Group Counseling Skills

CAC Level II Required Class

Overview of Training
Group therapy is a powerful tool in delivering addiction treatment services. Groups have many therapeutic elements and effects that draw people into the culture of recovery. Groups provide useful information, allow one or two therapists, depending on group size, to facilitate the group process which helps a number of clients simultaneously and provides positive peer support and pressure for recovery. This class will help the aspiring addiction counselor to understand the use of group therapy in the addiction treatment field and enable them to demonstrate the skills necessary to facilitate a therapy group. The class will focus on the group process and will discuss diversity within groups as well as the many challenges a group leader may face. The class will also present models of effective group practice. All CAC required classes seek to enhance the ability of the counselor to offer treatment services in a manner that respects gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, cultural, familial, systemic and socioeconomic diversity.

Course Content
- History, effectiveness, models, and types of groups in addictions treatment
  - Definitions of co-occurring disorders relevant to this class
  - Common group therapy models used in substance abuse treatment
    - Psychoeducational
    - Skills development
    - Cognitive-behavioral/problem-solving
    - Support
- Three group therapy types (relapse prevention, topic specific, culturally specific and gender specific groups)
- Integrating motivational interviewing (MI) techniques and strategies into the group process
  - Overview of MI strategies and techniques
  - Collaboration: looking at pros/cons of change
  - Evocation – looking at the desire for change
  - Developing Discrepancy - looking at current situation compared to their ultimate goal
  - Stage-of-change interventions with group clients
- Group structure, content, and process:
  - Criteria for placement of clients in groups
  - Women, adolescents, cultural backgrounds, level of interpersonal functioning, impulse control, and language barriers
  - Stages of group development
  - Group style and structure: Revolving membership groups typical in addiction treatment, client retention in groups, client safety in groups, group norms closed groups
Best practice guidelines for group work from the association for specialists in group work
Ethics of group counseling and common ethical issues that arise in groups
Therapeutic factors of group from the American Group Psychotherapy Association
Goal setting and service planning in groups
Group experiential techniques (art therapy, role playing, homework, letter writing, etc.)

- Group leadership skills, styles, and techniques
  - Leadership qualities: modeling behavior, ethics, flexibility, group cohesion, managing conflict, encouraging motivation, setting limits, maintaining safety, etc.
  - Co-leadership or co-facilitation model
  - Knowledge and skill competencies for the group counselor
  - Group leadership styles
  - Diversity-competent counselor in context of leading a group

Demonstration of Competencies
Upon completion of this training class, the participant will be able to:
- Select an appropriate strategy from accepted and culturally appropriate models for group counseling with clients who have substance use disorders
- Demonstrate how to choose appropriate strategies for special populations in group therapy such as women and adolescents
- Perform the actions necessary through actual practice facilitation, to include:
  - Opening and closing a group
  - Setting group norms and goals
  - Managing group process
  - Facilitating the entry of new members in an existing group, and transitioning members out of group
- Understand the concepts of “process” and “content,” their differences and how to move the group toward one or the other
- Demonstrate ability to manage difficult group behaviors as well as sensitivity to group dynamics such as crying, angry outbursts, challenge for leadership of group, etc.
- Create an individualized progress note based on group topic and client participation in that group
- Demonstrate effective motivational interviewing strategies and techniques in group facilitation