Notebook - Inventory of Foundation Competencies in Social Work with Groups (IC-SWG)

Developed by Mark J. Macgowan, PhD, LCSW (MJMacgowan@gmail.com) Ver. 052214

Items "The Group Worker..."	Notes About the Item
Core Values	
1. Helps each member to appreciate the contributions of the other members so that everyone's ideas are heard and considered.	
2. Respects and highly values diversity in all of its dimensions such as culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental abilities, and age.	
3. Creates a group environment that offers an opportunity to live and practice the democratic principles of equality and autonomy. This value is presented to the group whenever appropriate and reinforced when members articulate it.	
Pre-Group Phase (Planning &, Recruitment) and New Group Formation	
4. Obtains organizational support for an affirmation of the group.	
5. Selects the group type, structure, processes, and size that will be appropriate for attaining the purposes of the group.	
6. Reaches out to and recruits potential group members.	
7. Obtains consent from potential members and relevant others as required by ethical guidelines and organizational requirements.	
8. Clarifies potential group members' goals and expectations of the group work service and uses this information to assess prospective members' potential investments in the pursuit of group goals.	
9. Helps members specify goals in terms that can lead to the determination of their attainment.	
10. Establishes an appropriate meeting place and meeting time that will be conducive to members' comfort, safety, and access to the group.	
11. Prepares members for the group in appropriate ways (which will differ depending whether the group is intended to attain individual goals or to accomplish task purposes in the agency and community).	
12. Demonstrates empathy in identifying members' feelings and reactions to joining the group.	

Items "The Group Worker..."	Notes About the Item
13. Knows how to select members for the group in relationship to principles of group composition (may not apply to groups in which others determine the group's membership).	
14. Develops a clear statement of group purpose that reflects member needs and agency mission and goals (often done cooperatively with the group members).	
15. Considers potential contextual, environmental, and societal impacts on the group.	
16. As appropriate, explains group purposes and processes to non- members such as other agency personnel, relevant community entities, and parents or referring agencies.	
17. Considers issues of group content as well as the use of activities, supplies needed, and resources.	
18. Identifies and uses methods to track group progress (e.g., group progress notes, formal and informal evaluations).	
19. If relevant, considers with the co-worker together the implications of similarities and differences with respect to such issues as approaches, styles, and communication.	
20. If relevant, debriefs and plans with co-worker after each session.	
21. Accesses and uses supervision [or consultation] on a regular basis.	
Group Work in the Beginning Phase	
22. Works collaboratively with members to develop a beginning contract for work that identifies tasks to be accomplished, goals to be achieved and the process by which the work is to occur.	
23. Discusses confidentiality and limits.	
24. Assists members in identifying and clarifying individual goals and group goals.	
25. Helps the members to link individual goals with group purposes.	
26. Invites full participation of all members.	
27. Solicits member feedback on the progress of the group.	

Items "The Group Worker..."	Notes About the Item
28. If relevant, employs special skills in working with mandated members and understands the impact on group dynamics of member's mandated status.	
29. Establishes rapport with individual members and the group as a whole.	
30. Assists group members in establishing relationships with one another.	
31. Highlights member commonalities.	
32. Encourages direct member to member communication.	
33. Seeks to aid the group in establishing norms for participation that promotes safety and trust.	
34. Seeks to cultivate mutual aid.	
35. Appreciates the impact of various psychological, socio-cultural and environmental forces on participation.	
36. Promotes group exploration of non-productive norms when these arise.	
37. Promotes autonomy and self-determination.	
38. Encourages member empowerment.	

Group Work in the Middle Phase

Items "The Group Worker..."	Notes About the Item
39. Reinforces connection between individual concerns/needs and group goals.	
40. Offers programmatic ideas and activities that support group purpose and assist in helping members achieve individual and group goals.	
41. Assesses progress towards individual and group goals.	
42. Identifies difficulties and obstacles that interfere with the group and its members' abilities to reach their goals.	
43. If obstacles are related to the specific needs of an individual member, when appropriate, offers individual time outside of group.	
44. Ensures that the group has attended to special needs of individual members (e.g., physical, cognitive, language, or cultural).	
45. Assists members to engage in problem solving, in making choices and decisions, and in evaluating potential outcomes of decisions.	
46. Summarizes sessions with the group.	

Items "The Group Worker..."	Notes About the Item
47. Plans next steps with the group.	
48. Re-contracts with members, if needed, to assist in achieving individual and group goals.	
49. Clarifies and interprets communication patterns among members, between members and worker, and between the group and systems outside the group.	
50. Models and encourages honest communication and feedback among members and between members and workers.	
51. Reviews group values and norms.	
52. Assists members to identify and articulate feelings.	
53. Assists members to perceive verbal and non-verbal communication.	
54. Helps members mediate conflict within the group.	
55. Assists members to make connections with other group members that may continue after the group ends, if this is appropriate.	
56. Uses tools of empowerment to assist members to develop "ownership" of the group.	
57. Assists members to identify and access resources from inside and outside the group.	
58. Uses record keeping techniques to monitor leadership skills and group process.	
59. Uses group approaches appropriate to the populations served and the tasks undertaken as demonstrated in the literature, worker and agency experience, and other sources of professional knowledge.	

Group Work in the Ending Phase

60. Prepares members for the group's ending in advance.	
61. If a direct practice group, helps members identify gains they have made and changes that have resulted from their participation in the group. If a task group, helps members discuss what they have learned from this experience that will be useful to them in other task groups (involves considering how achieving group goals will contribute to the functioning of the organization and/or community).	

Items "The Group Worker..."	Notes About the Item
62. Discusses the impact of the group on systems outside of the group (e.g., family, organization, community.)	
63. Identifies and discusses direct and indirect signs of members' reactions to ending.	
64. Shares worker's feelings about ending with the group.	
65. Assists members in sharing their feelings about ending with one another and with the worker.	
66. Systematically evaluates the achievement of individual and group goals (routine and systematic evaluation of the group experience could/should occur over time rather than in the ending stage alone).	
67. Helps members make connections with other agencies and programs as appropriate.	
68. Assists members in applying new knowledge and skills to their daily lives.	
69. Encourages members to give feedback to the worker on the worker's role and actions in the group.	
70. Prepares record material about the group for the agency, for individual members, and for referrals as needed.	

References/Acknowledgments

IASWG. (2006). Standards for social work practice with groups (2nd Ed.). Retrieved June 5, 2013, from http://www.aaswg.org/files/AASWG_Standards_for_Social_Work_Practice_with_Groups.pdf (The source of the items. Appreciation to the Board of IASWG for permission to use the Standards for the development of this Inventory).

Macgowan, M. J. (2012). A standards-based inventory of foundation competencies in social work with groups. *Research on Social Work Practice*. doi: 10.1177/1049731512443288 (The initial study on the reliability and validity of the Inventory).

Macgowan, M. J., & Vakharia, S. P. (2012). Teaching standards-based group work competencies to social work students: An empirical examination. *Research on Social Work Practice, 22*(4), 380-388. doi: 10.1177/1049731512442249 (This study gives an example of using the Inventory in teaching about social work with groups).

Wilson, F. R., & Newmeyer, M. D. (2008). A standards-based inventory for assessing perceived importance of and confidence in using ASGW's core group work skills. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work, 33*(3), 270-289. doi: 10.1080/01933920802196146 (The scaling for the Inventory is derived from this study, which also helped inspire the development of the Inventory).