VHA OFFICE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

Fidelity for Social Skills Training Groups

January 30, 2023

This webinar is being recorded for placement in TMS

Prepared by:
VA Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness (SST) Training Program
VISN 5 Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC)

TMS

- If you would like to get continuing education credit (CE) for attending this presentation, you need to have registered in TMS prior to the presentation. After this presentation, you also need to confirm in TMS that you attended the event and to complete the TMS course survey within 15 days after the presentation.

- Even if you do not wish to receive CE credit, please complete the TMS course survey so that we may receive program evaluation feedback and continue to offer CE for our training events.

- We encourage you to complete the TMS course survey today.

Fidelity for the SST Group

- Today the focus of the discussion will be on fidelity issues and strategies in relation to SST <u>groups.</u>

- We are planning a future presentation where we address fidelity issues for the <u>individual goal setting sessions</u> that precede SST groups.

- We also plan a future presentation on integrating <u>measurement- based care</u> into SST, which also has implications for intervention fidelity.

Agenda for Today's Call

1. SST in the VA and Recovery

2. Discuss treatment fidelity, why it's important and how it's measured.

3. Review factors that may impact fidelity

4. Brief review of SST Training Program and SST intervention.

5. Explore resources to establish and maintain SST fidelity.

6. Create a personalized SST fidelity action plan.

SST in the VA & Recovery

- Designed for Veterans with a primary diagnosis of:
  - Schizophrenia
  - Schizoaffective disorder
  - Bipolar disorder
  - Treatment refractory depression (with social skill development as an area of growth)
- Recovery Model is an integral part of SST
  – To provide any mental health intervention, respectful and affirming communication as a provider is key to develop a beneficial treatment alliance.
  – People with SMI continue to be among the most stigmatized populations and be on the receiving end of many disrespectful communications.

Recovery is "*A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.*"

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

The use of recovery-oriented language is empowering.

- VHA mandates Veterans have access to SST, per the Uniform Mental Health Services Handbook (2008, revised 2015)
  - Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Centers (PRRCs)
  - VA Medical Centers (VAMCs)
  - Very Large Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)
- SST provision also positively impacts the MH Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) measure

TREATMENT FIDELITY

- "The degree to which a treatment was delivered as intended" (Perepletchikova & Kazdin, 2005)

- Also referred to as treatment integrity, treatment adherence, intervention integrity

How is Fidelity Measured?

- Objective measures are used to assess the fidelity of psychotherapies and psychosocial interventions.

- For example, The Social Skills Group Observation Checklist is used to assess fidelity to the SST model.

Social Skills Group Observation Checklist

SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP OBSERVATION CHECKLIST *(page 1 of 2)*

Group Leader:_____   Date:_____

Consultant:_____

Instructions: Complete this checklist after observing the group leader conduct a session. For each item, check off whether the group leader performed this skill "not at all", "partially", or "fully."

General structuring and positive engagement skills	Not at all	Partially	Fully
Created a warm, welcoming atmosphere.			✓
Spoke clearly, using a voice neither overloud nor oversoft.			✓
Established an agenda and maintained the structure of the session.			✓
Provided ample positive feedback for participation.			✓
Redirected group members who interrupted or strayed from the topic, using a kind but firm voice.			✓
Asked group members for examples of personal experiences in which skills could be or were used.			✓
Used a shaping approach to help members gradually learn new social skills by reinforcing small steps toward the targeted skill.			✓
Encouraged group members to be actively involved in the session. (Members can be active in different ways, such as reading the steps of the skill out loud, providing a rationale, providing feedback for role plays, participating in role plays, contributing examples of personal experience.)			✓

(continued)

From Social Skills Training for Schizophrenia (2nd ed.) by Alan S. Bellack, Kim T. Mueser, Susan Ginperich, and Julie Agresta. Copyright 2004 by The Guilford Press. Permission to photocopy this form is granted to purchasers of this book for personal use only (see copyright page for details).

SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP OBSERVATION CHECKLIST *(page 2 of 2)*

Steps of social skills training	Not at all	Partially	Fully
Reviewed homework from the previous group session.			✓
Established a rationale for using the skill.			✓
Discussed the steps of the skill with group members.			✓
Modeled the skill in a role-play.			✓
Reviewed the model with the group members.			✓
Engaged all group members in a role-play of the skill.			✓
Provided or elicited behaviorally specific positive feedback for each group member's role-play.			✓
Provided or elicited behaviorally specific suggestions for improvement for each group member's role-play.			✓
Assigned specific homework to practice the skill outside the group.			✓

From Social Skills Training for Schizophrenia (2nd ed.) by Alan S. Bellack, Kim T. Mueser, Susan Ginperich, and Julie Agresta. Copyright 2004 by The Guilford Press. Permission to photocopy this form is granted to purchasers of this book for personal use only (see copyright page for details).

Why is Fidelity Important?

- EBP without fidelity would not be an EBP

- Fidelity is linked to outcomes
  - For example, clients in SST Groups showed improved overall social skills and independent living skills (Kurtz & Mueser, 2008; Turner et al., 2018).

- Providing quality care to Veterans

Factors that Impact Fidelity

"However, there is a tension between fidelity and the necessity for many therapists to adapt EBTs to his or her patients or circumstances of delivery." (Andersen and Dorfman, 2016)

What interferes or may interfere with leading your SST Groups to fidelity?

Factors that Impact Fidelity

- Clinical setting
  - length of group due to program schedule, challenge to orient group members in open group with frequently changing group composition

- Client factors
  - Group members having pressing concerns to address

- Therapist factors
  - Burnout, staff shortages, preference for less structured interventions

- Fidelity Drift
  - Risk increases if not regularly providing SST groups or receiving feedback on SST group provision (as in consultation)

BRIEF REVIEW OF SST TRAINING PROGRAM AND SST INTERVENTION

Basic Components of the VA SST Training Program

Required Reading

Webcourse

Experiential Learning Session

6 Months of Weekly Group Consultation

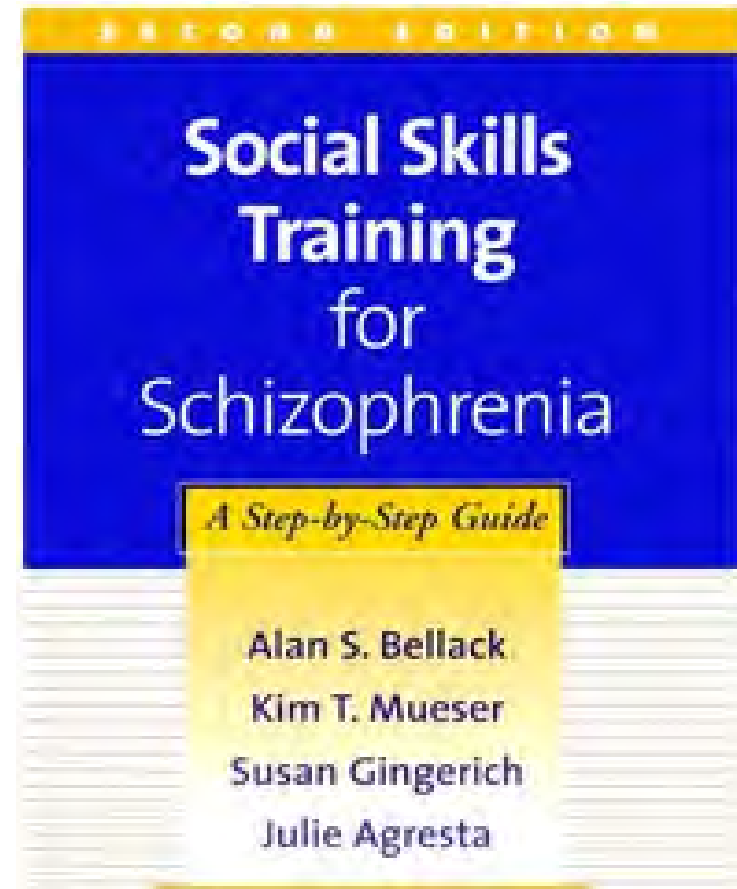- Consultant provided feedback on your SST individual sessions and groups.

Bellack, A. S., Mueser, K. T., Gingerich, S., & Agresta, J. (2004). *Social skills training for schizophrenia: A step-by-step guide*. 2nd Edition. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Key Components of SST

1. Individual session for engagement, orientation, goal setting

2. Group sessions for teaching specific skills

Individual Goal Setting Sessions

- Critical component of VA SST Model

- Build rapport, engagement

- Obtain informed consent

- Orient Veterans to SST and prepare them for group sessions

- Link recovery to SST

- Help them develop recovery goals for SST

Sociocultural Factors and SST

From Bellack et al. (2004):

- "A major error that leaders can make when conducting social skills groups is to operate under the assumption that different cultural groups employ the same verbal and nonverbal patterns of communication." (p. 99)

- "Clients who learn from models that are out of touch with the nuances of their particular sociocultural group or who are reinforced for behaviors that are maladaptive are unlikely to develop the social skills that are necessary for effective living within their community." (p. 99)

- "Leaders need to be sensitive to the sociocultural factors relevant to the clients with whom they are working and must be able to modify the skills taught so that they accommodate the differences in lifestyles, values, norms, and preferences." (p. 99)

Sociocultural Factors and SST

- Maintain the SST Group Structure, AND…

- Be able to <u>modify the skills taught</u> so that they accommodate the differences in lifestyles, values, norms, and preferences.

SST Group Session Sequence

Welcome and Set Agenda

Step 1: Review outside practice (for sessions other than the first session)

Step 2: Establish a rationale for the skill

Step 3: Briefly have members share a relevant experience or rationale

Step 4: Explain the steps of the skill

Step 5: Model the skill, review with members

Step 6: Have a group member role play

Step 7: Elicit and provide positive, then constructive feedback

Step 8: Have the member role play again

Step 9: Elicit and provide positive, then constructive feedback

Step 10: Repeat role play again and elicit/provide positive feedback

Step 11: Repeat Steps 6-10 with each group member

Step 12: Develop outside practice assignments

Group Room Layout and Movement in the Group Room

Board with Skill Title and Steps

SST Group Session Sequence

Seats for facilitators to introduce and model skill and for Veteran and role play buddy (role playing)

Group Members

Choose VA

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Resources to Establish and Maintain SST Fidelity

Poll Question: What tools and/or resources are you using to help maintain SST Fidelity (Check all that apply)?

A) Social Skills Training Quick Guide

B) Bellack et al. 2004 SST Manual

C) Social Skills Group Observation Checklist

D) Social Skills Group Observation Checklist: Detailed Anchor Points Version

E) CPRS Note Templates

F) I do not use any tools or resources

Resources

- Bellack, A. S., Mueser, K. T., Gingerich, S., & Agresta, J. (2004). *Social skills training for schizophrenia: A step-by-step guide*. 2nd Edition. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- SST Overview and Refresher Web course
- Social Skills Training Quick Guide
- SST Facilitators Guide
- Role Play Buddy Guide
- Social Skills Group Observation Checklist
- Social Skills Group Observation Checklist: Detailed Anchor Points Version
- SST CPRS Notes Templates

- What is Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness (SST)? An Overview and Refresher
  - TMS Link: *What is Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness (SST)? An Overview and Refresher* (VA TMS Item #37842)
  - Train Link (all public access): https://www.train.org/vha/course/1086072/
- Includes helpful overview of SST
- Can obtain 1.5 CEs

Choose VA

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Which step(s) of the SST group session sequence are most challenging to do with fidelity?

Fidelity Reminders

- **Most common ways SST providers in consultation veer from fidelity and how to get back on track (anecdotal national consultant report)**
  - Forgetting to review the outside practice and/or forgetting to write down what each group member planned for outside practice the previous group so that no one may remember what the group member was supposed to do.
  - Insufficient role play set up which can result in an overly complicated and lengthy role play scenario. It is helpful to ensure you review the scenario and how the steps will be practiced before role play 1 begins.
  - Not giving enough positive feedback after role plays. Positive feedback is a powerful tool in learning and behaviorally specific positive feedback can be particularly useful.
  - Not giving behaviorally specific "even better" feedback after role plays 1 and 2. The group member role playing the skill needs to have constructive feedback in order to practice more skillful social behavior.
  - Outside Practice Assignments are not developed and/or not specific: Saying something like "practice your skills outside group" rather than briefly and collaboratively making specific plans for outside practice with each group member. Also, if a group member does not think they can practice over the week, you can suggest they do another role play with a therapist/family member/case manager.

Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness (SST) Quick Guide

Preparing for SST Group Sessions

√ Review SST Group Session Sequence (in this guide)

√ Review the Social Skills Group Observation Checklist (SSGOC) or the SSGOC Detailed Anchor Points Version

√ Review skill in SST book (starting p. 193; including reading rationale, becoming familiar with steps, reading sample role play scenarios, and special considerations)

√ Copy handouts with skill title and steps only from SST website (see last page for link)

√ Prepare and copy outside practice sheets

√ When applicable, prepare and copy measurement based care measures for group members to complete prior to group session starting

√ Have a list of group members' SST Goals

√ Assign leaders to primary and secondary (if have two leaders); discuss tasks and roles related to primary and secondary group leaders and plan the model scenario

√ Prepare room (e.g., chairs in semi-circle facing board, prop flip chart/dry erase board)

√ Check audio recorder settings and conduct a test recording (if applicable)

SST and Recovery Goal for SST

Always keep in mind that **Social Skills Training is a Recovery-Oriented Treatment**. Therefore, in every session you should encourage and empower the group member to move forward with their recovery and the goal identified for SST. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website states that "Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential." Goal setting is an important part of the recovery process and is a core part of SST. Remember that tracking goals is an important part of SST. Refer to your training materials on how to track group member's progress on their goals.

Sociocultural & Linguistic Factors in SST

"Social skills are the interpersonal behaviors that are socially sanctioned in a given community, and are therefore influenced by the specific sociocultural features of that community" (p. 98, Bellack et. al, 2004). Effectiveness of SST is related to social, cultural, and linguistic factors. These factors can be integrated throughout the group session sequence (e.g., establishing rationale, setup role plays, etc.).

Note About the Very First SST Group:

For your very first group you will also want to add to beginning of the agenda:

1. **Introductions** of group leaders and group members
2. Review of **group purpose and structure** (You may need to repeat this in subsequent groups as well)
3. Discuss how **sociocultural factors** will be integrated in group
4. Discuss **group expectations**
5. Provide the opportunity for group members to **share individual goals** with the group
6. You will **not Review Outside Practice** in the very first group as the group members will not yet have been assigned practice prior to starting the group.

Sample Group Expectations

(with recovery-oriented sample presentation)

-Stay on the group topic. ("Staying on the group topic will help make sure we have time for everyone to practice.")

-Respect individual differences and differences of opinion; no criticizing or making fun of each other. ("No criticizing or making fun of each other. It's important to remember that feedback in SST focuses on what people do well.")

-Respect group members' social, cultural, and linguistic differences. ("Listen when others share their cultural backgrounds. Do not judge or be critical of differences. Social skills may vary based on your background and the social situation. Also, no use of discriminatory language. We want everyone to be safe and valued in the group.")

-Only one person may speak at a time. ("Only one person speaking at a time promotes respect for what everyone has to say.")

-No name-calling or cursing. ("No name-calling or cursing. Let's work together to make sure that SST group is a positive experience for everyone.")

-No eating during group. ("Please no eating during group. We have found that eating in group can distract from practice and people giving meaningful feedback.")

-Please turn cell phones off or onto silent during group. ("Turning off cell phones helps show respect for each other's time and efforts in the group.")

SST Facilitator and Role Play Buddy Guides

Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness (SST) Role Play Buddy (RPB) Guide

Individuals that can be SST Role Play Buddies include...

- Providers trained in SST
- Providers not trained in SST
- Peer Support Specialists
- Students/interns

SST Facilitator Responsibilities to the Role Play Buddy:

- Prior to the first SST session, provides copies of the RPB guide and the SST Quick Guide to the RPB and meets with RPB to review these guides and explain group procedures. Describes SST groups as being positive, welcoming, and encouraging, and answers any questions.
- Provides RPB with web course information, "What is Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness (SST)? An Overview and Refresher." Completing the web course is encouraged but not required for the RPB.
- Prior to the first SST session, brief the RPB about the group members' goals.
- Meets with RPB prior to sessions to plan model scenario, then clearly states model scenario immediately before starting the model with RPB in group session.
- Sets up role plays and makes sure the group member and RPB clearly understand roles in the scenario and the plan before starting role plays. Emphasizes who the RPB is pretending to be and the basic plan for what RPB will say.
- Clearly states the focus for second/third role plays before beginning so that the RPB understands their role in those role plays.

Role Play Buddy Responsibilities:

- Meets with the SST Facilitator prior to beginning SST to make sure they are clear on SST group procedures; may also observe an SST session.
- Highly encouraged (but not required) to complete the web course "What is Social Skills Training for Serious Mental Illness (SST)? An Overview and Refresher" prior to helping with SST.
- Prior to each session, meets briefly with the SST Facilitator to plan together the model scenario and possible role play scenarios for group members.
- Respects that SST sessions are highly structured and supports the SST Facilitator and structure by not speaking off-topic or encouraging too much discussion.
- Has a basic knowledge of the group session sequence and is able to follow along with it using the SST Quick Guide.
- Helps the SST Facilitator model the skill in a brief, simple role play focused on the steps of the skill. The SST Facilitator models the steps of the skill.
- Follows the instructions of the SST Facilitator provided in role play set-up. If the SST Facilitator inadvertently does not set up role play before beginning, the RPB can prompt set-up, e.g., "What situation are we role playing?"
- Provides opportunities in role plays encouraging the group member to use the steps of the skill (e.g., pausing to allow the group member to do the steps; allowing time for the SST Facilitator to use the steps on the board to prompt the group member).
- Gives a positive/neutral response to the group member in role plays when applicable (e.g., "Sounds good! I can look into your request.").
- Joins in applause after role plays and at every opportunity in the session.
- Gives brief, specific, positive feedback to group members about role play performance when appropriate (e.g., "Your eye contact really was great!").
- Follows instructions from the SST Facilitator on how to alter second and third role plays, if applicable.
- Has fun in SST!

SST FACILITATOR ROLES GUIDE: 2 VS. 1 TRAINED SST GROUP FACILITATORS

2 TRAINED SST FACILITATORS LEADING AN SST GROUP:

Typically switch off being Primary and Secondary facilitator from group to group. Secondary facilitator can help manage group emergencies and challenges so Primary Facilitator can implement the group session sequence. The list of tasks to be accomplished by each facilitator role in an SST session is noted below.

Roles of Primary and Secondary Facilitators in SST Sessions

Welcome Group and Set Agenda: *Primary*

Step 1. Review outside practice: *Primary*

Step 2. Establish a rationale for the skill: *Primary*

Step 3. Briefly have members share a relevant experience or rationale: *Primary; Secondary can briefly contribute as appropriate*

Step 4. Explain the steps of the skill: *Primary leads reading/discussion of steps; Secondary can briefly contribute as appropriate*

Step 5. Model the skill; review with members: *Primary demonstrates the skill and Secondary is role play buddy; Primary leads review of model*

Step 6. Have a group member role play: *Primary assists Veteran in role play set up and makes sure the Veteran is clear on the plan; Secondary is role play buddy*

Step 7. Elicit and provide feedback: *Primary leads feedback including providing and eliciting feedback from group members; Secondary provides feedback as appropriate*

Step 8. Have the member role play again: *Primary helps set up the role play and makes sure the Veteran is clear on the plan; Secondary is role play buddy*

Step 9. Elicit and provide feedback: *Primary leads feedback including providing and eliciting feedback from group members; Secondary provides feedback as appropriate*

Step 10. Repeat role play again and elicit/provide feedback: *Primary helps set up the role play and makes sure the Veteran is clear on the plan; Secondary is role play buddy; Primary leads feedback including providing and eliciting feedback from group members; Secondary provides feedback as appropriate*

Step 11. Repeat Steps 6-10 with each group member: *Same roles as in Steps 6-10*

Step 12. Develop outside practice assignments: *Primary*

1 TRAINED SST FACILITATOR LEADING AN SST GROUP:

- Reminder that if you are the only trained SST facilitator leading the group, you might ask a staff member to be a Role Play Buddy (RPB). There is a separate SST Role Play Buddy Guide to help orient the staff member to this role.
- If you are leading the group alone without a staff member as a RPB, for Step 5 (Model the Skill), you might ask a group member to role play with you while you model the skill. Ideally, ask the group member before the group session starts so you can practice the model with them. For the remainder of group (Steps 6-11), you should both lead the group and be the RPB.
- SST Facilitator helps set up the role play and makes sure the group member and RPB is clear on the roles in the scenario and the plan before starting role plays.

Conducting More than One Group on the Same Skill

- Due to time restrictions, it is possible that not all group members will have the opportunity to role play the skill on the first day the skill is presented
  - In these cases, it is recommended that the same skill be reviewed in the next session (and, if needed, during the session after that)
  - When repeating the skill, it is recommended that you follow the same basic SST group session sequence as you did when you first presented the skill.
  - However, Steps 2, 3, and 4 of the SST Group Session Sequence can be abbreviated if the great majority of group members were present at the previous group session.
  - Remember to keep track of which group members still need to role play the skill and be sure they get the opportunity to do so during subsequent sessions

- All components of SST can still be completed with fidelity despite COVID-19 pandemic related restrictions.

- For example, outside practice may be completed but may involve another role play with a provider if the group member has limited social interactions.

Social Skills Group Observation Checklist

SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP OBSERVATION CHECKLIST *(page 1 of 2)*

Group Leader:_____   Date:_____

Consultant:_____

Instructions: Complete this checklist after observing the group leader conduct a session. For each item, check off whether the group leader performed this skill "not at all", "partially", or fully.

General structuring and positive engagement skills	Not at all	Partially	Fully
Created a warm, welcoming atmosphere.			✓
Spoke clearly, using a voice neither overloud nor oversoft.			✓
Established an agenda and maintained the structure of the session.			✓
Provided ample positive feedback for participation.			✓
Redirected group members who interrupted or strayed from the topic, using a kind but firm voice.			✓
Asked group members for examples of personal experiences in which skills could be or were used.			✓
Used a shaping approach to help members gradually learn new social skills by reinforcing small steps toward the targeted skill.			✓
Encouraged group members to be actively involved in the session. (Members can be active in different ways, such as reading the steps of the skill out loud, providing a rationale, providing feedback for role plays, participating in role plays, contributing examples of personal experience.)			✓

(continued)

SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP OBSERVATION CHECKLIST *(page 2 of 2)*

Steps of social skills training	Not at all	Partially	Fully
Reviewed homework from the previous group session.			✓
Established a rationale for using the skill.			✓
Discussed the steps of the skill with group members.			✓
Modeled the skill in a role-play.			✓
Reviewed the model with the group members.			✓
Engaged all group members in a role-play of the skill.			✓
Provided or elicited behaviorally specific positive feedback for each group member's role-play.			✓
Provided or elicited behaviorally specific suggestions for improvement for each group member's role-play.			✓
Assigned specific homework to practice the skill outside the group.			✓

Choose VA

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Overview of the Social Skills Group Observation Checklist

- This tool determines if the group is being led to fidelity.
- The Checklist is comprised of two main areas:
  - 1) General Structuring and Positive Engagement Skills (items 1-8)
  - 2) Steps of Social Skills Training (items 9-17)
- Items under each area are rated as: "Not at all," "Partially," or "Fully."
- Rate SST facilitator behavior *throughout* the group session (e.g., a facilitator may not engage group members during one small part of the group session, but in general they do engage the group members).

Overview of the Social Skills Group Observation Checklist

- Fidelity for an SST Group is defined in the VA SST Training Program as 80% or more of the items on the Social Skills Group Observation Checklist (SSGOC) being rated "Fully" and none are scored at "Not at all."

- The SSGOC: Detailed Anchor Points Version was developed to facilitate rating reliability and fidelity. This document includes specific behavioral descriptors for each item and has been **updated** so that it is even more specific and helpful in rating group sessions.

Updated Social Skills Group Observation Checklist: Detailed Anchor Points Version

SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP OBSERVATION CHECKLIST:

DETAILED ANCHOR POINTS VERSION (3/7/22)

Group Leader:_____   Date:_____

Consultant:_____   Skill: _____

Instructions: Complete this checklist after reviewing an audio recording of or observing a group leader (i.e., the primary facilitator) conducting a session. For each item, check off whether the group leader performed this skill "Not at all", "Partially", or "Fully." Please be sure to review carefully notes in each column and the Important Guidelines for Making Ratings section at the end of this document prior to making ratings. The first session of a group series has special rating instructions that are detailed in the Important Guidelines section.

General structuring and positive engagement skills	Not at all	Partially	Fully
1. Created a warm, welcoming atmosphere.	No statements welcoming participants or showing support/concern/caring validation; no warm voice tone used. Some examples of statements projecting warmth include "it's so good to see everyone here today," "glad you could make it today," "It's so great to hear that you are moving forward on your goals" and similar.	At least one statement welcoming participants or showing support/concern/caring/validation and warm voice tone is used for most of the session.	Several statements to the group welcoming participants or showing support/concern/caring/validation using a warm tone of voice. Consistently projects warmth.
2. Spoke clearly, using a voice neither overloud nor oversoft.	Many statements were either not clear and/or many statements are overloud or oversoft.	Some statements are not clear and/or some statements are overloud or oversoft.	All (or virtually all) statements throughout the group are clear and voice is consistently at an appropriate volume (neither overloud or oversoft).
3. Established an agenda and maintained the structure of the session. (Note: The agenda for the first session is typically more elaborate than for subsequent sessions given	Neither established an agenda nor maintained the structure of the session or only one of these items was done partially.	Either did one item completely but not both (i.e., established the agenda and maintained the structure of the session) or did both items partially.	Did both items completely (i.e., established the agenda and maintained the structure of the session). An agenda may be as brief as announcing the skill that will be taught in the group. The structure of the session is maintained when every step of social skills training is followed in order (i.e., there are

Page **1** of **8**

General structuring and positive engagement skills	Not at all	Partially	Fully
the need to orient group members to the intervention, etc. To receive a fully on the first session, the agenda setting needs to reflect this complexity. Also, consider time management and whether the facilitator tends to go off topic or sticks to the agenda and structure.)			no ratings of "Not at all" for Items 9-17 and these steps are done in the proper order).
4. Provided ample positive feedback for participation. (Note: The behaviorally specific positive feedback that is given/elicited after role plays is rated separately in item #15.)	No or little positive feedback (e.g., reinforcement or praise).	Some positive feedback but not consistently throughout the group.	Consistent and ample positive feedback. Throughout the session, used many opportunities to provide positive feedback to group members for attending the group session and contributing in positive ways, such as offering a rationale, reading the steps, coming up to role play, giving appropriate feedback on role plays, etc.
5. Redirected group members who interrupted or strayed from the topic, using a kind but firm voice. (Note: Please rate whether the group leader makes appropriate attempts to redirect, not whether the group member is fully responsive to these attempts.)	Did not redirect group members who got off topic or interrupted.	Redirected group members at times but also missed significant opportunities to redirect group members who interrupted or strayed from the topic. Or, consistently redirected without a kind voice.	Consistently, quickly, and politely redirected group members who strayed from the topic or interrupted to get them back on track. Also, if no redirection is needed in this group, rate "Fully" for this item.

Page **2** of **8**

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Let's Practice

- The behavioral descriptors can help facilitate rating your groups.

- Let's take a closer look at the Social Skills Group Observation Checklist: Detailed Anchor Points Version using some sample scenarios.

- We have sample scenarios from an SST group session on the following slides and we will discuss how you would rate the items on the Detailed Anchor Points Version.

- *Item #9 Reviewed the outside practice from the previous group session*

The group leader asks a yes/no question to all the group members about whether they completed their outside practice. Group members shared that they did the practice and said they were highly effective. The steps of the skill were not discussed.

Steps of social skills training	Not at all	Partially	Fully
9. Reviewed the outside practice from the previous group session	Did not ask about outside practice of previous skills.	Asked at least one group member (but not all) about outside practice or just asked a Y/N question about whether outside practice was completed. Did not reference the steps of the skill when reviewing the outside practice.	Asked each group member who had been assigned outside practice about their outside practice and briefly but fully reviewed what occurred during the outside practice. During the review, either group member(s) and/or the facilitator(s) referenced at least some of the steps of the skill.

Steps of social skills training	Not at all	Partially	Fully
9. Reviewed the outside practice from the previous group session	Did not ask about outside practice of previous skills.	Asked at least one group member (but not all) about outside practice or just asked a Y/N question about whether outside practice was completed. **Did not reference the steps of the skill when reviewing the outside practice**. ✔️	Asked each group member who had been assigned outside practice about their outside practice and briefly but fully reviewed what occurred during the outside practice. During the review, either group member(s) and/or the facilitator(s) referenced at least some of the steps of the skill.

Choose VA

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- *Item #10 "Established a rationale for using the skill."*

For this item, please turn to page 198 in Bellack et al. (2004).

The group facilitator asks the group members why it is important to practice making requests. Group members provide their input and group facilitator fills in comments with all the main points from the Bellack et al., rationale.

Anchor Points for Item #10

Steps of social skills training	Not at all	Partially	Fully
10. Established a rationale for using the skill	Did not establish or only established minimally why the skill is important or helpful.	Did partially but not fully establish why the skill is important or helpful using input from group members and, when needed, facilitator(s). At least part of the rationale section of the skill sheet in the Bellack et al. manual is covered in this discussion.	Established fully the importance/helpfulness of using the skill using input from group members and, when needed, facilitator(s). The main points from the rationale section of the skill sheet in the Bellack et al manual are covered.

Steps of social skills training	Not at all	Partially	Fully
10. Established a rationale for using the skill	Did not establish or only established minimally why the skill is important or helpful.	Did partially but not fully establish why the skill is important or helpful using input from group members and, when needed, facilitator(s). At least part of the rationale section of the skill sheet in the Bellack et al. manual is covered in this discussion.	Established fully the importance/helpfulness of using the skill using input from group members and, when needed, facilitator(s). **The main points from the rationale section of the skill sheet in the Bellack et al manual are covered.** ✓

- Item #16 *"Provided or elicited behaviorally specific suggestions for improvement for each group member's role play."*

   After the first role play for each group member, the facilitator provides specific and behavioral constructive feedback (i.e., "even better feedback"). After the 2nd role play for each group member, the facilitator only encourages the group members to try again for practice without providing or asking about specific ways to make the role play even better. The facilitator says "Well, let's just role play again and give it a try." How would you rate item #16?

Anchor Points for Item #16

Steps of social skills training	Not at all	Partially	Fully
16. Provided or elicited behaviorally specific suggestions for improvement for each group member's role play	Did not provide or elicit suggestions for improvement or provided vague suggestions only.	Provided or elicited brief, specific, supportive, behavioral suggestions (1-2 suggestions maximum) for improvement after at least some roleplays.	Provided or elicited brief, specific, supportive, behavioral suggestions for improvement (maximum 1-2 suggestions) consistently after 1st and 2nd role plays in a set of 3 role plays (or in all but the last role play, if there are more than 3 role plays in a set conducted with the same group member). Constructive suggestions were given to all group members engaging in role plays. Stated how to make role play scenario more challenging if a group member's first role play displayed mastery of the skill within the initial scenario's context. Made sure group member was clear on specific suggestion before doing next role play.

Steps of social skills training	Not at all	Partially	Fully
16. Provided or elicited behaviorally specific suggestions for improvement for each group member's role play	Did not provide or elicit suggestions for improvement or provided vague suggestions only.	Provided or elicited brief, specific, supportive, behavioral suggestions (1-2 suggestions maximum) for improvement after at least some roleplays. ✓	**Provided or elicited brief, specific, supportive, behavioral suggestions for improvement (maximum 1-2 suggestions) <u>consistently</u> after 1st and 2nd role plays in a set of 3 role plays** (or in all but the last role play, if there are more than 3 role plays in a set conducted with the same group member). Constructive suggestions were given to all group members engaging in role plays. Stated how to make role play scenario more challenging if a group member's first role play displayed mastery of the skill within the initial scenario's context. Made sure group member was clear on specific suggestion before doing next role play.

- Item #17 *"Assigned specific outside practice for the skill taught."*

  Each of the group members share they will not have the opportunity to practice because they will not be seeing many people in the following week. The group facilitator nods and moves on to end group. They say, "Ok, that's fine. You all practiced today in group so just see if something comes up this week." How would you rate item #17?

Anchor Points for Item #17

Steps of social skills training	Not at all	Partially	Fully
17. Assigned specific outside practice for the skill taught	Outside practice may have been mentioned in general but no specific outside practice assignments were created.	Outside practice plans were collaboratively developed and/or specific (e.g., included when/with whom/where they will use the skill) for *some* group members.	Outside practice plans were collaboratively developed for *all or nearly all* group members, and the plans were specific (e.g., included when/with whom/where they will use the skill).

Steps of social skills training	Not at all	Partially	Fully
17. Assigned specific outside practice for the skill taught	Outside practice may have been mentioned in **general but no specific outside practice assignments were created.** ✔	Outside practice plans were collaboratively developed and/or specific (e.g., included when/with whom/where they will use the skill) for *some* group members.	Outside practice plans were collaboratively developed for *all or nearly all* group members, and the plans were specific (e.g., included when/with whom/where they will use the skill).

SST CPRS Note Templates

- Initial Individual Goal Setting Session

- Veteran outcomes in group

- Incorporating goals into role plays and outside practice assignments

Other Ideas to Maintain Fidelity

- Ask an SST trained colleague or SST Regional Trainer (RT) to observe group

- Attend advanced quarterly webinars (PDFs are also on the SST website for past topical webinars)

- Attend other SST Webinars on advanced topics, such as SST webinar "[Sociocultural and Linguistic Factors in Implementing Social Skills Groups (Enduring)](#)" (TMS ID: 131003157)

- Attend SST-Telehealth Community of Practice Call

- Contact the SST Training Program Staff-we are available!

- Visit the SST MIRECC website: [VA Social Skills Training Program website](#)

Preventing Burnout

- Lapses in fidelity may be related to burnout
- Helpful to recruit a role play buddy or co-facilitator to share the work and make the group even more fun and meaningful.
- Organizational factors play a role in burnout so if you are in leadership be attentive to burnout issues. Employee satisfaction is closely tied to the behavior of their direct supervisors.
- EAP resources
- Self-care, exercise, meditation, nutrition, nature, social support

Create an SST Fidelity Action Plan

Make an SST Fidelity Action Plan

- Completing the SST Training Program means that you had established fidelity at that time.

- An SST Fidelity Action plan helps you prevent fidelity drift.

- Let's talk about your SST Fidelity Action Plan.

Make an SST Fidelity Action Plan

- Be patient and honest with yourself as you consider your SST Groups and whether they are currently being led to fidelity. Take a baseline assessment.

- Consider what you are doing well AND what can be EVEN better.

- Recommendation once fidelity is achieved: rate your own fidelity (or have someone else rate it) on the SSGOC at least once every 3 months to reduce fidelity drift.

- Commit to at least one or two new ways to establish and/or maintain SST fidelity and take time now to write down your plan.

SST Training Program Contacts

For consultation about SST groups:

Elizabeth Gilbert, Ph.D.

VA SST Program Manager

Elizabeth.Gilbert@va.gov

For materials to enhance fidelity:

Laché Wilkins, M.S.

VA SST Program Coordinator

Lache.Wilkins@va.gov

References

1. Andersen, B. L., & Dorfman, C. S. (2016). Evidence-based psychosocial treatment in the community: Considerations for dissemination and implementation. *Psychooncology, 25,* 482–90.

2. Bellack, A. S., Mueser, K. T., Gingerich, S., & Agresta, J. (2004). *Social Skills Training for Schizophrenia: A Step by Step Guide, 2nd Edition.* New York: The Guilford Press.

3. Perepletchikova, F., & Kazdin, A. E. (2005). Treatment integrity and therapeutic change: Issues and research recommendations. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 12,* 365–383.

4. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration (2008). *Uniform Mental Health Services in VA Medical Centers and Clinics.* VHA Handbook 1160.01, 28-30.

5. Draper, A.A., Greenwood, S.K., Harris, J.I., Owen, R.R. & Sanders, E.J. (2021). *VA Mental Health Lived Experience Community of Practice Language Statement.* Retrieved from https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn5/MHLE_COP/index.asp.

6. Kurtz, M. M., & Mueser, K. T. (2008). A meta-analysis of controlled research on social skills training for schizophrenia. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 76,* 491-504.

7. Turner, D. T., McGlanaghy, E., Cuijpers, P., van der Gaag, M., Karyotaki, E., & MacBeth A. A. (2018). Meta-Analysis of Social Skills Training and Related Interventions for Psychosis. *Schizophrenia Bulletin, 44,* 475-491.

Choose VA

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Questions?

TMS

- If you would like to get continuing education credit (CE) for attending this presentation, you need to have registered in TMS prior to the presentation. After this presentation, you also need to confirm in TMS that you attended the event and to complete the TMS course survey within 15 days after the presentation.

- Even if you do not wish to receive CE credit, please complete the TMS course survey so that we may receive program evaluation feedback and continue to offer CE for our training events.

- We encourage you to complete the TMS course survey today.

Thanks for joining us today!