

## **Service Talk Shop: Psychosocial Support Services**

**Date:** December 18, 2025

**Location:** Marsha P. Johnson Training Room

### **Activity 1: Small Things That Work!**

This activity is meant to ground us in the day-to-day work. We asked people to think about common situations where clients may feel overwhelmed, hesitant, or unsure about engaging, and to share small things they've found helpful in those moments.

The goal isn't to come up with perfect solutions, but to surface practical approaches that actually work in practice, especially when clients are newly diagnosed, dealing with stigma or grief, worried about disclosure, or affected by the current political climate.

The sections below reflect common client scenarios discussed during the activity, with notes pulled directly from participant input.

#### **Client who is newly diagnosed**

- HIV is managing chronic disease
- Take medication
- Try to engage
- Acknowledge difficulty (shame, stigma...)
- Being patient with clients
- People feeling overwhelmed due to misinformation and anxiety
  - Break into small, manageable steps
  - Connect to resources so clients know there is a plan
  - With medication, you can live a full life!
  - Create a welcoming environment, “we are in this together”
  - Human connection, no judgement

#### **Client feels uncomfortable or different in group settings**

- Encourage people to come & emphasize privacy
- Others share similar experiences
- Optional participation, no pressure
- Share as much or as little as they want

#### **Client seems reluctant to engage**

- Talk about support services

- Reinforce confidentiality

#### **Client is worried about unintended HIV status disclosure**

- Community education around stigma
- Building self-confidence, being able to stand up for yourself

#### **Client is dealing with grief**

- Loss of people/or things they loved or needed
- Give clients time to grieve as they can
- Ask people what they need - advice, space to vent, etc.
- Connect with others in similar situations

#### **Client is scared to engage due to the political environment**

- Building trust
- Reminding people about confidentiality, explaining where their information goes
  - “We can help you when you share with us.”
- Clarify staff role and limitations - what you can & cannot do

### **Activity 2: Mapping Our Groups and How We Recruit**

This activity focuses on getting a clearer picture of what PSS groups currently exist and how clients find their way into them. Participants mapped out their groups by site and then talked through how recruitment usually happens.

The goal is to better understand what's already out there, where there may be gaps, and what helps or gets in the way of participation. It also helps us see opportunities to share resources, learn from each other, and think about how to reach clients more effectively.

#### **What types of groups are available in the EMA?**

##### **Harvard St.**

- PSS on housing
- Caring Hands, 2nd and last Thursday, open to PLWHA
- Substance abuse group, 1st and 3rd Wednesday, 1 to 3 pm, not HIV specific

##### **Whittier**

- Every Friday – mix of discussion & having fun – open to any PLWHA
  - Women's and men's groups
  - Senior group

- Sewing group

## JRI

- Women's group once a month in person
- Latino Group once a month in person (session in Spanish)
- Men's Group – 2 times a month in person/Zoom – long-term survivors are mostly attending
- THRIVE – non RW FUNDED SOCIAL EVENT @ Club Café 6-8 pm - non JRI clients can join!

## MAPS

- Portuguese-speaking support group on Zoom (not RW-funded but open to the international public)
- DV survivor group for Brazilian and Cape Verdean clients

### **Are there any gaps/unmet needs?**

- Men's daytime group
- Mental health
- Language-appropriate related groups
- LGBTQ+ Specific group
- Survivors of DV & SA group – otherwise can be a major barrier
- Grief-focused group
- Budgeting
- Housing
- Detox resources
- CM/peer grief support

### **How do we recruit?**

- Staff connect with other agency staff
- Outreach van
- Word of mouth
- @Boston Living Center
- Keep an eye out for topics that are relevant to specific clients
- Challenges- no food leads to low return
- Tabling with flyers explaining groups
- Offering groups centered on shared experiences helps with fear of judgment

## **Upcoming Series & Trainings**

- 1/9 JRI training for PSS supervisors
- 1/22 JRI Assessing and Supporting Substance Users for PSS staff

## **Takeaways from Participants**

- Small, practical steps help clients feel less overwhelmed and more able to engage.
- Trust, patience, and clarity around confidentiality make a big difference in whether clients feel safe.
- Shared experiences help people feel less alone and more comfortable joining groups.
- Grief, stigma, and fear of disclosure continue to affect when and how clients engage.
- Giving clients choice and flexibility supports participation.
- Even with many existing groups, there are still gaps across populations and needs.