

Rocking Horse Circle of Support

Facilitator Guide

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1. Introduction

The Rocking Horse Circle of Support groups were first developed in 1991. This program was designed to reach out to younger mothers experiencing a host of health threats from substance abuse. We delivered a group program that provided a comfortable setting, lowered the access barriers, and provided childcare. Our approaches were sensitive to the links between substance abuse, self-esteem, life management, and parenting. We also believed in the importance of support and learning from each other. As we conducted these groups we observed increasing demand and utilization, a decrease in AOD behaviors, improved coping, and more adequate parenting. Since this beginning we have refined our curriculum and methods, and monitored the effectiveness of these groups. In collaboration with the VDH -Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs this curriculum is made available to provide a community-based intervention program for women who may benefit from this level of care.

Certain principles guided the development of this group modality. It is believed that intervention programs must go beyond information sharing to influence changes in everyday behavior. Traditional education alone is not effective but needs reinforcing supports. This curriculum recognizes that behavior is highly influenced by feelings, values, and the social environment. The program stresses that addressing alcohol and other drug abuse must include acknowledgment of the powerful contextual forces that place these women at risk.

It is known that lower income rural women face many hardships and struggling to maintain housing, taking care of babies and children, and managing the family and the relationship may loom larger than concerns about the ongoing destructive nature of substance abuse in their lives. Helping these women whether they are questioning their own use or being affected by another's substance abusing behaviors depends upon an understanding of their life background and using relational approaches that are sensitive and respectful.

The four themes of this curriculum are interwoven throughout the ten sessions. These four major themes reflect topic domains. They are (1) **Motherhood**, the role and its expectations, womanhood and health, self-esteem, problem solving and coping, self-efficacy (personal competence); (2) **Alcohol and Other Drugs**, the cascading effects & consequences of substance abuse for women, children, and families; (3) **Relationships**, recognizing and building reliable and stable social supports, handling differences, knowing dangerous relationships; (4) **Kids**, being a safe, nurturing, and successful parent, coping with babies and children, strengthening your family.

II. Philosophical Overview

The Rocking Horse Circle of Support curriculum is based on the following philosophical assumptions with specific regard to offering this group intervention to lower income rural mothers.

- 1. Healthy Lifestyles** are prevention. We are our own worst enemy by engaging in behaviors that lead to premature illness and death. The patterns of substance abuse are multidimensional and multi-determined, and hold grave consequences for physical, emotional, and social health outcomes.
- 2. Effective** intervention depends upon increased knowledge, changed beliefs, and a shift in attitude to develop new actions and different behaviors.
- 3. Holistic** approaches that are responsive to individual needs, social backgrounds, and cultural influences can more fully address the complex web of risks surrounding substance abuse.
- 4. Safety and Respect** are the cornerstones of our relational support for all members.
- 5. Promoting** social and life management skills, role mastery, and self-confidence may strengthen perceptions of personal competence, build effective functional coping, and provide for more positive experiences.

III. Helping Mothers Involved with AOD - Overview

The ageless stigma against women "under the influence" of alcohol and drugs can place women in hiding. The societal shaming for behavior not congruent with the expectations of the maternal role is a powerful influence for all women. For rural mothers, this attitude may hold greater barriers to seeking help because of the more traditional beliefs of motherhood and family care taking that are often observed in rural settings. The sensitive nature of the issues of poor parenting, family conflict, and chaotic living associated with substance abuse keeps these mother's invisible until there is a crisis.

Women most often report five major life factors that have taken them from the mainstream and into the insidious and devastating use of alcohol and other drugs. The five repeated themes are childhood trauma, multiple stressors and losses, AOD using kin and friend networks, substance abusing male partners, and a lack of skills and personal competence to leave the ongoing cycle.

Although the connection between early maltreatment and substance abuse is still debatable, we believe that a woman's addictive behaviors may be a post traumatic coping response to these painful childhood experiences. When women encounter major stressors, they tend to use and abuse alcohol and other drugs to self-medicate more frequently than men. The literature also suggests that women use to overcome loneliness, sadness, and feeling overwhelmed while men report using for power. The effects of living in an AOD using circle of family and friends serves to isolate many women from social experiences with a non-using network. It has also been found that women are more vulnerable to following their male partners' substance use patterns than men are to their wives' or girlfriends' drinking or other drug use. And lastly many women state that they want to get out of the vicious cycle but don't know how. They worry about their capacity to make it on their own, are often unaware of the helping systems, and fearful that if they seek help their children will be removed.

Helping these women calls for intervention approaches that can turn a crisis into an opportunity. Non-judgmental attitudes, caring and faith in the ability to change, boosting the capacity to realize potentials and establish self-efficacy are the support strategies. Other measures include considering mothers and children as one unit and promoting the ability to be safe and nurturing care givers; strengthen non-using social networks; and provide life skill instruction to help them boost their abilities to make decisions, manage a household, establish rewarding relationships, deal with stress more constructively, and utilize community resources.

The Rocking Horse Circle of Support is an intervention model that hopes to help some mothers "make it" and is only one piece of the care continuum available to Vermont women experiencing substance abuse. All the women who have attended our groups shared goals of having a stable family, loving relationships, and being successful. We have found that our intervention group holds promise in helping these mothers fill their pockets with those goals.

IV. Goals of the Rocking Horse Circles

The Rocking Horse Circle of Support is community-based educational support group intervention designed to serve a selective population of lower income pregnant and parenting women facing the risks of substance abuse. Our curriculum is designed to provide knowledge, build skills, and offer a safe and caring interpersonal climate to discuss needs, problems, and issues. This group modality is **not** treatment but may serve as a bridge into treatment services.

Program Criteria:

- Inform and educate lower income pregnant and parenting women about the impact of drinking and illegal drug use for women's health, pregnancy, parenting, and the family system.
- Inform and educate these women about substance abuse and its links to relationship stress.
- Teach and demonstrate ways to build healthy relationships, and provide approaches to build coping and self-care.
- Teach and demonstrate parenting skill sets to reduce stress and strengthen parenting potential.

Goals:

1. Reduce substance use among a population of low income pregnant & parenting women.
2. Increase capacity to manage stressors & family life more effectively.
3. Develop and sustain rewarding social, peer, and family relationships.

Program Objectives:

1. Provide education about the risks of substance abuse
2. Provide approaches and experiences for self-care and self-esteem strengthening
3. Provide parenting education
4. Provide life skills training

Group Outcomes:

1. Increased knowledge of risks from alcohol and illegal drugs for women's health and pregnancy, and the family system.
2. Increased knowledge and use of healthy coping skills including the use of community resources.
3. Increased perception of positive social supports.
4. Increased perception of self-efficacy.
5. Decreased alcohol consumption patterns.

V. Principles to Applying the Curriculum

The guiding principles of implementing the Rocking Horse Circles are intended to maintain the essential concepts supporting this group intervention modality and provide direction for the professional facilitators leading these groups.

- 1. Harm reduction never minimizes or ignores the real or tragic danger associated with AOD but understands that it is a multi-faceted phenomenon with a range of behaviors and accepts that for better or worse it is apart of our world and strives to reduce its grave effects.*
- 2. We recognize that the realities of poverty, social isolation, poor education, and limited opportunity may influence the vulnerability to and the capacity for dealing with alcohol misuse and other drug abuse.*
- 3. We will ensure that mothers who touch upon strong emotional issues will receive compassionate support and a process for closure in the group meeting.*
- 4. The location of the groups will be a safe, private, and comfortable space and attendance will be made accessible.*
- 5. The group leaders are role models and teachers who by their actions and support will encourage the mothers to build and expand their lives.*

6. *Laughter and humor are healing and may sometimes help to overcome the most difficult of situations. Encouraging mothers to find their own laughter is done with thoughtfulness and caring.*
7. *We will honor motherhood and the lifetime commitment all mothers make to their children and families.*
8. *We will recognize that this group intervention may not be suitable for some women and will refer these mothers to other services.*
9. *Spirituality is important and a very personal life dimension. Sharing about spirituality may be comforting and may reinforce changes in values and behavior.*

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I. Curriculum Overview

The curriculum for the Rocking Horse Circles is built under the umbrella of substance abuse and its impact for health, family systems, interpersonal relationships, parenting, and life management. These five block domains are addressed throughout the ten sessions within the context of the group discussions. The weekly topics highlight the hazardous connections of problem drinking and illegal drug use and the domains.

The following section will outline the weekly sessions and will begin with guidelines for the group process.

II. Educational Support Group Modality

The approaches used in this program are based on the concepts of an educational group and not on the concepts found in psychotherapy groups. Therapy groups are driven by psychological theory and diagnosis, address described problems, use individualized treatment plans, focus on resolving problems, and apply dynamic strategic approaches. Educational support groups provide health teaching, target coping and life skills, promote a climate to support change, strive to meet objectives with defined activities, and are time limited.

III. Group Process

The attention to group process is equally important as the information and knowledge shared in these groups. You will find that many of the young mothers who attend these groups frequently report unstable and chaotic lives. In any given week, some will experience a reported "crisis". These crisis events can be used to introduce information, resources, new coping, and demonstrate relational understanding and support. Often group members will share their ways of overcoming the problem and this interaction can be very helpful. However, the group facilitators must guide the discussion and point out the strengths and weaknesses of the problem solutions offered by the group. Group work holds the potential to build trust, experience healthy social interactions, offers an opportunity for validation, and a setting to try new approaches.

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It is important to establish a process structure that is both consistent yet flexible. Checking in with the group members at each session is necessary before working on the topic for the group meeting. It is also important to bring the group to closure and we suggest a ritual for this process. The following instructions are suggested as guidelines for group process. (Total Group Time: 2 Hours)

Checking-In: (10 minutes)

Each member will have an opportunity to talk about their week. If someone has experienced a difficult time the group may decide to give this member more time to get group help. The group leaders will ask who would like to start and then the individual members will choose the next person to talk. The group leaders may use this check in reporting to tie into the session topic.

Today's Topic: (45 minutes)

Introduce the session topic and ask whether there is anything about the topic members want information on- individualize the topic to the group's needs. Begin to discuss the content area encouraging group participation. This time is usually more didactic and information sharing.

Let's Have a Break: (10 minutes)

At the half way time, give the group a ten-minute break. This is time when some of the members might approach the group leaders for more help about issues they are facing. The group leaders need to remain available and socialize with the group during the break.

Getting Back Together: (45 minutes)

Reconvene the group and focus on the application of the information shared earlier. Encourage the group to provide examples about how they can use the information in their lives. Talk about what will work and what will not. Have them tell you what they thought was important from this group meeting.

Closure: (10 minutes)

Closing the group session is done with thoughtfulness and care. Lots of stories and truth telling are shared during the sessions with the basic question- what can we learn from our own and each other's experiences?" We have found that closing the group with a ritual is well received. We have used Angel Cards and had the members read the message while the group leaders describe the attribute and how to carry out the message. We have also used Melody Beattie's, "The Language of Letting Go". Reading appropriate passages from this book can sensitively summarize the group meeting.

We also suggest:

1. Snacks and beverages are provided during the group session. We suggest that light but nutritious snacks are served to the attending mothers.
2. Although childcare is provided on site, we do not encourage babies and younger children to come into the group sessions and be with their mothers. At times mothers may need to feed or soothe their infants but this activity can be distracting to the group. Once the baby is quiet return the baby to the sitters. The group time is for the mother and for her to be away from her children.

Journals and Homework:

Our experience with these groups has found that many members have requested to keep journals and wanted homework assignments for the group. We believe that journals and homework can be reinforcing and have used these methods. Our leaders have provided simple "reflective homework" assignments for members to share at the next meeting. The journals remain private and are only read and commented upon by the group leaders (the leaders will write in the member's journal as needed). We feel that these approaches are useful and suggest that they are an option to use with your group.

III. Session Outlines

The following meeting topics are the progression through the 10 group sessions.

Group One: Getting Together

About this Session: This first session is an introduction to the group, describes its purpose, sets the group rules, and explores expectations. The focus of this session is to look at the impact of problem drinking and illegal drug use for life domains. Group leaders will explain the need for the pre and post surveys.

Session Objectives:

1. Introductions and reasons for attending.
2. Review privacy, confidentiality, and group rules.
3. Discussion of individual experiences with substance using
4. Complete the pre-survey.

Activities: The focus of this first group is to establish rapport and support. The interpersonal style of the leaders is expected to be warm and engaging. It is suggested that the members are thanked for coming acknowledging their desire to strengthen themselves and their families. It is important to recognize the motivation to come to the group. "Bragging" is an exercise that may positively support this motivation. Have everyone think of some accomplishment, personal characteristic, a skill, a job well done, anything, and boast about it. This activity will highlight strengths and build group rapport.

Group Two: Substance Abuse in My Life

About this Session: This session further examines AOD and when, where, and how substance abusing behavior has touched my life. Leaders underscore the connections between problem drinking and using drugs to risky behavior and harmful consequences.

Session Objectives:

1. Discussion of the consequences of alcohol and other drugs for women's health and pregnancy, and the effects of this parental behavior for children.
2. Discussion of the links between using and loss of judgment and risk taking.
3. Discussion about drinking and using other drugs and volatile behavior
4. Introduce alternative behaviors to using.

Activities: Examine and discuss the personal and family connections to substance abuse. Talk about the cascading effects it holds for all life areas. Explore ways in which the group members handle substance abuse in their lives. The following questions are suggested to explore AOD - List four ways drinking or drugging hurts your health; how does using alcohol or other drugs hurt women differently from men; what does drinking do to a baby when you are pregnant; what happens to kids when the grown-ups drink and drug.

Group Three: Being a Mom

About this Session: This session addresses motherhood, the good stuff and the tough stuff, and provides an opportunity to share the work, successes, and struggles of parenting young children. This session addresses the harm to children when parents are substance abusing.

Session Objectives:

1. Discuss the characteristics of a healthy family
2. List the variety of jobs mothers take on
3. Provide tips on parenting young children
4. Explain how AOD impacts caring for babies and children

Activities: Talk about motherhood and the importance of this maternal work. Offer parenting advice in categorical blocks - developmentally appropriate guidance on safety & health; love and limits parenting; and use ages and stages approach to describe developmental needs and demands. Discuss strategies to handle the stress of motherhood. Highlight the negative effects of AOD for safe and nurturing parenting.

Group Four: All My Relations

About this Session: This session explores the nature of healthy interpersonal relationships and compares rewarding relationships with relationships affected by substance abusing behavior. The target areas include making friends, communication, quality of intimate relationships, and dangerous liaisons.

Session Objectives:

1. Describe the characteristics of a rewarding relationship
2. Examine the building blocks of rewarding relationships
3. Inventory the qualities of strong social support with support from someone who is drinking too much and/or using drugs

Activities: Talk about what friends do and don't do to each other, what reliable friendship offers, identify important relationships and help the members define what qualities were present in those relationships. Discuss threatening relationships and how these relationships feel. Talk about the nature of respect in a partnered relationship, and what are the signs of being in an unhealthy relationship. Underline the harm AOD plays in relationships and the consequences for communication. Develop a check-list of characteristics and behaviors in others that are valued.

Group Five: All About Me

About this Session: This session focuses on self-esteem, confidence building, and self-care. Avoiding AOD risk arises from a stable and sound sense of self-worth. Expanding self-esteem follows experiences of feeling capable and competent.

Session Objectives:

1. Identify and recognize the group members, achievements
2. Explore approaches to bolster self-confidence and capability
3. Propose ways to promote self-care: physically, emotionally, and socially

Activities: Explore what makes us feel good about ourselves and what others can do to make us feel OK. Talk about ways to take charge of your life and when to let others guide you. List ways to boost self-esteem and confidence. Introduce strategies for taking care of yourself and name rewards. Talk about feeling guilty if you take time to care for yourself and encourage the belief that it is not selfish. Discuss the results of heavy drinking and using drugs for self-esteem. Explore the menacing effects AOD for self-worth.

Group Six: Managing Stress I

About this Session: This session demonstrates the dangerous mix between problem drinking and illegal drug use and stress. High stress may lead to substance using and substance using increases stress. Successful coping with everyday issues calls for a skill set to manage personal and family affairs with sound strategies.

Session Objectives:

- I. Review the steps in problem solving
2. Illustrate prioritizing personal and other concerns
3. Identify supports that may increase skill building
4. Examine the impact of substance abuse on taking care of everyday stressors

Session Activities: Explore the common stressors- money worries, car problems, keeping up the household, and childcare. Make a stressor list and discuss the barriers and solutions to handling the stressors. Suggest coping strategies that can reduce the feelings of stress and revisit the nature and quality of supports. Describe how stress can be harmful physically and emotionally. Provide information about community resources that may provide added support to reduce stress. Present ways to manage money, be a thrifty shopper, pay bills, make appointments, and other strategies to manage a household. Emphasize the range of stress brought on by alcohol and illegal drugs from spending down money to a host of other high stress troubles.

Group Seven: Managing Stress II

About this Session: This session is a continuation of last week to identify areas of life that cause stress and developing coping skills. The focus is upon making healthy choices in all life areas.

Session Objectives:

1. Outline options to handle problems and stress
2. Review decision making processes

Session Activities: Explore with the group members what areas and relationships in their lives that they cannot fix, help them examine what they can change and how they can cope, and promote plans to make different choices.

Group Eight: Straight Talk

About this Session: This session centers on expressing feelings, communication patterns and anger management. Healthy communication lets others know your feelings and thoughts, and poor communication keeps others guessing about your feelings and what you mean, while aggressive communication is not respectful of others. Learning how to communicate well and recognize your feelings raises personal effectiveness. Individuals who abuse alcohol and other drugs have altered communication patterns and this behavior may lead to hostility with others. Describe how anger is a healthy feeling, but violence is an unacceptable behavior.

Session Objectives:

1. Compare the differences among assertive, passive, and aggressive communication styles.
2. Explore family and intimate communication patterns
3. Explain the steps in resolving differences with others
4. Contrast anger and violence

Activities: Discuss forms of good and poor communication across a range of interpersonal interactions from intimate, to social, to casual, to formal (interfacing with workers from helper agencies). Stress the characteristics of being assertive not aggressive. Describe the need to recognize feelings in communication. Suggest methods to keep anger from becoming explosive. Discuss how children learn from their parents how to act and get along with others; being cooperative or being bullies. Distinguish the risks of AOD and altered communication in the family.

Group Nine: What I Want to Do and Want to Be

About this Session: This session raises the wishes, dreams, and goals we all hold for ourselves. At times, we share these hopes with another person, but often they are private thoughts. There are two different kinds of wishes - wishes for us and for others. We may not be able to change others but we can change ourselves.

Session Objectives:

1. Explore goal setting and action plans
2. Describe personal motivation and readiness for change
3. Identify emotional, physical, interpersonal, and spiritual goals

Activities: Define the four goal areas. Emotional goals include but not limited to sharing feelings, expressing anger appropriately, accepting feelings, being aware of negative thinking, dealing with stressful situations better. Physical goals include healthy life styles (nutrition, exercise, rest), reducing stress, learning to relax. Interpersonal goals include, learning to ask for what I want, building rewarding relationships, being more assertive, making more decisions, communicating clearly, and using new coping skills to handle conflict. Spiritual goals focus on ways to feel safe and secure. Discuss individual goals and guide action plans to accomplish the goals.

Group Ten: Saying Goodbye but Staying in Touch

About this Session: Sensitive closure is important. Framing closure under the broad categories of My Life and My Relations, Mastery, and Taking Charge with New Directions summarizes the group experience.

Objectives:

1. Discuss the group experience and individual gains.
2. Administer the post survey.

Activities: Help the group plan how they can continue to support each other and acknowledge all the participation and support everyone contributed. Inquire with the group what they think individually are the most important take away messages and or impressions they hold from the experience.

IV. Children's Program

The children attending the groups are provided a separate play area under the supervision of childcare staff. It is suggested that a structured playtime is provided. We recommend that pro-social skills be encouraged among the young children.

Pro-social skills building is a set of approaches that encourages self-confidence, teaches self-control, and models cooperation. Because many of the children will be young (under 4 years) pre-school activities are needed. The established groups have provided a range of activities for the children to include simple arts and crafts, motor skill games, music and singing, and story book reading.

Although most children will be pre-school age, there may be babies and older children. It is important that there is enough staff to watch the children so the mothers do not have to care for their child during the session. It is also important to provide the older child with an age appropriate activity.

The structure and organization of the weekly playtime should be consistent for the children. Setting up a routine early will help settle the children so they are familiar with the weekly visit for the duration of the group meetings. We have found that the children look forward to coming and the week's activities.

It is anticipated that different groups will offer a range of activities for the children depending upon the available childcare resources. At a minimum, it is expected that the children will receive a structured playtime and be well supervised.

Logistics

The following logistical tips are offered, as you get ready to implement the community-based Rocking Horse Circles.

I. Place

The setting for the group requires that space accommodate both the mothers and children. As well, the adult meeting room should be comfortable and private. We suggest using Churches because they usually have a separate area for the Sunday school that is children friendly and often have a small kitchen available. Other options could be the local school or your community's Family Center. We suggest that you do not use an Agency setting but locate the group in a community "space". Another consideration for the space is to be aware it can be noisy and lively with the women and the children.

II. Transportation

A variety of options could be considered for transportation. We suggest using the local bus (if available) and/or the rural bus program and provide the fare money. We also suggest encouraging the members to give each other rides and provide a stipend for gas. We have used taxi services but these can be costly. Because many of your communities have a range of transportation services, we suggest that you investigate what options you have to get the mothers back and forth. It is important to make getting to group barrier and hassle free.

III. Incentives

Our program believes that motherhood is a lot of work and deserves to be recognized. We also think that coming and working to solve issues and problems needs to be rewarded. Our incentives are small tokens provided at each group meeting to each of the mothers. We buy the same item for each woman with some variation in color and style as needed. The cost of the incentives ranges from about one dollar to three dollars per gift. We provide gifts for the mother and prefer the selection to be personal not household items. We suggest grooming items, candles, writing tablets, socks, etc. The Dollar Stores are your best shopping resource for ideas and inexpensive gifts.

IV. Snacks

Snacks are provided to both mothers and children. We suggest nutritious snacks be made available and encourage the members to help themselves during the group meeting or have the snacks at the designated break. As your group comes together having food and when to snack should be the group's decision, as will the types of food requested. Shopping for the food can be shared between the group facilitators.

V. Childcare

These groups provide on-site childcare. We do not recommend offering the mother money to pay her provider for childcare. The group setting is arranged to welcome and supervise children so the mother can bring them along. We suggest contacting your Family Center, the local High School, or advertising for childcare providers.

VI. Educational Materials

We recommend that user-friendly educational materials be available for the topic areas discussed at the weekly meetings. Use your local Health Department, Prevention Consultants, and other Agencies to gather relevant educational materials. There are numerous health related publications available but we caution that you be selective and tailor the materials to your group needs. Do not overload the mothers with brochures and please check for a match between reading levels of mother and material. We also suggest that some of the materials could be condensed and simplified into handouts created by the leaders.

VII. Certificate of Completion

We give each mother a certificate at the completion of the group program. A sample of the certificate is enclosed in this manual for duplicating.

I. Planning

Preparing for a Rocking Horse Circle in your community will take some time and it is suggested that you allow for a couple of months to get ready. Setting up the logistics, advertising, getting referrals, and gathering supplies are the natural pre-start steps. It is also advised that the group leaders meet in advance to go over the curriculum sessions and discuss how they will individualize the content and process.

II. Referrals

The Rocking Horse Circles are intended for younger mothers who may be at risk for substance abuse or living in a family where substance abuse is present. Frequently this select population of women is receiving services from a variety of helper agencies. We suggest forwarding announcements of this educational support group to your community's network of programs such as Reach Up, WIC, DCF, Mental Health, Family Centers, Probation and Parole, Maternal Child Services of Home Health, local Substance Abuse Providers, School Guidance Office & SAP, School Nurse, and Pediatric and Obstetric Medical Providers. A sample referral form is enclosed in this manual.

Referral Tips:

1. Prepare an announcement letter that outlines the Group offering. A sample is enclosed in this manual.
2. If possible schedule yourself to present at a staff meeting to describe the Rocking Horse Circles.
3. After the announcement letters are received, give the individuals a call to answer any questions that may have come up.

Introducing a new program to a community network can take time and establishing a program can take longer. Intervening with parenting women at risk for substance abuse is a sensitive issue. The nature of this program calls for strong referral strategies and gentle encouragement for the mothers.

The following sample Announcement is provided as a guideline for introducing this program to your provider network.

Rocking Horse Circle of Support

What is the purpose of the program?

To help pregnant and parenting women reduce the risks of substance abuse in their lives and promote improved life skill management and nurturing & safe parenting.

What does the program do?

The program is a 10-week substance abuse selective-level prevention group modality that attempts to intervene with risk progression by providing health education, skill-building, and support. The group is co-lead by a substance abuse specialist and a maternal child professional. The 10-session curriculum addresses the impact of AOD in all life domains and provides guidance in moving away from this hazardous behavior. The group process is supportive and motivational.

Why is the program important?

Prevention and early intervention are the focus of the program. The program addresses the grave and devastating consequences of drinking for women, pregnancy, and the equally destructive effects of parental substance abuse for early childhood.

Who is eligible?

The program is designed for both pregnant and parenting childbearing age women who are questioning their own drinking and other drug using behaviors or experiencing the second-hand effects of another's substance using behavior. The program is funded and there is no charge to the group members. Transportation and childcare are provided at no cost.

Where is the program located?

This program is being offered at (location)
Day and Time

Need More Information?

Call:

I. Evaluation

Evaluation is an important component of all programs. Measuring a program's effectiveness provides information about the strength of the program for meeting its intended purpose, and for assessing the program for refinements. The Rocking Horse Circle of Support is aimed at changing individual attitudes, beliefs, and behavior. The evaluation methods used seek to measure these changes. We know that individually focused strategies that try to reduce substance abusing behavior show promise if they are linked to skills building and supportive relationships.

The Rocking Horse Circles are evaluated each year and it is necessary to continue to collect data and review the findings. It is important that this program be monitored and measured to increase our confidence that the program is effective. We must evaluate both process and outcomes by collecting observational data by the group leaders and their opinions about the groups, attendance data for utilization rates, and outcome data from the pre and post surveys. It is very important that leaders maintain the evaluation processes.

The following page provides instruction for administering the evaluation tools.

II. Group Evaluation Instructions

The following instructions are provided to refine the Rocking Horse Program evaluation component to better monitor program outcomes and the process of conducting the groups. Data from the evaluation is critical to the growth and sustainability of the Rocking Horse Program.

PRE-SURVEYS:

- Give the participants the “RH Program Evaluation Survey” at the first group session.
- Have the women enter the last four digits of the social security number where indicated.
- Read the information at the top of the survey. Participating in the survey is completely voluntary.
- Instruct the women to fill out the top section (questions 1 – 13)
- Instruct the women to complete **ONLY** the second column with the heading “**Pre-Survey**”.
- Collect all surveys before the end of the first session.

POST SURVEYS:

- Redistribute the “RH Program Evaluation Survey” to all women attending the next to last or last session.
- Instruct the women to complete the two columns with the headings “**Post Survey**”.
- Collect all surveys at the end of the last session.

WHAT TO DO WITH THE EVALUATION MATERIALS:

At the completion of each 10-week session please:

- Complete the “Rocking Horse Statistics” form;
- Complete the “Rocking Horse Leader Observation” form;
- Complete the “Group Implementation Checklist” form;
- Forward these forms and the completed “RH Program Evaluation Survey” to:

VDH/ADAP
108 Cherry Street
P.O. Box 70
Burlington, VT 05401

Thank you!