make sure they interpreted it correctly and so that anyone who cannot read the board can hear it.

65:00 – 80:00 Discussion on work between group sessions

Facilitators can suggest assignments for between sessions. Ask the group if that works for them. If anyone has a strong reaction against it, let them know that the assignments are voluntary and generally will be simple things they can do on their own.

For this first one, the assignment will be about self-care. Healing from sexual abuse is hard work. Many survivors of sexual abuse have been given, and have taken in, the message that they do not deserve care and kindness. In the facility, it can also be hard to find ways to take care of yourself.

Can anyone share some examples of ways they take care of themselves? Some common ones are:

- Reading a favorite book or magazine

- Exercising
- Getting enough sleep
- Making healthy eating choices
- Writing to a friend or family member
- Going to programs
- Listening to music

For this week, the assignment is to pay attention to moments when you do something to take care of yourself. Keep track of at least three things you do and be ready to report back to the group next week.

80:00 – 90:00 Closing

Each group should have a closing and an opening. Incarcerated survivors will have to shift gears from the facility environment to the group environment and back when they enter and leave the group. Simple rituals that signal the beginning and end of group help people to make that shift. It can be as simple as an opening and closing round. For the first group, some suggestions are:

- Think about why you decided to come to this group and finish the sentence, "I hope…"
- Tell us one way you commit to taking care of yourself this week.

Close by thanking everyone for coming and reminding them of the date and time of the next session. If you are completing evaluations at the end of each group, be sure to leave five minutes for people to complete them.

Session Two: Crisis and Coping

- Welcome everyone back and ask everyone to share:
    - Their name
    - The things they did to take care of themselves since the last group

15:00 – 25:00 Review Group Agreements

- Ask group members to share their understanding of the group agreements
- Ask if anyone thought of any that were missed last week

25:00 – 60:00 Understanding Trauma Discussion

- Discuss common reactions to trauma and ask participants to share things they recognize in their own reactions
- Provide information about how trauma affects the brain, memory, and behavior; provide information about triggers
- Normalize the group participants’ reactions
- Encourage group participants to give each other feedback

- Close the discussion with a round, asking the participants to share their most significant takeaway from the discussion

60:00 – 75:00 Coping with Crisis and Triggers

- Ask participants to share the best ways they have found to cope with triggers
- Share with the group some simple exercises for grounding when they experience a crisis or trigger
  - Breathing exercises
  - Guided imagery
  - Positive and grounding self-talk
  - Talking to a supportive person
  - Journaling

75:00 – 90:00 Closing Round

- Ask everyone to share how they are doing after the group and to name two coping skills they will try this week
- Remind the participants that they will be asked to share what new coping skills they used

Close by thanking everyone for coming and reminding them of the date and time of the next session. If you are completing evaluations at the end of each group, be sure to leave five minutes for people to complete them.

Session Three: Unlearning Self-Blame

00:00 – 15:00 Opening round

- Welcome everyone back and ask everyone to share:
    - Their name
    - One new coping skill they tried and how it worked; be explicit that it is not a failure if they do not think it worked well

15:00 – 20:00 Process Check-In

- Ask group members how they think the communication in and running of the group is going so far
- Ask if anyone would like to review group agreements and/or thought of any that need to be added

25:00 – 45:00 Self-Blame Discussion

- Share with participants that many survivors blame themselves for the perpetrator's actions, for the way they reacted during or after the assault, or for things they believe they could have done to prevent the abuse
- Ask participants if this sounds familiar and if anyone would like to share how it feels or sounds familiar to them
- Use the discussion prompts in the "Unlearning Self-Blame" exercise found in Appendix A

45:00 – 65:00 Unlearning Self-Blame Discussion

- Reflect the common themes from the previous discussion
- Ask participants to reflect on how it felt to hear about how others blame themselves; was it validating? What did they learn?
- Share with the group about the importance of correcting self-blaming messages when we notice them in ourselves and other group members
- Using the "Unlearning Self-Blame" exercise as an example, talk about ways to counter self-blame; share information about common reactions to trauma that helps group members counter self-blame; ask group members to counter a self-blaming message they heard from another group member

65:00 – 80:00 Unlearning Self-Blame Exercise

- Note that it was probably much easier to help other group members counter self-blame than it is to do it for yourself; encourage group members to be as kind and understanding of themselves as they are to other people
- Using the "Unlearning Self-Blame" exercise, ask participants to choose one self-blaming message they put on themselves and:
    - Describe the message
    - Describe why they blame themselves
    - Correct the self-blaming message
- Ask participants to continue this work through the coming week, tracking their progress in a journal

80:00 – 90:00 Closing Round

- Ask everyone to share how they are feeling after the exercise and if there are any messages about self-blame that they will take away with them from this week's group
- Remind the participants that they will be asked next week to share any progress or challenges they had around self-blame

Close by thanking everyone for coming and reminding them of the date and time of the next session. If you are completing evaluations at the end of each group, be sure to leave five minutes for people to complete them.

If the group is an open support group, the facilitator can still have an agenda for each session and keep a record of topics that participants raise so that, when needed, the facilitator can refer to goals the group set. The facilitator, in this case, is the keeper of the structure. One of the most powerful things a group in detention can offer is space that people do not usually have. Another is offering an outside person — the facilitator — who listens without judgment, provides support, and empowers survivors to build their coping skills. Being a compassionate witness to a survivors' experience and survival is always the most powerful and important role the rape crisis counselor can play — no matter the structure of the particular group.

Pre-Planning with the Facility — Especially around Security

Once the group is approved and the model is chosen — and an ideal date selected — there will remain a few other details to work out with the facility.

Security is an issue that will likely come up often. Discuss with the facility their need for security staff to observe the group. The level of supervision will be determined in part by the status the facilitators have within the facility. For example, most facilities have 'escort' and 'non-escort' visitor badges. Some have a different classification for volunteers who provide direct services. The higher the facilitators' security clearance, the more privacy they will have with the group. Facilitators should know and prepare for a clearance process that often is in-depth, lengthy, and can seem invasive.

Learn from the facility where officers are usually posted for other types of group sessions. For sexual abuse survivor groups, it is necessary that security staff not be in the room, so talk it through with the contact person. If they must be in the room, this will change the kind of group you offer, and you will probably need to start your group work by offering a psycho-educational group.

In some facilities, an officer will be posted outside the door. In many cases, as long as there is a window in the room so that officers doing rounds can see into the room, the door can be closed, and officers will not need to step in. Check if the room is monitored through camera or audio surveillance. If it is, find out what can be seen and heard — negotiate for a room that does not have audio surveillance.

One benefit of being considered an agency volunteer is that, in most cases, the group facilitators will be left alone with group members and the officer might need to check in, but will have a higher degree of comfort with leaving group facilitators unsupervised.

Learn how officers do security checks, or "rounds." Find out if they are required to see people and count them in person, or if knowing they are in the group is sufficient. It is not realistic to expect that groups will have the same level of privacy as they do in the community but at the same time, rape crisis counselors should always advocate for the highest level of privacy possible for their clients. The group facilitator must guard against becoming too used to the facility rules and, to put it bluntly, becoming institutionalized to the point where they simply accept without question things that harm survivors. In other words, be respectful of facility rules, but do not accept that privacy is not possible just because that is the norm.

Group participants will probably be used to routine security procedures that may interrupt a class or a group, including staff's security rounds. Such an interruption will feel odd and intrusive to rape crisis counselors, and while it will interrupt the flow of a group, facilitators should expect it to happen and be prepared to facilitate the group through it. Group facilitators should minimize the disruption and give participants an opportunity to process it afterwards, as in the example below.

"I was in a group the other day. We were discussing the participants' concerns around safety from staff sexual harassment. An officer came into the room. He didn't say anything. He just walked in and went and stood in the corner. A couple of the group members looked uncomfortable and the one who was talking just kept on talking. I didn't want to interrupt her but I also saw that some participants were really uncomfortable. After she finished, I turned to him and said hello and asked if he needed something. He introduced himself and said that my usual contact person had to leave and that he would escort me out when we were finished and he gave me his extension in case I needed something. Here I was assuming he was doing a security check or was just curious and he only had a simple message for me. I am so glad that I stayed calm and polite. When he left, I checked in and asked the group how the interruption was for them. In this case, the officer was someone they all trusted. They weren't disturbed; they just thought it was funny that he came in and stood in the corner without saying anything. Lesson learned yet again — good communication is the best tool."

— Group facilitator in a women's jail

Planning For Problems in the Group

As with most things in this work, planning ahead for challenges that might arise during the course of running a group is key. Discuss with your facility partners what the facilitators should do if a group participant becomes unruly or inappropriate during group. Talk with the group members about how you

will handle things like interruptions, off-topic conversations, imbalances in participation, and conflicts during group. A facilitator's primary tool is observation. In keeping with the goal of maximizing participants' agency, facilitators should plan to:

- **Observe**: pay attention to group dynamics and notice any interactions, communication patterns, or brewing conflicts that threaten the smooth functioning of the group.

  Example: *One participant, Jordon, shares that they used to self-harm, scratching their arms and thighs with pencils to numb emotional pain. The first group member to respond is Sam, who jumps in before Jordon seems finished, to say, "You think that's bad. I used to cut myself with knives." The facilitator notices that Jordon looks down and does not say anything as other group members respond supportively to Sam.*

- **Reflect**: notice interactions — helpful or harmful — and verbalize them to make the group dynamics clear and perceivable for the group members.

  Example: *Noticing Jordon's withdrawal from the group, and the shift of the energy to Sam's disclosure, the group facilitator says, "Self-harm is pretty common. Many survivors use it as a coping mechanism. I'm noticing that Jordon raised the topic and I want to make sure Jordon is able to finish sharing."*

- **Facilitate discussion**: Help the group to talk through the dynamic that was raised. If the disruption was a one-time event, this step might look like getting the discussion back on track.

In the example above, the facilitator might create space for Jordon to finish sharing, note a concern that — however it was meant — the response might have seemed minimizing or dismissive of Jordon, and refer to any group agreements about when and how to take a turn to speak.

If the interaction above was indicative of a pattern — if Sam consistently interrupts and routinely one-ups other participants, the facilitator should be ready for a more thorough discussion, including creating space for Jordon and any other group members' feelings about being cut off or having their experiences minimized, while making sure that Sam is not attacked or exiled from the group.

- Invite solutions: If the discussion in the previous step is not enough to help the group move back into working through the agenda, and particularly if the dynamic is a recurring one, the facilitator should pause the group agenda to talk through solutions. The solutions for managing a group disruption will be most effective if they come from the group, and the process of developing solutions together will help to further build group cohesion. The solutions might be embedded in the group agreements and what is required might simply be a review of the group agreements. However, before coming up with solutions, the facilitator must help the group to clarify the problem.

  Example: *In the discussion, the facilitator picked up that Jordon felt silenced and unsupported; other group members are frustrated with Sam's routine interruptions to share how their experience is more severe. Now Sam feels attacked and guilty about not responding more*

supportively to Jordon. The facilitator says, "Group interactions about sensitive topics are difficult and we are going to experience challenges like this from time to time. We can take the time to talk this through so everyone gets what they need as much as possible. I perceive that there are a few things to work out here: first, that Jordon wasn't finished sharing before Sam starting sharing; that Jordon's sharing was not responded to by anyone in the group — not just Sam; and that there was a ranking of trauma — Sam might have been the one to actively do it, but the others supported it by responding directly to Sam and not to Jordon. Does that sound right to everyone? Am I missing anything?"

The group shared that they agreed that the facilitator summarized the challenges correctly. The facilitator used a chalkboard to list the problems, reframing them as desirable outcomes: everyone has a chance to share; everyone is supported; everyone's concerns and experiences are valued. The facilitator invited discussion and summarized the suggestions on the chalk board.

At this stage, the facilitator should not edit the suggestions — the ones that will not work will likely be eliminated in the discussion.

- Everyone has a chance to share
    - Ask if the person before you is finished before speaking
    - Give everyone three paper tokens and we each get five minutes of sharing time per token
    - Have some item that you have to be holding to talk

    - Come up with a word we all use to show we are finished
    - Have the facilitator set a timer and stop whoever is talking when the timer goes off
- Everyone is supported
    - Each group member asks for what they need before they share
    - Have a rule that each person gets at least two supportive responses after they share
    - No cross-talk — have a rule that the point is sharing, not getting a response.
    - Just make an effort to say something supportive when someone is done, not only when you want to speak next.
- Everyone's concerns and experiences are valued
    - Remember that everyone's experiences are unique
    - Write on the board "this is not the trauma Olympics" and have it there every group
    - Follow the same guidelines about being supportive
    - When you share, never compare yourself to someone else
    - Use "I" statements

- **Choose solutions and develop a plan to carry them out**: Discuss the pros and cons of the various options and help the group choose the ones that everyone believes will most likely help the group to move forward. The group should be careful about choosing new rules that are too rigid or are unrealistic. Simply having the conversation is sometimes enough to reset the group dynamic and expectations.

  Example: *The group reviewed each option to test the "one person-one mic" guideline that was already in the group agreements. They decided that most of the options would make the conversation awkward and interrupt the flow. Because it promised to work best for them and be the most seamless, they chose to use an item that would signal to others that whoever is holding it has the floor. The facility held a Take Back the Night march in conjunction with Sexual Assault Awareness Month and everyone received teal ribbon bookmarks with supportive messages on them. The group decided that one of the bookmarks should be the talking item.*

  The group decided that they did not need a new rule or agreement for supporting each other. In the session, several people acknowledged that they could have been more supportive of Jordon. Everyone agreed to ask if they need something specific after they share and to give supportive responses to each other.

  Similarly, the group decided that the discussion was enough of a refresher about valuing everyone's experience. They agreed to call each other out, respectfully, if anyone starts ranking trauma.

- **Hold participants to the agreed-upon solution**: If necessary, add the solutions discussed to the group agreements. Review the group agreements regularly. Some facilitators do it at the beginning of every group. Facilitators should use their judgment — regular reviews of the group agreements might be comforting to some groups and it might seem overbearing to others. Ask the group. Remember that once the discussion has been held and solutions mutually agreed upon, it is easy for the group facilitator and other group members to refer back to the discussion as needed. After a conflict or other challenge, as described in the example, the facilitator should also review agreements about sharing outside of group or carrying disagreements back into the unit. If the conflict is hurtful or the facilitator has concerns that it will spill out into the housing units, the facilitator might need to hold a separate group session to process the conflict.

Conflict and the feelings associated with it are often seen as only negative and to be avoided or suppressed. However, the more group participants can share intolerable feelings, work through conflict, and process anger or frustration, the more trust and safety is created. If group members can learn to discuss disagreement, misunderstanding, and work through defensiveness, they will have gained skills that very few people have and the group will have helped them take an important step in healing. However, despite best efforts, detailed group agreements, and open problem-solving discussions, groups sometimes face challenges that are only resolved by someone leaving the group. It may not be possible to work through a violation of trust, conflict, or cruelty through by a thoughtful discussion.

The process for determining when a person who consistently violates group agreements will be asked to leave, and how to discuss that with them should be developed before the group starts and communicated clearly to group participants during a discussion around group rules and norms. Some facilitators may wish to develop the process with the group participants — and for people who live in a therapeutic programming unit or "honor dorm," such discussions might already be part of the culture. If the facilitator ever has to ask someone to leave, space should be made during the following group session to process the loss of the group member and plan to move forward with the group plan; reviewing and revising group norms and agreements would also be an important step. Depending upon what happened, the remaining members might have safety concerns or worries about confidentiality, and time should be given to discuss any concerns that might hamper the group's functioning.

Facilitators should be aware that sometimes when a group is experiencing conflict, the group blames the dynamic on one person, in group theory called a scapegoat. Asking one person to leave might change the dynamic enough that the group is able to become productive. If the problem was in the group, it might continue even if someone is asked to leave or chooses to leave. In that case, the facilitator will have to decide if they can work through the group conflict using the process described above, or if the dynamic is toxic and potentially a safety concern. Remember that the facilitator leaves after group and the group participants must live together with the fallout from group. Facilitators should work with mental health staff in the facility, if possible, when there is conflict in group and if someone is asked to leave. Facilitators should work with their facility contact person and mental health

staff to make sure that a participant who is asked to leave or chooses to leave is not disciplined or penalized unless there is a legitimate reason, such as that their behavior harmed someone. The consequences of people being disciplined for participating or not in the group would be a loss of trust in the community that would be difficult to rebuild.

Confidentiality

Rape crisis centers that run groups inside detention facilities must maintain the standard of care they provide in the community. Confidentiality guidelines must be worked out before the group starts and communicated clearly to participants in the first group session or, preferably, in the screening process. Privacy will not be exactly the same as in the community, in that both staff and other prisoners will see who is going to group. That said, confidentiality within the space where the group takes place should be as close to the community standard as possible. Rape crisis centers should always strive to follow their own policies, and certainly state and federal requirements, around confidentiality.

Talk through with the facility what the expectations are around what will be shared and what will not be shared. Document the agreements in a memorandum of understanding or other written agreement. Identify a contact person at the facility to whom group facilitators can disclose information when required — such as a credible threat of suicide or homicide, and child or elder abuse. Details about confidentiality and privileged communication are discussed in more detail later in this guide.

Credits for Group Participation

Facilitators should discuss with the facility if participants can receive credit for attending group. In some cases, people receive points or 'good time' for attending programs. Find out from the facility what the process is for approving a program for such points, and if the group can qualify. In most cases, if someone expects to be reviewed for parole, they can include a letter from the group facilitators or a certificate of completion that will show they are working on rehabilitation. This might help with their parole review, even if there are no other tangible incentives for group participation.

Choosing Facilitators

The most important characteristic of the group facilitators is a desire to run a group for sexual abuse survivors inside a detention facility. This work is not a fit for everyone. But when there is a good fit, it can be transformative for group participants and incredibly gratifying and educational for the facilitator.

Whenever possible, groups should have more than one facilitator. Two is optimal during each group. Facilitators can balance duties of observing process, responding to participants, time-keeping, managing activities, and helping to guide discussions and manage challenging or intense conversations. A third facilitator who is trained and ready to step in if needed is a useful asset. However, it is important to be careful about the balance — the participants should always outnumber the facilitators. Rape crisis

programs with a small team can consider working with interns or more experienced volunteers as co-facilitators. An experienced rape crisis counselor can be a tremendous asset as a co-facilitator, even if they have not run groups before. Participating in a group is the best way to learn facilitation skills.

If possible, a balance of gender, race, age, ability, and sexual orientation should be considered. If there is an obvious imbalance between the group participants and the facilitator, the facilitator must be prepared to acknowledge it. One glaring difference between the facilitators and the group members is that the participants are all incarcerated and the facilitators are not. Facilitators should make it evident to participants that they are open to hearing about, and believing, their experiences of being incarcerated. They should also take care not to minimize the daily challenges of being a survivor behind bars — nor should they imply that they understand how it must feel. The approach should be similar for other differences in identity between the facilitator and participants — acknowledge difference so as not to minimize it. Be clear that the facilitators' job is to create a space where members can work on healing from sexual abuse. The facilitators build connection by listening without judgment, showing unconditional positive regard, and treating everyone with respect. Be genuine. Survivors, and particularly incarcerated survivors, can usually spot inauthentic interactions, or when someone is trying too hard. The participants' need for connection, or for seeing one's experience in someone else, is met by building relationships with other group members. Even facilitators who have been incarcerated will not have the same exact experience as the current group members and should be careful about generalizing their experiences to them.

Incarcerated people are used to others making assumptions about them — usually to paint them in a negative light. Make this a different experience. Remember that you only know what people have told you about themselves.

Be prepared to work with participants who have a wide range of educational levels and professional and personal experiences. It is true that because the most marginalized in our society tend to be incarcerated, a significant proportion of prisoners have lower educational levels than the general population. On the other hand, it's important not to assume. Many people in prisons have advanced degrees — sometimes earned while they are incarcerated. Keeping that in mind, group facilitators should be prepared to present information and facilitate conversations in ways that a variety of people can access the information. Simple, clear language is better for any audience to avoid misunderstandings and increase consistency, no matter what the educational levels of the participants.

For some people, long incarcerations may mean a real lack of interaction with the outside world. Again, do not assume, but people who have been in prison for years might have little information on current events, current trends in language, and understanding of technology that has become part of life for many people. If, for example, you are unsure whether people in the group have access to television news, or radio, or are comfortable with computers, just ask. If your group is in a prison, you might have participants who have been there for decades — think about how differently we communicated before email, cell phones, or social media. Similarly, language around identity is constantly evolving. The ways we speak about race, sexual orientation, gender, country of origin, and ability change from year to year, not to mention generation to generation. Be prepared to hear what might sound like

outdated language from some older participants or who have been incarcerated for a long time. Such differences in language are common in the outside community as well and are exacerbated by the lack of easy flow of information in and out of detention facilities.

Physical Accessibility

Work with the facility to make sure that your group sessions will be truly accessible to people with physical disabilities. Discuss how they make sure that other spaces, groups, educational opportunities, and services are accessible to people with disabilities. Many older facilities have areas that are not wheelchair/walker accessible, but do usually have a classroom or visiting area that is. Make sure your group is held in an accessible space. Ask people with disabilities who live in the facility for help in making groups accessible. If there are inmate leaders, like an advisory council or trustees, or people who work as helpers for people with disabilities, ask them for tips as well. Some things to think about are:

- Note any steps on the way to the room or into the room
- Check for barriers like narrow entrances, uneven thresholds, cracked walkways
- Make sure that furniture in the room is spaced at least 36 inches apart
- Check with participants about the temperature of the room and adjust if possible

- Find out if any of the participants need physical assistance getting to the group
- Find out if any of the participants work with a personal assistant who needs to be near them
- Note the location of a restroom and if it is accessible (has a 36-inch radius around the toilet and sink; has grab bars next to the toilet; and has a sink that is reachable by someone who is seated or small in stature)
- Check body language: make sure you are not standing over people, asking participants to stand for exercises, or requiring strenuous physical movements that a person with a disability might not be able to do
- When you are doing grounding, mindfulness, and guided imagery exercises, pay attention to your language and if it excludes people. Note if you say things like "feel the way your feet connect to the ground," and revise your language, always stating that people should participate in aspects of the exercise only if it works for them

Some of the items above might not be in your control, like temperature for example. Nevertheless, it is important to think through accessibility for a broad range of participants and do what you can.

Accessibility of Communication

Provide a way for interested participants to communicate their needs before group starts so that you can work to meet those needs. For example, if someone is Deaf or hard of hearing and works with an interpreter, you will want to arrange for and meet the interpreter before the group starts. Learn from the participant and the interpreter how they work together and how you should introduce the interpreter to other group members. Make sure the interpreter understands the purpose of the group and that they will be interpreting information about trauma. Check in with the interpreter about their support system and plan to get them support, if needed. Remember that you and other group members should always speak to the participant, not the interpreter. Obtain, and let participants know you have obtained, a confidentiality agreement specific to the group from the interpreter.

When developing exercises and written materials, make sure that any participants who are blind or have low sight can benefit. Check in with the individual about what is comfortable for them and what works best for them. If you use a board to write group agreements or take notes, make sure to read them as you write them and be prepared to repeat them several times. Check in and ask if anyone in the group needs you to reread any written materials or instructions throughout the group session — this approach makes the group more comfortable for people with limited literacy skills as well as low sight.

The most effective communication strategy with any group is one of universal precautions — always assume that clear, simple language is best. Following a

few simple guidelines will ensure that most people with cognitive disabilities or mental illnesses will be able to participate in any group. For example:

- Make sure written materials like informed consent and intake forms, handouts, and written exercises are in simple, clear language and at a fifth grade level with at least a 75% readability score
- Be steadfast in enforcing the one person-one mic guideline
- Create empty spaces within the group for people who are not as comfortable speaking up by saying things like, "Let's pause for a moment to see if anyone is thinking about sharing."
- Ask one question or give one sharing prompt at a time — avoid lists of prompts and compound questions
- Ask for group participants to repeat group agreements, exercise instructions, or plans for future groups back to you

In some facilities, people with significant cognitive disabilities or mental illnesses are placed together in a housing unit. If you are doing a group in such a unit, meet with the unit staff and the mental health staff to determine what other kinds of groups and activities work well in the unit. In some cases, the facilitator might observe life skills or other group to learn about what seems to work well.

Clear and simple communication is the most important aspect of making group sessions accessible to people with cognitive disabilities. In addition to the tips above, here are some specific tips for making groups accessible to people with cognitive disabilities:

- Take time during each session to review group guidelines
- Ask participants to reflect back to you their understanding of the group guidelines
- Create empty spaces to allow people who do not usually speak up to jump in

Some tips for helping people with mental illnesses participate in groups are:

- Ask participants to describe their understanding of group agreements, discussion prompts, and exercises
- If someone is having difficulty staying on topic in a way that becomes disruptive, reflect back on what you hear them saying and redirect to the topic of the group
- Remember that not everyone with a mental illness has symptoms that affect communication, and that active symptoms might change day to day
- Decide ahead of time, working with mental health staff from the facility, what you will do if someone's behavior becomes disruptive; be thoughtful about what you consider to be disruptive and why. Consider if someone's behavior impairs others' safety and ability to get what they need from the group
- Validate feelings even if the content is confusing or seems to be based on delusions

- If you are confused or do not understand what someone is saying, remain open and take accountability for the misunderstanding. Say something like, "I am having trouble understanding right now" or "Please help me understand." Avoid any impulse to interrogate or get stuck on details
- Be flexible, remain open, and reserve judgements
- Ask for support and assistance from mental health staff in the facility when needed, with permission from the group participants

Language access is also an important issue. Many rape crisis centers will have the capacity to offer a group in Spanish, but other languages will be less common. If someone who has limited English proficiency wants to join a group and the rape crisis center does not have capacity in their language, work with the facility to learn how they provide services in other areas. Meet with the person to determine how they function and get their needs met in the facility. Duplicate what is working. Just as with a Deaf person, work with an interpreter, if possible.

Person First Language and Corrections Culture

Advocates must affirm survivors' humanity in their language at all times. Many advocates are accustomed to first-person language with survivors in the community. For example, "person with autism" instead of "an autistic," or "people of color" instead of "non-whites." Group facilitators must remember to use the same principles when referring to incarcerated people. The facility, and even group members, might use dehumanizing or

diminishing language because it is shorthand or is simply the language of the facility. Group facilitators must be careful not to adopt such language. For example, facilities might refer to people as "intakes," or by their classification status by saying something like, "He's an ad seg." Many staff refer to people as "bodies," as in, "We need to move thirty bodies to the dining hall." Using person-first language to refer to incarcerated people is another way the group facilitator can make the group a safe and healing space and a different experience than daily life in the facility.

On the other hand, group facilitators might need to use the vocabulary of the facility in order to communicate respectfully with staff and must decide how to balance working cooperatively with staff and remaining a solid advocate for survivors. For example, many facilities refer to all people in their custody as "offenders." JDI never uses "offenders" to refer to survivors. However, although the terms "inmates," "prisoners," and "detainees" might also be dehumanizing and are certainly not person first, JDI does use them to communicate with facility staff and in publications because they are clear and usually not misunderstood.

Ask people what they prefer to be called and reflect what you hear. One caveat to this principle that is intended to be empowering is that, when group members refer to themselves in derogatory ways, group facilitators should gently insist on using non-demeaning language. For example, if a group member in a youth facility refers to themselves as a "juvenile delinquent," the facilitator should not reflect that language.

Gender Accessibility

Detention facilities are structured in a way that is gendered; there are men's facilities and women's facilities. Remember, however, that there are transgender women in what are called men's facilities, transgender men in what are called women's facilities, and nonbinary people in both.

Before advertising the group, decide if you will do a mixed-gender group — meaning it includes people who are transgender and nonbinary. If not, then will you offer a separate group for people of other genders? For example, if you are working in a men's facility, will you do a group specifically for transgender women? There is value in creating a safe space for transgender women, but if low numbers of transgender women in a facility would mean that they do not get to participate in a group, consider offering a mixed-gender group.

If the rape crisis program is planning a group in a men's facility and has not run groups for men before, it might be a good idea to offer individual services first. In researching this guide, JDI learned that centers that have offered groups for men in detention have often framed them as educational, for addressing trauma generally, or as being for loved ones of survivors, to lessen the stigma of participating in the group. Do not, however, assume that a survivors' group will not work for men or that the group could only be psycho-educational. Male survivors need and benefit from emotional support, a safe place to be vulnerable, and a compassionate witness as much as other survivors. Similarly, do not assume that women survivors will always have ease with communication and feel safe being vulnerable. Each group has its own

dynamic and the facilitator must work to create and maintain the healing space in every session.

Agency Checklist for running groups in detention facilities:

- ❒ Support from agency leadership
- ❒ Resources
- ❒ Staff Time
- ❒ Materials and funding
- ❒ Staff expertise and supervision
- ❒ Self-care and support for facilitators
- ❒ Good working relationship with the facility, including a written agreement
- ❒ Determine the types of groups the agency will offer; work with facility staff and inmates to identify need
- ❒ Choose program supervisors and facilitators
- ❒ Identify corrections facility contact for group facilitators
- ❒ Work with group facilitators, facility contact person, and inmates to develop a screening process
- ❒ Develop participant intake, attendance, and informed consent forms

Facilitator Group Planning Checklist

- ❒ Learn about facility set up and how to enter
- ❒ Complete clearance procedures, including any required volunteer orientation
- ❒ Determine the time, location, length, and number of sessions

- ❒ Develop a process for people to express interest in joining the group
- ❒ Work with facility contact to advertise the group
- ❒ Work with facility contact to reserve the room and parking if necessary
- ❒ Work with your agency and the facility to ensure accessibility for people with disabilities and who are Deaf or blind
- ❒ Develop group agendas and a plan for the first three sessions
- ❒ Compile necessary group materials
- ❒ Plan to arrive at the facility thirty minutes to an hour before group is to begin

5. Getting started

Details, Details, Details part 2

Once the pre-planning is complete, the group can be advertised and group participants can be selected. Like with everything in this work, a little planning goes a long way. That said, group facilitators should be flexible and ready to change plans if needed.

If the group is a new program, a pilot group can be a helpful strategy. JDI has often run a shorter series of a new group, with a pre-selected group of people, such as members of an internal leadership group or a pre-existing treatment group. Include people who are more likely to be able to help you work out the bugs in the first round of a new program and to spread the word about the group to others once the pilot is finished.

Planning Q&A:

- Who can participate?
    - Do not assume that people in high-security units cannot participate. Often, people in higher security units need programming desperately and facilities may be willing to help make a group work

    - Offer groups in units for people with mental illnesses, people with disabilities, or people who are considered to be vulnerable to sexual abuse — people who are at higher risk of being targeted for abuse might be in specialized or higher security units and are likely to need services

- Where can the group meet?
    - Choose a room that provides the best combination of privacy and safety
    - The more comfortable facility staff feel, the less likely they will have to check on you — for example, a room with no internal windows might mean that staff have to enter the room for safety checks. A room with a window might seem less private, but practically, the group will likely have more privacy
    - A library, classroom, mental health group room, multipurpose room, or unused day room are some good candidates for a group space

- Who can and cannot be in a group together?
    - Work with facility staff and mental health staff to form the group. Learn what the different security and classification levels mean and who can interact and who cannot
    - Talk with the prisoner leadership groups about the composition of the group as well. They might have information about dynamics, relationships, and potential conflicts that will be helpful. They

might also have thoughts about a group composition that you may not have considered. For example, the leadership council at a prison where JDI was running a group suggested combining people who were new to the facility with an equal number of long-time residents into a group. Doing so would help the newer people adjust and build positive connections while giving the people who had been there a long time an opportunity to be helpful.

- How many people should be in the group?
    - The best number for psycho-educational groups is 10-12; for support and therapy groups, 6-10 is better
- How will people learn about the group?
    - If the rape crisis center is already providing other services, word of mouth is the most effective advertisement
    - If the facility is not providing other services, consider doing some discussion groups with people inside to introduce the new service and get feedback from people
    - Meet with mental health staff, the facility PREA Compliance Manager, any specialized treatment program staff, Chaplains, and sexual abuse investigators — they are the people most likely to offer referrals to potential group members
    - Post flyers with clear information about the group, how to ask questions, and how to express interest

  - Before advertising, determine the topic for the group and how many people can join
  - If this is a pilot, consider asking a pre-existing group to join and to then be the ambassadors for it
- How will people be screened for the group?
  - If possible, meet individually with each potential group member. This is an opportunity to describe the group in more detail and to find out if it is the right fit for the person and the group
  - Assess if the group is safe for the person. If they have never talked about sexual abuse with anyone before, they should receive individual services first
  - Assess if the group is voluntary — make sure the person does not feel forced to attend because of pressure from someone else or program requirements
  - Find out what they hope to gain by being in the group and clarify expectations and benefits
  - Describe the group experience and what they can expect; confirm that it sounds like the group could meet their needs
  - Ask for a commitment on attendance

Forming the Group

Once the group has been planned and advertised, the group facilitators must screen participants and form the group. Facilitators must consider both how the group will impact the individual and how the individual will impact the group. The individual must be able to participate in a group and be ready for it, something the facilitator can work to determine during a screening process. The facilitator should not make any guarantees to potential participants during the screening process. While an individual might benefit from a support group, they might not be a fit for that particular group.

The composition of the group refers to the mix of individuals that makes up the whole. Groups can be heterogeneous and still function well, and the fact of being an incarcerated survivor is usually such a strong identifying characteristic that it overrides many other considerations. In some cases, the group might have an identity focus, such as incarcerated survivors of color, or who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual. In general, however, the most important characteristics are an ability to listen and provide support for others.

Group member selection:

- A desire to be in a group
- The ability to function in a group setting
- Goals that are realistic given the group timeline, structure, and topic
- An ability and willingness to discuss
- A need for support and feedback from peers

- The ability to witness other participants' feelings and experiences and provide supportive feedback
- Consider whether or not participating in a particular group is safe for the individual

Group Composition:

- How each group member will interact with others and the group as a whole
- How each group member will affect the whole
- If group members have pre-existing conflicts (rival gang members, recent fights or assaults, ex-partners) or close relationships (parent-child, siblings, people in a romantic relationship, people who committed a crime together)
- If there is a mix of communication styles, of introverts and extroverts, more dominant and more submissive
- Group facilitators should consider:
    - Age of participants
    - Gender
    - Ethnicity and cultural groups
    - Accessibility and ability
    - If the group composition poses risks to people who are more vulnerable within the facility, i.e., if there is one transgender

woman in a men's facility, consult with her and with any mental health staff about whether participation in the group is likely to provide needed support and therefore potentially increase her safety or if the culture of the facility is such that she might not be safe to share openly in a group — unless otherwise, and strongly indicated, facilitators should err on the side of inclusion, not exclusion

- Who needs programming most urgently; what groups of people tend to be excluded from other programming
- Feedback from relevant staff members, like mental health or program staff or your primary contact person; feedback from groups of leaders who live in the facility, such as advisory or leadership councils

If more people are interested in the group than can participate, the group facilitators must determine how to select participants. Because programming is so important to incarcerated survivors, facilitators should be thoughtful about informing people if they are not selected for a group session. They should notify people why they were not selected the group and inform them of plans to hold subsequent group sessions in which they might be able to participate.

Including People Convicted of Violent Crimes

While the majority of people who are incarcerated in the United States have been arrested for, charged with, or convicted of non-violent crimes, there are

people inside detention facilities who have perpetrated sexual violence. Some of them are also survivors of sexual abuse, either prior to or during their incarceration. Decisions around serving people who have been convicted of violent crimes are often challenging for rape crisis counselors. Because the victim services field has historically drawn a clear and bright line between victims and perpetrators, what to do when someone is both is a relatively new conversation — a conversation that is often raised for the first time when a program is developed for incarcerated survivors.

Remember that rape crisis counselors are likely to serve people who have committed crimes or been arrested or incarcerated all the time — although they might not always know it. No matter what a person's history, rape crisis services should always focus on healing from sexual abuse. Whether or not the group facilitators are qualified to provide services to sex offenders, they must be careful not to stray into doing so in a group for survivors of sexual abuse. Such treatment is not appropriate for survivors who are not sex offenders.

Unless it is relevant to the topic of the group, the facilitator does not need to know why group members are incarcerated. Some group members will want to share because they are aware that many people see them as nothing but the crime for which they were arrested, and they may want to explain. Other group members will be relieved to have one place where they are not defined by their crime. Remember that in detention facilities, the words "offender" and "perpetrator" are often used to describe everyone and do not mean the same things as they do in the community.

"I worked with a man who was in prison for sexual assault. He was then raped when he was in prison. I started seeing him after he reported the rape to the facility. I'll admit, it was hard for me at first. I wasn't sure I could see someone who had sexually abused someone else. I sought consultation. I also thought about if I was sure I had never done this, meaning counsel someone who had abused others, and realized I couldn't say I hadn't. This man just had no choice about my finding out. When we started, I was really clear with him about the limits of our services and my scope of expertise. He was able to accept that I couldn't work with him on what he had done. If he hadn't been able to listen to the limits, I don't think it would have worked. There were a couple of times I had to redirect him, when he asked to process feelings about the abuse he perpetrated. I reminded him that we could work on coping skills and processing effects of the recent sexual abuse. I referred him to mental health at the prison after we accomplished everything we could to process the sexual assault."

— Karin Stone, Women's Center-High Desert

To decide if someone who has committed a violent crime can participate in group, explore:

- Have they received any treatment or support related to the crime they committed?
    - If they have not, they might not be ready for a survivor's group. A group with other survivors cannot be the place they explore their

thoughts or feelings about having perpetrated abuse. If they have, they might be able to explore healing from abuse they endured without bringing elements of the abuse they perpetrated into group in a way that is harmful to others.

- Was the crime recent? How old were they when they abused another person?
    - If the person abused someone else recently, they are probably not appropriate for a survivors' group. Perpetrators of sexual abuse or domestic violence engage in a pattern of power and control tactics that they will bring into the group. If the person abused someone else decades ago and has not engaged in behaviors that violate another's rights since they might be ready for a survivors' group.
- Have they been found guilty of abusing or harassing anyone in the facility?
    - If the person abused someone in the currently facility, there is a strong chance that someone else in the group has been affected by their abusive behavior and they are probably not appropriate for the group.
- Are they able to share about the abuse they experienced without sharing details about or asking for forgiveness from group members for the abuse they committed?

- The most important indicator of readiness for a survivors' group is that healing from sexual abuse is a primary concern. If someone is able to focus on building healthy coping skills, understanding dynamics of sexual abuse, and accepting and offering support during group, they can probably do well in the group. The biggest indicator that someone is not ready or appropriate for the group is if they are not able to focus on healing; specifically, if they disrupt the group by asking for absolution for their actions or try to use the abuse they have suffered to justify their abusive behavior.

Confidentiality and Privilege

Confidentiality is a primary organizing principle of rape crisis services. Rape crisis programs were formed around the United States to provide support and advocacy for survivors outside of mainstream law enforcement, medical, and mental health services — with the recognition that having a place to share and know the information is not going anywhere is key to survivors' healing. Confidentiality refers to an agreement to keep something private — it's the principle of what is said here, stays here.

Privilege is related to confidentiality, but it is a legal concept instead of a principle or agreement. Privilege is a rule of evidence that allows the holder of the privilege to refuse to disclose information or records, and to bar disclosures from being used in legal or other proceedings. The survivor holds the privilege; it is theirs to keep or not. Understanding that fact is key to understanding rape crisis counselors' responsibility around confidentiality —

and to explaining it to corrections officials for whom it might be a foreign concept.

Key points about confidentiality:

- Group facilitators should plan to discuss with their contacts at the corrections facility their obligations around confidentiality, and be knowledgeable about state laws, agency policies, and guidelines enforced by federal agencies
- Group facilitators should be clear about limits to confidentiality — i.e. when there is an exception to privilege — and be able to communicate it clearly to corrections staff and group participants
- Group facilitators should recognize that many corrections staff will see their commitment to confidentiality as confusing and as jeopardizing their own and others' safety, and be respectful of this position in discussions about confidentiality, without compromising their legal and ethical obligations to survivors

Key Contacts

Group facilitators should identify key contact people with whom they will communicate the most. These are the facility staff who can help the facilitators to enter the facility, obtain clearance, approve materials, troubleshoot around disruptions, and provide support if needed for any safety concerns. The primary contact person or people will probably know details

like who is in the group, the purpose of the group, the agreements around confidentiality, and procedures for handling difficult situations. The staff member at the front desk, for example, should have clearance information, including a list of materials that are approved, but they do not need to know the specifics of the purpose of the group. It is helpful to develop a good relationship with the person at the front desk.

Some staff members do not need to know more than is necessary to maintain safety. If staff who do not need to know details ask for specifics about group members or what the group is for, group facilitators should be courteous while maintaining confidentiality. For example, by saying, "I can't share details, but I am working with Sgt. Smith and if you have questions about the group, it's best to ask them." It can be helpful to carry a memo or email with the name and contact information of the person who approved the group and a statement that the group and the facilitator's entrance into the facility was approved.

Communications Tips

- Have a plan for ongoing check-ins with the facility contact people
- Make sure to have a contact person on each shift, especially any shifts during which you might be inside the facility
- Get to know the people at the front gate
- Learn who supervises the people at the front gate and how clearances are approved

- Make a plan for communicating with your group members between group sessions in case you cannot make it or something needs to be rescheduled. It you have a reliable contact person, they can do it. In some facilities, people have access to email and that can be a useful way to stay in touch
- Work out a plan with participants for them to communicate if they cannot come to group for some reason
- Learn about how people move from place to place in the facility. Are there passes or other approvals group members need in order to get to group? Make sure your contact person has the list in case there are any questions and you are not onsite

Tips from the Field

Two rape crisis agencies —WestCOP-Victim Assistance Services and Women's Center-High Desert — offered their wisdom on running groups inside detention facilities:

From WestCOP-Victim Assistance Services:

Before you start:

- Meet with the programming and mental health departments to learn about their current programs and groups and see if there is a spot within existing programming where the group might fit

- Find out how frequently groups can be held and if there are specific units or groups of people who are eligible to attend

- Ask about how your group might affect people's other programming. Keep in mind that some people have requirements or earn good time for programs and try not to put people in the position of choosing between a required class and a sexual abuse survivors group

- Find out what resources or support are in place for people between groups — consider how people might become re-traumatized by content in the group and help them plan for care and support between groups

Take everything you learn about the facility and the population into account before deciding if the group will be open or closed membership, ongoing or time-limited. Remember there are pros and cons to each approach.

From Women's Center-High Desert

- Develop a good working relationship with facility leadership and, at the same time, make sure to have a great relationship with unit staff who are information leaders. They are the ones who will help you day to day.

- Develop a good working relationship with inmate leaders. Many facilities have groups like an Inmate Representative Council or Inmate Advisory Council that is elected and serves as a leadership body. There are also often informal leaders who can help spread the word about

groups, give you tips on how best to advertise them, and what times of day work best.

- Think about how to describe the group. The terms 'rape,' 'sexual abuse,' and even 'PREA' may not be the best because of the stigma of being a sexual abuse survivor or the image of being a 'snitch' that PREA conjures up for some people. Consider that opening the group to survivors of domestic violence and child abuse might make it more palatable. Similarly, give the group a name that doesn't have any of those sensitive words in it. Also, describe yourself simply as a 'counselor' or a 'trauma counselor.' Consider offering a group for people who have loved ones who have been sexually abused, if you have the capacity.
- Create a set of group guidelines and be very clear about expectations around confidentiality.
- Let people in the group know about other services, including individual counseling. In every group we have done, people come in saying they only want group, but after experiencing counseling, they also realize how much they could benefit from individual.
- Identify, with the facility's permission, someone who lives in the facility who can help you coordinate logistics. An incarcerated person who is a helper can do things like hang flyers, be an ambassador for the group, or share any changes in schedule.

6. Group Strategies

Maximizing the Healing Factors: Practicing Empowerment-Based Advocacy

One of the key principles for psycho-educational support groups, as explained earlier, is empowerment-based advocacy. Empowerment, including the opportunity to regain control, is one of the foundations for healing. The core of sexual assault trauma is disempowerment and disconnection. Therefore the guiding principles behind all recovery efforts, including group facilitation, must be re-empowerment and the establishment of new and meaningful relationships or reconnection with positive friends, family members, or service providers. People who help others using this model provide aid and resources that survivors deserve but do not have. To empower therefore means not to view the survivor as powerless. Instead, focus on their strengths; provide choices, resources, and options; and realize that group members have the right to make their own decisions regardless of your views and opinions.

The facilitator sets up and maintains the space where survivors can explore their feelings, build coping skills, recognize their strengths, honor their resilience, and receive and give support.

Role of the Facilitator

Impart knowledge about sexual abuse and sexual harassment: Any information the counselor or group facilitator has on this topic should be shared with the group participants. A skilled rape crisis advocate shares information to empower survivors and to help them place their experience within a context. Group facilitators must be knowledgeable about dynamics of sexual abuse and sexual harassment, common reactions to such trauma, how sexual violence exists in a context of oppression, how incarceration affects survivors and their healing, and available resources – and they should share such knowledge with group members.

Create a space where healing can happen: Group facilitators set the tone and create a space where the healing factors of group can be realized. They build rapport with group members and help group members build rapport with each other. They help to set and maintain group agreements that create a structure for sharing. They model being a nonjudgmental and compassionate witness to others' experiences. They respect each survivor's needs and choices, meet the survivors where they are in their healing, and help survivors to recognize their own strength and resilience. They help survivors make healthy, informed choices, and they support the group members in doing each of these things for each other.

The facilitator must also understand culture and oppression – as related to the larger society and the corrections facility and how they interact. This quality is sometimes called cultural competency or cultural humility, and is not about memorizing a list of cultural characteristics. The group facilitator must be able to understand that someone's experiences, including the way they view

others and the way others view them, affects how they move through the world and how they will come to group. The role of the culture of the facility itself is also important. Facilitators must be willing to examine their own privilege and be aware of how it impacts their role in the group and how participants see them. Privilege refers to an advantage that is socially conferred and not earned. It is usually invisible to those who hold it because the nature of privilege is that the dominant group's identity is centered. Conversely, people and groups who do not hold privilege have no choice but to be aware of both oppression and privilege. The unearned advantages of the dominant group mean equal and corresponding unearned disadvantages for the oppressed group.

> "A system of privilege—a family, a workplace, a society—is organized around three basic principles: dominance, identification, and centeredness." — From *Privilege, Power, and Difference* (Allan G Johnson, 2018)

Privilege and oppression are a visible part of daily life inside corrections facilities. The inequalities that exist in broader society are concentrated inside detention and there are distinct hierarchies both among the incarcerated people and the staff. Prisoners are used to not being believed when they report concerns, especially sexual abuse and sexual harassment by staff members. The common assumption that prisoners lie about abuse is an example of privilege – the perspective of staff is dominant and centered. Facilitators must be ready to acknowledge and support group members in their experiences with privilege and oppression as they almost always affect

the survivor's healing. The most important thing a facilitator can do to this end is to remember that each person is the expert in their own experience and that we can only learn about and understand that experience by listening.

Tips on creating a healing space:

- Acknowledge difference; do not try and minimize areas of privilege and oppression
- Admit inexperience and lack of knowledge — people will be able to detect false confidence and will respect humility
- Apologize freely and willingly — remember that incarcerated survivors are often not used to people in positions of authority apologizing or admitting they were wrong
- Expect people to assume that you have more resources than you do. Remember that people in detention live in a state of deprivation — of resources, food, communication, and control over details of daily life. It can seem as if people, especially professionals, have unlimited access to resources in the free world and also have more influence than you do. And, to be honest, something that will take a prisoner three weeks might take you ten minutes. It is still important to set limits and stay within your scope of work, but be understanding and non-judgmental as you do so.

Remember that the group is not a place to get your needs met. If you have unresolved trauma, a need to be liked, a desire to be seen as noble or charitable, or difficulty maintaining professional boundaries, seek supervision

to process and plan to manage these issues that will get in the way of facilitating the group.

Build and maintain group cohesion: The group facilitator listens, observes, and acts on their observations by encouraging healthy communication, addressing potential conflicts, and reminding participants of the group agreements. The group facilitator models active listening, validation of feelings, normalizing of experiences, and discussing healthy coping skills. The group facilitator addresses disruption and conflict without becoming defensive or joining the conflict and helps disengaged participants to reengage.

"I find that many of the same techniques work as in face-to-face counseling. When I can remember to remain open and calm, and to truly meet survivors where they are in that moment, leaving behind my own opinions and needs, the group goes well. When I stay grounded in my role of reflecting and guiding and supporting, remembering that the survivors are the experts in their own experience, the participants respond the best. The most challenging is conflict, but when I can stay in that mindset of a compassionate witness and remain non-judgmental or defensive, the group remains intact. Never underestimate the power of admitting when you've made a mistake. Incarcerated survivors are extremely perceptive when it comes to manipulation or inauthenticity and are not accustomed to people in authority being willing to admit they were wrong. Do not expect the group members to be perfect and model that it's okay for you not to be either. The other key for the group facilitator in a detention facility is to be consistent and not to make promises you can't keep – incarcerated

> *survivors are used to well-meaning outsiders who make promises and then disappear on them. They will forgive mistakes and inexperience if you just show up."* — JDI Group Facilitator

Help to maintain safety: Survivors cannot work on healing within group if they do not feel safe. Consider emotional and physical safety in discussions with group members. Remember that safety concerns and overall conditions in the facility can make a person feel fundamentally unsafe — the issue might not seem directly related to sexual abuse, but it is still important to consider because the group members will bring their whole selves into the group.

In group agreements, include what to do if there is a serious conflict between group members. Hopefully that will never happen, but having the discussion ahead of time will send the message that the group facilitator is prepared to handle difficult or unsafe situations.

Similarly, discuss what the group will do if a group member has a crisis during group. For example, if a person expresses suicidal ideations or begins to self-harm. There must be room within the group for people to talk about feeling suicidal or self-destructive and the facilitator must balance making such space for intolerable feelings with safety for others. One group agreement could be that there is to be no self-destructive behavior in group. Another might be that if someone shares that they are feeling suicidal or like harming themselves, the group will help them to develop a safety plan. The facilitator should also make clear that they will refer the person to a mental health provider and, if necessary, break confidentiality to keep the person safe.

The group facilitator must feel safe within the facility and confident that they will know what to do in an emergency; model confidence so that group members can focus on healing.

Tips on creating a safe space for group:

- Complete the facility volunteer orientation if one is available
- Learn facility safety procedures
  - What to do if there is an alarm or lock down
  - What to do if there is a medical emergency in group
  - What to do if there is a mental health emergency in group
- Learn the facility staff contact person's schedule and have a backup contact person for when they are not available; check in with the contact person when you arrive and check out with them when you leave the facility
- Make space for safety planning with group members if needed. Help them to identify:
  - Coping skills for crisis
  - Safe, or the safest, places within the facility
  - Safe people within the facility
  - What to do in an emergency related to physical safety
  - What to do in an emergency related to emotional safety
- Include safety in discussions on group agreements

- Include explicit conversations about confidentiality in group agreements; help group members practice how to answer when other prisoners or staff ask them about what happened in group
- Have a plan to learn about any major incidents within the facility — fights, injuries, suicides, fires, natural disasters, escapes, staff being fired. Remember that the group is happening in the place where the group members live and they will be deeply affected by whatever is going on in the facility. Never dismiss or minimize how unsettling a major disruption can be; make space to process how people are feeling and how the disruption has affected them
- If possible, allow people to rest, breathe, have a transition before returning to their unit, work, or program

Manage the logistics of the group: The group facilitator must make sure that survivors can get to the group – some facilities will require appointment slips or that names be on a list that is filed before each group. A communication strategy that will allow the facilitator to inform members of any changes in schedule should be developed. The group facilitators should plan ahead and between group sessions to develop agendas, prepare materials, and plan to manage group dynamics. The facilitator must also work with the facility to make sure that all materials, group facilitators, and any guest speakers are approved to enter the facility. The facilitator should work with the facility to make sure participants receive any program credits they can earn and prepare attendance sheets, completion certificates, or letters as needed. A final logistical task is group evaluation. The facilitator should design and carry out

an evaluation strategy and use the feedback to improve future group sessions and the overall groups program.

Manage Group Dynamics: As has been said before, the group facilitator is the curator and keeper of the group structure and must notice and guide group dynamics. Having two facilitators is important because it is difficult for one person to perform all of the functions of the facilitator and keep an eye on dynamics.

- Look for diads and triads. Alliances between two or three group members can affect group dynamics by making others feel excluded. In a corrections facility, such alliances are inevitable. If the group facilitator manages group participation evenly, encourages group members to support each other, and checks in with the group regularly, such alliances can be neutralized
- Notice group dynamics, including shifts in demeanor of individuals or the tone of the group as a whole; reflect what is observed; work with the group to move through or address any problematic dynamics
- Make time to process with group members; make sure members check into and out of each group session
- Be consistent in attendance, punctuality, and in maintaining group agreements; do not make promises you can't keep and keep the promises you make
- Notice if one or more people seem to be holding back and not participating or sharing openly. Remember that it will probably take longer to build trust inside a detention facility. Don't make a specific

level of unstructured sharing a requirement — expect that some people will feel unsafe to share; structured exercises and rounds can be used to help someone who tends to hold back to share. Encourage group members to challenge themselves (both to share and to listen). Like with other dynamics, point out when sharing levels are very uneven and talk about it with the group, without placing judgments on either sharing a lot or sharing very little.

- Respond to group without judgment, recognizing that working through all group dynamics, including conflict, is an opportunity for healing and growth.
- Make termination decisions carefully. Make time and space in group sessions to help group members process when someone leaves the group — members and facilitators alike. If a facilitator has a planned departure, give the group members notice and provide a structured way for them to say good-bye. When the group is ending, devote time in the final sessions to talking through: what the group has meant to people; accomplishments and growth, positive things group members have learned about and from each other, and plans to maintain progress made during the group. During the final session, an ending ritual is an important tool to help the group members find closure.

Manage Multiple Roles: Inside a corrections facility, the group facilitator plays multiple roles. The group facilitator should view beginning a new program inside a corrections facility the same as going into a new community. The prison is a community of which the facilitator is not a part. Facilitators should enter the facility with the same openness, willingness to learn and observe,

curiosity, and patience as they would when starting work in a community center or school that is new to their service area. Because of the closed nature of a corrections facility, any new person or program that enters affects the environment — this is part of the reason that corrections officials tend to be hesitant about new people and programs coming in. The facilitator's role is a combination of direct services provider, prevention educator, and community organizer. Facilitators must also be able and feel empowered to make autonomous decisions because challenges will invariably come up that require quick decisions.

Group Process

All groups, whether they meet once or for months, go through a process of coming together, figuring out how to work together, getting to work, and ending. The group facilitator guides the groups through the process but is not necessarily in complete control of the process. Each group develops its own personality and the manifestation of group dynamics is a function of the sum total of the group members more than of their individual personalities. The following is a helpful model in predicting the stages that most groups go through.

Forming: At the beginning of the group, participants and the facilitator are getting to know each other. People are often more reserved than they will be later in the group. The group is developing group agreements and goals and members usually look to the facilitator to be a strong leader and direct the group. Participants might be nervous, excited, hesitant, and uncertain

about how to behave or even if they are committed to returning. Laying a foundation for future work is important in this stage and facilitators should be ready with discussion suggestions and activities to help participants learn how to function in the group; set clear guidelines and model active listening and respectful interactions.

Storming: The second stage is marked by transition. Group participants are working to define themselves within the group, to gauge their relationships to each other and the facilitator, and, sometimes, to push the group to be something other than what it is. Group members sometimes challenge each other or the facilitator, form alliances with one or two other participants, attempt to exclude certain participants, or push the norms of the group. The facilitator must reinforce the group agreements, assist the participation of anyone being excluded, continue to model respectful and compassionate behavior, and emphasize the point of the group. Sometimes group members leave the group during this stage and the group returns to the forming stage.

Norming: The third stage is when the group begins to become productive and cohesive. Participants work together and begin to see each other as allies. The group interactions become more enjoyable and cooperative and group members bond. Conflicts might arise and are dealt with easily because the group members have a foundation of respect for each other and the group as a whole. The facilitator must still guide the process but

can be less directive. The facilitator's role becomes encouraging, reflecting, sharing information, and supporting the work of the group.

Performing: During this stage, the group takes on its own identity. The facilitator might begin to feel like they are there to hold the space and little else. Group members interact fluidly and support each other – even outside of the group. Group members might have ideas for what the group can work on to further the group's goals. The group members make strides in their goals and have a unique community identity during this phase.

Adjourning: The final stage of the group is an important opportunity to help members leave something in a healthy manner and to maintain any progress they made in the group. Facilitators should make space for feelings of loss, sadness, fear, or anger about the group ending. Near the end of the group, membership might drop off or participants might create conflict that has not been seen since the early stages. Endings and goodbyes are difficult for most people and for prisoners for whom the group has been a safe place and respite from daily life in a facility, the end can be painful. It might be easier for some people to end in conflict than to acknowledge their feelings about group ending. Facilitators should begin to prepare participants for the ending several sessions beforehand and validate participants' feelings about termination. Having a celebration or ceremony to mark and honor the ending is an important way to help participants process that the group is over.

Although the stages make the most sense in the context of closed groups, open-ended groups with rolling membership will also experience these stages when there is a shift in membership or other major transition.

Awareness of the stages can help facilitators to anticipate and manage the group process. It is also useful to know during times of conflict that the storming stage does not last forever.

Group Structure

As mentioned before, an open support group is not a group without structure. The facilitator should have a plan for each group, and each group session can follow a similar outline, with consistent beginnings and endings for each. Such consistency will help group members to know what to expect, create a container for their sharing, and help the facilitator by giving them a plan to fall back on.

Sample Agenda for an Open Support Group

1) Introductions
    a. Facilitator and group members
    b. Informed consent discussion
2) Opening
    a. Experienced group members review group agreements
    b. Opening round

3) Working
    a. Facilitator introduces and facilitates discussion topic (from a list the group has already chosen or, alternately, an issue that was raised as critical in the opening round)
    b. Or, facilitator introduces and facilitates an exercise on a predetermined topic
4) Closing
    a. Closing round
    b. Announcements and reminders

Beginning and Ending a Group Session

Regardless of the structure and topic of the group, closing and ending are essential parts of the group process and of creating and maintaining the healing factors.

The way the group begins and ends should:

- Give group members a safe way to practice talking in front of the group
- Model how to share the group space and time
- Allow group members to influence the direction of the group session
- Encourage sharing and disclosure
- Provide a space in each session for the facilitator to receive feedback
- Offer stable bookends for the more fluid group process in the working stages of the group
- Help group members to transition from and then back to the detention environment

The simplest way to open and close a group is a round. The facilitators can use opening and closing rounds to develop the group process further and reinforce the healing messages of the group. The opening and closing rounds or activities can shift depending on where the group is in its process and the topic of the group session. In the early phases, group openings should probably be light and are intended to help the group practice interacting.

Initial Stage (Forming): During the initial stage, opening and closing rounds can focus on getting to know each other, practicing sharing and listening, setting goals, selecting topics for group sessions, and gaining trust. Ice breaker games or activities are a common way to help people practice sharing. Choose ice breakers carefully — they can be fun and a wonderful tool, but they can also be unintentionally invasive or silly in a way that make people uncomfortable. One possible opening discussion in the initial stage would be to choose the name of the group. When the group members name the group together, they build a connection, feel ownership over the group, and have the chance to choose a name with which they feel comfortable.

"I was in a group training once where the ice breaker was that everyone had to sit in a circle, with their feet facing the middle. The facilitators told us we had to try and steal each other's socks. It wasn't a therapy group, and part of their point was to make people uncomfortable, but I remember thinking that it was a really poor choice. There was a clear assumption that no one would have a disability or injury that prevented them from participating. There was also an assumption that being touched by and touching virtual strangers was safe for everyone, and that no one would be embarrassed about the state of their socks. I used to really like doing the two truths and a lie exercise — the one where everyone says two things that are true about themselves and one that is not true, and then the group tries to guess which one is not true. I do still like it because it can be fun and it gives people a chance to tell funny stories about themselves, but I don't use it in survivor groups in the early stages anymore because, even though it's usually very light-hearted, it can be unsafe for survivors of childhood abuse or domestic violence to be asked to lie and then to have people doubt what was true. I tend to stick to simple rounds that are related to the current topic of the group." — Group facilitator

Transition Stage (Norming and Storming): Opening and closing rounds in the transitional stage can be used to reinforce group agreements, explore group process, model active listening and clear communication, explore internal and external resources, communicate needs and plan for future groups, and debrief from the previous session. The group knows each other and the facilitator now, so opening and closing rounds can include more explicit

sharing. However, if the group is experiencing a difficult transition, they should focus on group process and how to move into the working stage.

Working Stage (Performing): The group and facilitator have the most freedom during the working stage. Opening and closing rounds can be a chance to share feelings and thoughts, practice communication skills, provide support to each other, share accomplishments and skills, identify strengths and challenges, and evaluate the group.

Closing Stage (Adjourning): When the facilitator identifies that the group is in the ending stages, all opening and closing rounds should be used to help the group members with termination. Opening and closing can be used to evaluate group progress and process, share feelings about group ending, review and evaluate individual and group goals, share what group members have learned from and appreciate about other group members. Avoid choosing a closing round topic that cannot be resolved in the remaining time left in the group. Focus instead on closure itself and how people will continue to use coping skills and nurture relationships built during the group.

Sample Opening and Closing Rounds

Opening:

- Share the time you felt most like yourself
- Share one thing you did to take care of yourself since last group
- Share one thing you are proud of
- Share one thing that might surprise us about you

- Share how you are feeling about being here today
- Share what you did on the assignment we discussed last week
- Share one thing you are hoping to get out of group today
- Share one thing that was difficult for you this week and one thing that went well

Closing:

- Finish the sentence, "I am resilient because…"
- Share one thing you commit to doing to take care of yourself this week
- Share one thing you will take away with you from group today
- Finish the sentence, "I know I am strong because…"
- Share one thing you appreciate about each person in this group
- Share one goal you have for your healing this week
- Share an idea for a future session
- Share one way you will work on building your support system

Staying on Topic

While each survivor is unique, survivors of sexual abuse and sexual harassment have some common needs – no matter where they live. JDI consistently finds that the skills rape crisis counselors employ with any survivor are applicable to

work with incarcerated survivors. The healing factors inherent in groups are also applicable. One common challenge that incarcerated survivors face is the frequency and level of daily triggers in their environment. What that means for group facilitators is teasing out what is related to healing from sexual abuse and what is a byproduct of living in a highly chaotic environment with little control over day-to-day aspects of one's life. Many issues that might not, on the surface, seem related, in fact, are. For example, incarcerated survivors deal with invasions of privacy, moments of being out of control, and casual sexual harassment constantly throughout the day. Some incarcerated people describe being in detention as long periods of boredom – but always with the threat of danger – and then crises that are out of their control. For survivors of sexual abuse, such an environment can leave them constantly on edge and in crisis. It is important for group facilitators to recognize the need to process such concerns as directly related to healing from sexual abuse and to create space for survivors to process their feelings and reactions.

While facilitators must understand the breadth of issues that are related to healing from sexual abuse, it can also be frustrating for group members if the group has trouble staying on track or discussing the agreed-upon topic. When a group member's sharing becomes off-topic, the facilitator should acknowledge what the person said, respond supportively, and redirect. For example, "I hear that the delay in receiving canteen has been frustrating. I've learned that it's a highlight of your week and it sounds like you're feeling disappointed. Let's check in with the group a little later if we can take time to process general frustrations around things that are out of all of your control. Was there anything you wanted to contribute now to today's topic of

unlearning self-blame?" In a mature and high-functioning group, group members will begin to do this for each other.

TIP: Incarcerated survivors often have a need to process daily life in detention and the effect of things like isolation, noisy environments, lack of privacy, and lack of control. When this need is preventing the group from working on stated goals, it is useful to schedule a brief time within each group for participants to share about whatever is pressing to them in that moment. They should agree to return to the group's goals and agenda when that period of time is over.

Being a Role Model

One important function of the facilitator is to be a role model. The facilitator can model that kind, nonjudgmental, anti-bias language is part of creating an environment that is humanizing and non-traumatizing. The facilitator can also model using "I" statements, active listening, setting boundaries, and keeping commitments.

The group facilitator also models how to give and receive feedback. In the early stages of the group, the facilitator must help the group members to build trust so that they can eventually communicate openly and honestly. Many incarcerated people, particularly survivors, have had little experience with open communication and positive or constructive feedback. It is understandable for incarcerated survivors to interpret all feedback as critical and hurtful, and to become defensive and shut down. Giving constructive

feedback in a gentle and non-blaming way is just as difficult as receiving feedback without becoming defensive. The facilitator can model how to give feedback by:

- Using clear, simple language
- Being straightforward and honest, describe specific behaviors and, interactions and avoid generalities and words like "always" and "never"
- Using "I" statements
- Balancing a focus on problems with a focus on solutions
- Providing space for everyone to share their perspective and reflecting what was said without judgments
- Assuming best intentions on the part of all group members, until proven otherwise
- Understanding that people's actions usually make sense for who they are and where they are in their process
- Reflecting on positive interactions and things the group and individual group members have accomplished
- Summarizing observations and asking for clarification
- Noting that giving and receiving feedback can be difficult and thanking group members for being willing to engage

There is sometimes conflict between a group member and a facilitator. It could be that the facilitator reminds the group member of someone. It could be that something the facilitator said hurt or angered the group member and the group member does not feel comfortable or have the communication skills to address it. It is important for the facilitator to respond and deal with the problem and imperative that they not join the group member in the

conflict. No matter how difficult, the facilitator must resist the impulse to trade barbs or try to one-up the group member. A conflict with the group facilitator is an excellent opportunity to model good communication skills.

Tips on how to handle a group member's conflict with a facilitator:

- Notice and acknowledge the conflict; ask the group member for their perspective on what is happening; summarize what you hear; propose a plan for resolving the conflict; ask for the group member's help in making the plan work
- Ask your co-facilitator for help managing the conflict
- If you find yourself joining in the conflict in any way, seek supervision and help in developing a plan
- If you are hurt by an interaction, seek supervision to process your feelings
- Do not be afraid to apologize if you contributed to the conflict

If a group facilitator develops feelings for a particular group member — positive or negative — it is similarly important to address them. Facilitators should expect to find that they occasionally like or dislike a particular group member more than the others. It is uncomfortable to admit disliking a group member — rape crisis counselors and group facilitators are supposed to exercise unconditional positive regard for all survivors. However, if a group facilitator does not acknowledge uncomfortable feelings, they are much more likely to come out in the group facilitator's behavior and to change the group dynamic. This is one of the reasons it is so important to have co-facilitators. Facilitators should make an agreement with each other that they will respectfully point out any such boundary issues that become apparent in the

group; facilitators must agree that they can share with each other if they find themselves having feelings about a group member, even if they don't believe they have acted on them. Anytime a facilitator notices that they have developed feelings for a particular group member, they should inform their supervisor as soon as possible and ask to debrief and strategize about it.

Tips on maintaining boundaries:

Facilitators are the holders of the group process and dynamics. Their behavior sets the tone for every group session. Facilitators should consistently assess their own feelings and actions in the group. Some possible questions to review are:

- Do I look forward to or dread seeing a particular group member over the others?
- Do I respond to a particular group member differently than to the others?
- Have I had side conversations or other interactions with a particular group member outside of group (apart from meetings with an individual client)?
- Have I said or done something that took away from the group's focus on healing?
- Have I responded to a group member in a way that I would not have if my supervisor were in the room?
- Have I said or done something in group that I would rather not see played back on a video?

Supporting Group Facilitators

Rape crisis counselors are a special and unique group of people. Doing this work takes dedication, courage, and a willingness to face injustice about which most people would rather not know. Providing services to incarcerated survivors inside a detention facility adds layers to the challenges of the work.

> *"The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet."*
>
> — *Kitchen Table Wisdom* (Rachel Naomi Remen, 1996)

Vicarious trauma is exposure to traumatic events and experiences that have happened to other people. Witnessing trauma can cause reactions similar to experiencing a traumatic event. Rape crisis counselors who provide services inside detention facilities are exposed to a dehumanizing environment, casual disregard and cruelty, and rampant sexual harassment. In addition, the racism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and ableism that are prevalent in society are often magnified, or concentrated, inside the intense and closed culture of the corrections facility. Staff and inmates alike are both harmed by this toxic culture and perpetuate it. When directly confronted with oppressive and hurtful or harassing comments, group facilitators must be able to talk with each other to process and plan what to do. Supervisors should make it clear to group facilitators that they are empowered to take care of themselves – whether that is by saying something in the moment, removing themselves from the situation, or asking for a meeting to discuss the event.

Compassion fatigue is the exhaustion that can come from caring and extending yourself for others. The phrase "compassionate witness" has been used in this guide several times — meaning being present with a survivor to be a witness to, to hold, and to provide a safe space for them to share their trauma. A person can only bear witness to trauma and provide support for a trauma survivor for so long before they are at their limit of what they can take in. The group facilitators must have a plan for support and supervision. Supervisors must make it clear that being affected by the trauma they are witnessing does not indicate that a group facilitator is not up to the work.

Tips for providing support:

- Make time and build in resources in the program for continuing education for group facilitators; they are expected to be up to date on group facilitation models, understanding trauma, crisis intervention, and current trends in support and advocacy for sexual assault survivors. Training sessions and conferences can also be rejuvenating, decrease isolation, and help to connect with resources
- Make group supervision a priority. Debriefing, processing boundaries, processing exposure to an oppressive and dehumanizing environment
- Offer and destigmatize individual support for facilitators
- Support staff in processing and confronting racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism
- Plan for breaks onsite if the facilitator is doing more than one group
- Have food and water that can be taken into the facility

- Remember that in an oppressive environment, any acts of kindness or that move the culture to being more trauma-informed are transformative
- Celebrate successes, no matter how small

Documentation and Evaluation

Documentation should follow the same guidelines as for services in the community, with some minor tweaks. In order to maintain confidentiality and protect privilege, any files or records should be kept in secure, fireproof cabinets in the rape crisis center's home office.

Documentation should include:

- An intake form that has basic demographic and contact information
- An intake assessment that includes the person's goals for the group and a measure of trauma reactions or symptoms
- An informed consent form that includes a description of the group, benefits, and risks of participating, and limits to confidentiality
- Group notes that include who participated and a brief discussion of the group dynamics, activities, and any notable discussions or safety concerns
- Group evaluations

Group facilitators must balance collecting necessary information with group participant's privacy and comfort. Information collection should never be invasive, overly burdensome, or seem manipulative. For example, group facilitators should explain, in clear and simple language, that completing an evaluation or other feedback form is optional and in no way affects the person's ability to receive services. The only documentation the group member must complete in order to participate in group is the informed consent form and the most basic of contact information.

Documentation is also important for current funders and for reaching out to potential funders. Some funders might ask for demographic data and almost all will need to learn about the number of group participants and how many sessions have been provided. Evaluation information is usually the most important for funders. They will want to learn about how the program is helping people to heal. Group facilitators should find ways to elicit and collect stories and quotes from participants that show the ways the group has helped. Again, ask for permission and be open and honest with participants about where and how the information will be shared. Always remove all identifying information before sharing it with outside parties. Note that identifying information for people who are incarcerated is a little different for people in the community. Things like the unit the person lives in, the security level of the unit they are housed in, the nature of the charges that brought them into detention, how long they have been in detention, and any other programming they might be involved in can all identify a person. Also, if the person is in a women's facility, remember that many jails and prisons only have one women's unit or facility, so they are more easily identifiable than someone who is housed in a men's facility.

Evaluating the group is important for purposes other than reporting to and gaining interest from funders. The group facilitators can use information from the evaluation process to improve the group program, share accomplishments with the facility, and plan for future programs.

Assess the funders' requirements, the program needs, and the nature of the group and use the following discussion questions to develop an evaluation process.

Decisions about the evaluation process:

- When will the evaluation be done?
    - At the end of each session
    - At the mid-point and during the last session
    - During the last session
    - After the last session
- How will the evaluation be completed?
    - A written form completed in the group room
    - A written form to be turned or mailed in after the group
    - A group discussion
    - Individual interviews
- Who will complete evaluations?
    - Participants

   - Facility staff or administrators
   - Group facilitators

Tips from the Field

The Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault (LaFASA) on using evaluations to improve groups

LaFASA completed an evaluation of groups inside detention facilities to learn about the effectiveness of their groups and how to improve them. Some of what they learned was not what they expected — in other words, there were unexpected benefits of the group that they would not have learned about had they not done an evaluation.

Topics that were most helpful to group participants:

- Understanding triggers and how to cope with them
- Understanding common reactions to trauma
- Learning coping mechanisms
- Learning "I'm not the only one"
- Learning that it wasn't my fault
- Understanding how past trauma influenced my future
- Understanding what sexual assault is
- Learning about the Power and Control Wheel[iv]

- Learning about freezing and fight or flight

Participants want more information about:

- How the brain and trauma work
- Domestic violence
- Trauma and mental illness
- Childhood abuse
- Being assertive and setting boundaries
- Getting through the hurt and pain
- Dealing with the reoccurring thoughts
- Understanding the laws and role of victim advocates
- How to forgive and let go

7. Group examples

In researching this guide, JDI spoke with and heard from advocates from all over the country. The descriptions below are based on what advocates shared with JDI about the groups they run as well as groups that JDI staff facilitate.

In a Youth Facility:

A closed, time-limited group: A rape crisis advocate works with a facility mental health staff to co-facilitate a group for youth who have experienced sexual abuse before they were incarcerated. It is a closed, time-limited group. Up to eight youth meet together for eight sessions. The topics of the sessions include building coping skills, processing anger, dealing with betrayal, grieving a loss of safety, learning about healthy sexual development, honoring resilience, understanding healthy boundaries, and self-care. The group is voluntary. It is held in a classroom outside of school hours, so there is maximum privacy. At the end of group, the youth get a half hour of free time to prepare to go back to their housing units and peers. When the eight sessions are over, any youth who attended six or more sessions receive a certificate. The youth have named the group "Healers."

An open, ongoing group: A rape crisis advocate comes to the facility every week and holds two groups — one for youth in the girls' unit and one for

youth in the boys' unit. Any youth who want to come can attend, and they attend the group that best fits their gender identity. Because it is a small facility, the group is open to all and there is no pre-screening. The facilitator plans an activity each week that is geared to provide all youth, but survivors in particular, with new coping skills and with positive messages about healing from trauma. The facilitator also includes basic information that is required for resident education by the PREA standards — that the youth have the right to be free from sexual abuse, how to make a report, and how to get help. If a youth needs more intense services related to healing from sexual abuse, they can receive individual face-to-face counseling outside of the group.

In a Prison:

An ongoing group with rolling membership: A rape crisis advocate offers a group for anyone in a men's prison whose life has been touched by sexual abuse. The group is made up of people who are survivors of abuse as well as people who are loved ones of survivors. The people in the facility requested that the group be about sexual abuse generally to protect the privacy of group members — no one outside of group knows exactly what brings someone to the group. Because it is a mixed group, discussions focus on common trauma reactions, building coping skills, how to support survivors, dealing with triggers and feeling out of control inside the facility, unlearning self-blame, and learning communication skills. The group membership is capped at twelve and it meets every week, with one week off every six weeks. During the week off, members can choose to leave and new members can join. The group facilitator maintains a waiting list of people who have been

screened. When the group reconvenes after the one-week break, the members review the group agreements and set goals for the coming six weeks.

A closed, time-limited group: A rape crisis counselor has been working with the facility mental health staff to identify members for a trauma processing group. The group focuses on healing through story-telling — giving survivors an opportunity to take control of their story by telling it in their own way. Six to eight group members meet for twelve weeks. They spend the first three sessions learning about trauma, dynamics of sexual abuse, and coping skills. They then spend sessions four through seven developing their story. Participants can write a testimony, write a song, create a piece of art, create movement or dance, or use a combination to tell their story of survival. The facilitator helps them to create a representation that honors their resilience. During sessions eight through eleven, participants share their testimonies and art, giving participants an opportunity to witness each other's stories and give positive feedback. The final session is a celebration of all they have accomplished. The facility has agreed to display the art of any participant who gives permission, and would like to share it, in a locked display cabinet in a common area.

In a Jail:

An open, ongoing psycho-educational group: A rape crisis advocate comes to the jail two full days a week. Each time they come, they provide several

individual sessions and a group session. The group sessions are open in that new people can join each time, but they must be prescreened or invited. The group sessions are for survivors of sexual abuse or sexual harassment and are psycho-educational. The group facilitators have developed a series of sixteen workshops that can be run over eight weeks. They have been running the group for a year now and have offered four series of sixteen sessions, with breaks in between. Most people are in the facility for less than three months, so the eight-week model works well. The workshop topics range from understanding trauma to building coping skills to setting boundaries to sexual harassment and bystander intervention. The jail has asked the facilitators to provide the basic information that they also provide during inmate education.

A closed, short-term group: A rape crisis advocate partners with a local meditation and mindfulness instructor. They screen and select up to fifteen participants who are sexual abuse and sexual harassment survivors for a four-week group series. The group is brief and focused on coping skills instead of sharing or processing trauma. Because the jail has a high turnover in the unit where the group is offered, more than a four-week series would not be possible. If someone needs more services or would like to explore trauma or delve into their history more, the rape crisis advocate can see them individually. The group sessions focus on learning basic meditation techniques, including deep breathing, choosing a calming or safe chant or phrase, and using stretching and progressive muscle relaxation. This group structure is safe for this particular unit and people learn coping skills they can use in their cells.

8. Resources

A Guide for Facilitators of Transgender Community Groups: Supporting Sexual Violence Survivors, FORGE (March 2016), https://forge-forward.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/facilitators-guide-trans-support-groups.pdf

Hope Behind Bars: An Advocate's Guide to Helping Survivors of Sexual Abuse in Detention (Just Detention International), available at https://justdetention.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Advocates_Manual_FINAL_2017_3.pdf

The Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs has many resources on support groups, which can be found here: https://www.wcsap.org/resources/support-groups?field_cs_tax_type_target_id=All&sort_by=field_cs_date_only_value&sort_order=DESC&items_per_page=10&page=0%20

9. Notes

i. National Standards To Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Prison Rape, 28 CFR 115 (Department of Justice, 2012), "Supplemental Information 1C: Costs and Benefits," at www.federalregister.gov/d/2012-12427/p-61

ii. Allen J. Beck, et al, Sexual Victimization in Prisons and Jails Reported by Inmates, 2011-12 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, May 2013), available at: www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/svpjri1112.pdf

iii. You can click through and read each of the PREA standards on the website of the National PREA Resource Center: www.prearesourcecenter.org/implementation/prea-standards/overview

iv. You can find the Power and Control Wheel at the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs website: www.theduluthmodel.org/wheel-gallery