

Powerful Staff Meetings: Creating a Culture of Recovery

These are suggested guidelines that leaders can follow to make established staff meetings more effective. The guidelines can help leaders create a more hopeful and empowering team culture, which is essential for delivering recovery-focused services. Leaders should expect that their confidence and skill in applying these guidelines will gradually improve with practice.

Beginning of the Meeting

- Introduce new members and/or visitors (*if necessary*)
- Clarify the purpose of the meeting (*two options*):
 - Make a brief statement about overall purpose (*if new staff or visitors are present*)
OR
 - Provide a preview of key items that need to be discussed during the meeting
- Establish agenda (*two options*):
 - Distribute agenda (*if pre-determined*) and any handouts
OR
 - Build the agenda with the staff at the beginning of the meeting
 - Ask each staff member if they have any agenda items to add
 - Prioritize items (*see section on decision-making methods*)
- Assist staff members in creating ‘ground rules’ or a code of behavior for the meeting.
 - Ask members to develop a set of ‘ground rules’ to promote open and respectful communication and to ensure the meeting is productive. (*Possible rules include*):
 - Come to the meeting on time
 - Give leader prior notice if you cannot attend
 - Listen without interruption when another staff member is talking
 - Avoid dominating the discussion
 - Actively participate by expressing honest thoughts and feelings
 - Respect each other’s thoughts and feelings
 - Make positive, cooperative, helpful comments
 - Ask for commitment from staff members to abide by these rules
 - Uphold rules of decorum for the remainder of the meeting



*Help members
differentiate between
facts and opinion*

Working Part of the Meeting

- Manage task processes
 - Identify topic/problem/opportunity
 - Explain why it is important
 - Invite comments from staff members about topic/problem/opportunity
 - Seek information about topic/problem/opportunity
 - Seek opinions about topic/problem/opportunity
 - Invite staff members to share feelings about topic/problem/opportunity
 - Clarify staff member comments (*if necessary*)
 - Elaborate on staff member comments
 - Encourage widespread participation (*invite quiet staff members to comment; seek divergent opinions --- e.g., “Does anyone have a different opinion?”*)
 - Summarize comments about the topic/problem/opportunity
 - Develop an action plan to address topic/problem/opportunity (*if necessary*)
 - Ask for ideas and suggestions from staff members
 - Select the best plan (*see section on decision-making methods*)
 - Establish responsibilities and time frames for each action item
 - Implement action plan (*see section below: “After Meeting”*)
 - Evaluate outcomes
- Manage interpersonal processes
 - Maintain open and balanced participation
 - Ensure that ground rules are respected
 - Deal with Aggressive Behavior (*see section on Tips for Dealing with Aggressive Behavior*)
- Complete agenda items within allotted time frames

Ending the Meeting

- Finish on time
- Summarize main points and consensus decisions
- Review action items
- Place unfinished business on next agenda
- Remind people of time and place for next meeting



After the Meeting

- See that tasks and decisions from this meeting are carried out (i.e. monitor implementation of action plans)
- Prepare for next meeting

Decision-making Methods

No decision-making method is inherently better than another. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. The leader and/or team needs to choose a decision-making method that will be appropriate to the amount of time available, the kind of task being worked on, the past history of the team, and the climate the team wants to establish.

- Decision by Lack of Response** – *team makes a decision not to support the idea of an individual member by ignoring the idea.*
- Decision by Formal Authority** – *the authority figure on the team makes the decisions.*
- Decision by Minority Rule** – *one or two team members railroad a decision.*
- Decision by Majority Rule** – *the leader calls a vote or polls everyone's opinion after a period of discussion. If a majority feels the same way, that becomes the decision.*
- Decision by Consensus** – *the leader helps the team achieve a consensus by facilitating discussion in a way that is open and supportive, and allows time for all team members to state opposing views. Once everyone has been given an opportunity to share their point of view, it becomes easier to reach a broad agreement. Research shows that this decision-making method often improves group functioning.*
- Decision by Unanimous Consent** – *All team members agree on a course of action.*

Tips for Dealing with Aggressive Behavior

Here are several options you can employ:

- Maintain a Relaxed Posture** – *Face the person, make eye contact, lean forward slightly, and use firm but open hand gestures.*
- Remain Non Defensive** – *Refrain from trying to defend your position or policies.*
- Clarify and Acknowledge** – *Show you are really listening by rephrasing key statements and checking for understanding.*
- Clearly State Needed Behavior Change** – *Be specific about what behavior you want the team member to either stop or start as well as the impact of their current behavior. Give them the choice to act on your feedback.*
- Let the Team Help You Deal with the Problem** – *Give team a chance to work out some of the issues.*

