

ROCKING HORSE CIRCLE OF SUPPORT
A Substance Abuse Group Intervention for At-Risk Low Income Mothers

Description:

The Rocking Horse program is a ten-week (20 hours) psycho-educational group intervention delivered by 2 female leaders; a substance abuse specialist and a maternal child professional. The groups are community based and receive referrals from the network serving these women in a variety of capacities. The program follows a dedicated 10 session curriculum that frames substance use in four major domains- substance use for women's health, substance use and relationships, the effects of substance use in the family, and substance use influence for life troubles and life management. The program describes the risk associated with substance use behavior and presents strategies to boost self efficacy and life management. The program is accessible providing child care and transportation and is no cost to the participants. At each group, the women are given a token incentive gift and snacks are served.

The theoretical foundation of the program centers on the Stages of Change constructs proposed by Procheska and DiClemente. The program assumes that the participants are at differing readiness stages to address substance abuse in their lives as evidenced by their voluntary participation in the program. The program believes that behavioral change is a process and attempts to promote change by modifying attitudes, increasing risk perception associated with the behavior, and building life management skills. The program's goals are twofold- reduce substance use and develop greater capability for life management. These goals are consistent with prevention efforts whose aim is to address risk factors and build protective factors.

Population Served:

This program serves lower income rural childbearing age Vermont women. The difficult life circumstances surrounding these women place many in the path of substance abuse and the progression of this behavior from sets of risk factors. The program delivers health education and life skills building within a socially and instrumentally supportive group process.

Outcomes:

Evaluation data suggest that there is a significant shift in participant's perception of risk from drinking and marijuana use for women's health, a decrease in binge drinking behavior, and an increase in perception of having increased social supports and coping capacity to manage stress.

The presence of these groups is filling a "gap" in the care system. The group referrals come from a variety of programs that suspect substance abuse risk in the women they serve and are using the Rocking Horse Program where it is available as a care continuum step in addressing this risk.

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