

# Alumni Group Guide for Engagement

*The general guidance for engagement to support and interact with each other and participants as a Treatment Court Alumni Group.*

## **Introduction**

Alumni support is a key ingredient to Treatment Court participants finding the value in lived experience that alumni members can provide. It is a circular process that allows for mutual support that fosters long-term recovery practices, fellowship, a sense of giving back, and the effect of empowerment to change and show others it is possible.

These general guidelines are meant to be a road map to establish and maintain a meaningful engagement strategy in an alumni group to support participants in the program. The focus is on sobriety, recovery, and support. Depending on the length of the treatment court program, it is best to include alumni interaction throughout, while encouraging positive environments.

Keep in mind, that you are an expert in your lived experience and that is all you need to be effective in following this guide. Where you started, landed, and are at right now is the best message you can share to support others. There are several trainings that you might find helpful, and some are required if you are interested in becoming the Alumni Coordinator. Either way, your presence, and input are valuable!

## **Alumni and Program Policies and Procedures**

As you begin to work with the Program Coordinator, it will be a good time to familiarize yourself with the established policies and procedures for the alumni program. If these have not been established, you may be asked to help develop a draft for consideration by the treatment court team. Your input and expertise on how to engage with participants and other alumni are vital to this process. Consider how you would want to see this occur from your time in the program. Remember these can ALWAYS be revised to meet new or changing criteria.

## **Ethics and Boundaries**

Ethical behavior and positive boundaries are extremely important when engaging with the participants of the program, and of course with each other as alumni. Part of this consideration is to be aware as alumni you are not a therapist, nor are you expected to be. This group is a self-help support group and not a therapy process group. Remember to be mindful of your personal boundaries and recovery path.

- Be fair and honest in all you do-no special treatment for anyone

- Do not monopolize the conversation with your experience or impose your path as the “only way” to recovery
- Respect all paths to recovery and all forms of recovery
- Acknowledge all participants for sharing their strengths and shortcomings
- Never require someone to share

### **Peer Engagement**

When engaging with participants and other alumni consider the following:

- Always start on time and take attendance
- Always have a guiding subject to open the discussion
- Do not speak over each other, ask that the members raise hands for you to call on
- Use de-escalation techniques, if the discussion seems to be getting intense
- Allow everyone the opportunity to speak, even if they pass
- If someone is in need of a higher level of support, encourage them to reach out to the Program Coordinator. Ask them if you can alert the Program Coordinator of their need.
- Use the last 10 minutes of the interaction to recap what was covered and how well everyone did engaging. Acknowledge their presence and attention are appreciated.

### **Confidentiality**

The confidential nature of group engagement is important, and it is necessary to be aware of the exceptions. While you want to make sure participants feel comfortable being honest and engaging in healthy discussions, you have a responsibility to inform them if you feel they are in danger of hurting themselves or someone else by physical violence, you must report it to the authorities.

- Exception to confidentiality: There is a term called “mandated reporter” which refers to the suspected abuse or neglect of children or adults and the laws that protect them. The simple definition is that any person who suspects abuse or neglect of a child or adult must report it to the appropriate authority. ***\*\*The law citation and contact information for reporting are below\*\*:***
  - Section 32A-4-3 of the New Mexico Children’s Code mandates that anyone who has knowledge or a reasonable suspicion that a child is an abused or neglected child must report it immediately. The report may be made to (1) a law enforcement agency; (2) the New Mexico Children, Youth, and Families Department; or (3) a tribal law enforcement or social services agency for any child residing in

**\*\*Indian Country\*\***. Merely reporting the incident to a supervisor or manager is insufficient.

- **24-HOUR ABUSE, NEGLECT, OR EXPLOITATION REPORTING HOTLINE-1-800-445-6242**
  - **CYFD's Statewide Central Intake child abuse hotline (1-855-333-SAFE [7233] or #SAFE from a cell phone)**
  - **Local Law Enforcement**
- Section 27-7-30 Adult Protective Services. Duty to report; penalty.
- A. Any person, including financial institutions, having reasonable cause to believe that an incapacitated adult is being abused, neglected, or exploited shall immediately report that information to the department.
- B. The report required in Subsection A of this section may be made orally or in writing. The report shall include the name, age, and address of the adult, the name and address of any other person responsible for the adult's care, the nature and extent of the adult's condition, the basis of the reporter's knowledge, and other relevant information.
- **If you suspect an adult is being abused, neglected, or exploited, call Adult Protective Services Statewide Intake, toll-free at 866-654-3219 or 505-476-4912.**
  - **Local Law Enforcement**

Although these types of issues may not occur often, it is a possibility and must be discussed. You will be required to sign a confidentiality form by the Program Coordinator. If you have ANY questions about this form, do not hesitate to ask.

### **SAMHSA's Core Competencies of Peer Support**

#### **Principles of Peer Core Competencies-SAMHSA**

**Core competencies for peer workers reflect certain foundational principles identified by members of the mental health consumer and substance use disorder recovery communities. These are:**

- **Recovery-oriented:** Peer workers hold out hope to those they serve, partnering with them to envision and achieve a meaningful and purposeful life. Peer workers help those they serve to identify and build on strengths and

empower them to choose for themselves, recognizing that there are multiple pathways to recovery.

- **Person-centered:** Peer recovery support services are always directed by the person participating in services. Peer recovery support is personalized to align with the specific hopes, goals, and preferences of the people served and to respond to specific needs the people have identified to the peer worker.
- **Voluntary:** Peer workers are partners or consultants to those they serve. They do not dictate the types of services provided or the elements of recovery plans that will guide their work with peers. Participation in peer recovery support services is always contingent on peer choice.
- **Relationship-focused:** The relationship between the peer worker and the peer is the foundation on which peer recovery support services and support are provided. The relationship between the peer worker and peer is respectful, trusting, empathetic, collaborative, and mutual.
- **Trauma-informed:** Peer recovery support utilizes a strength-based framework that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety and creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

SAMHSA Core Competencies are a clear picture of the guidelines to engage with participants and each other. The key goal should be the value and effectiveness of being of service to a fellow in recovery

*U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2020, April 16). Core Competencies for Peer Workers. SAMHSA.  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/brss-tacs/recovery-support-tools/peers/core-competencies-peer-workers>.*

### **Group Process**

As mentioned above, make sure to start and end on time. Not only does this establish the expectations for attending the group, but it also helps participants to be organized and accountable.

Suggested topics:

## **Alumni and Participants**

### **Support System**

These can be single topics of discussion or combined based on the dynamic of your group.

- A support system may include family members, friends, co-workers, and members of local support groups. What does your support system look like?
  - Someone to share your thoughts, dreams, hopes, gains, and losses
  - A person or group of people who will support your mental and emotional needs through life.
- Discuss ways to build up your support system. This is a personal reflection on who and what matters to you.
- Questions:
  - Who is a member of your support system?
  - How do the people of your support system support you?
  - What else could they do to support you?
  - How do your peers and Alumni support you?
  - Are you willing to be a support system for someone? If so, how would you provide support to others?

### **Hope**

- Definition: A feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.
- Sobriety and recovery from alcohol or drugs start with abstinence and hope.
- Belief and expectation are the key elements of hope; Hope has the ability to help you heal.
- Recovery comes with challenges, difficulty, frustration, and obstacles.
- Set goals. You need hope to keep your focus on those goals.
- Hope will help you build a solid foundation for long-term recovery.
- Questions:
  - What does the word “hope” mean to you?
  - Have you ever hoped you could stop using substances for good?
  - What did that feeling of hope feel like?

- What is your hope for your future? Relate your answer to recovery.

### **Alumni Only:**

#### **Support and Fellowship:**

- Open sharing by topic or organic
- Shared facilitation
- What works what doesn't
- Resources in the community
- Post-graduation challenges

#### **Live by Example: Role Model**

- The importance of positive role-modeling,
- A positive role model serves as an example and encourages others to live positive lives.
- Did you have a hero or someone you looked up to?
- How was that influential in your life and now in recovery?
- How can you share your recovery to empower others?
- How are you currently serving as a role model?

#### **Giving Back:**

- Using your knowledge and experiences to encourage others to refrain from substance use and misuse.
- Effectively sharing your story of recovery to enlighten others.
- Giving back to your community will build a sense of self-worth and gratification.
- Sharing your story:
  - What is the most important thing you can think of to tell them?"
  - What stories would you share with them?
  - What advice do you have to give in order to encourage them to refrain from alcohol and drugs?

### **Final Thoughts**

The support and lived experience of alumni and participants being shared consistently will enhance recovery goals and life skills. As long-term recovery can be challenging at times, peer support is absolutely a foundational guide to success. Those alumni who have successfully graduated, and are willing to share their time, experience, strength, and hope about recovery will emphasize dignity, value, and humanity.

### **Sample Agenda for Alumni with Participants:**

**Greeting:** Alumni Member and/or Alumni Coordinator

Gratitude for time and willingness to share their recovery with others and each other

**Introductions:** Alumni

Graduates: name date of graduation, the most positive outcome so far of recovery, motivation to be a part of the alumni group

**Check-In:**

Go around the room and ask each participant to share the best part of recovery for them this week.

**Topic:**

· Introduce the topic with personal experience

**Close:**

Ensure everyone is ok with what was discussed and summarize the discussion with the positive takeaways.

Remind them of the next meeting date, time, and location.

### **Sample Agenda for Alumni Only:**

**Greeting:** Alumni Member and/or Alumni Coordinator

Gratitude for time and willingness to share their recovery with others and each other

**Introductions:** New Alumni

Graduates: name date of graduation, the most positive outcome so far of recovery, motivation to be a part of the alumni group

**Check-In:**

Go around the room and ask each alumni to share the best part of recovery.

**Alumni Group Business:**

Discussion of any upcoming or suggested events

**Topic:**

· Introduce the topic with personal experience

**Close:**

Follow-up Tasks:

Ensure everyone is ok with what was discussed and summarize the discussion with the positive takeaways.

Remind them of the next meeting date, time, and location.