

Facilitating Virtual Support Groups

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Before we begin



This webinar will be recorded and shared with you.



Submit your questions via chat.



Please complete our survey at the end of the webinar.

Our mission



Raise public awareness about the need for foster and adoptive families for children in the public child welfare system



Assist US states, territories, and tribes to recruit, engage, develop and support foster and adoptive families

Goals for this webinar



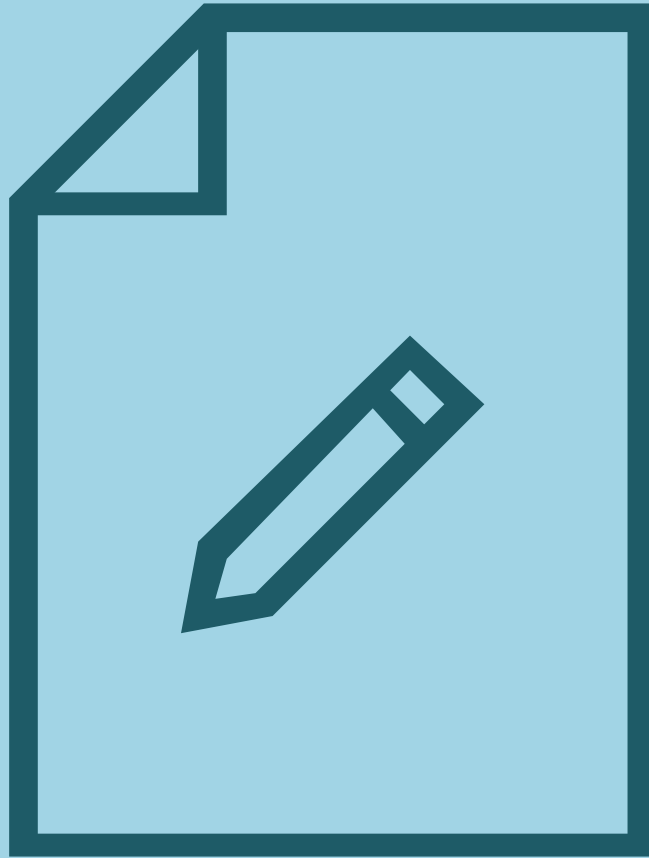
Discuss effective facilitation of parent support groups



Discuss considerations for hosting support groups in virtual spaces



Share strategies to improve engagement in online groups



Audience polls



Type in “questions”

What challenges do you experience in hosting virtual support groups?



Establish group agreements together

- Empowers the group
- Creates a safe, respectful place
- Helps resolve future conflicts

Examples of group agreements

- Confidentiality
- Start and end on time
- Avoid side conversations or interruptions
- Understand different approaches work for different families
- Don't judge

What others? Type into “questions.”



Additional rules for online support groups

- No recording
- No screenshots
- Use headphones if around others

Your group agreements slide could look like this



- ✓ Start and stop on time.
- ✓ No screenshots or recordings.
- ✓ Be respectful and judgment-free.
- ✓ This group is confidential. Tips, strategies, and resources can be shared **without** connection to any person.
- ✓ If other people—including your children—are around, use headphones to protect privacy.
- ✓ Speak for yourself and give everyone a chance to speak.
- ✓ Agree to disagree. It's OK to have differing opinions.

Confidentiality agreements

It's crucial that confidentiality be covered at each group. Post confidentiality statements at the start of each group. Make it clear that folks are agreeing to confidentiality by participating.

Types of support groups

- General discussion group
- Training on various topics
- Curriculum focused
- Book club

Format of group

- Have general discussion—what's going on with everyone?
- Prepare topic or questions ahead of time.
- Invite speaker/presenter.

Tip: It's always smart to have some questions or topics ready to go in case the discussion isn't flowing.

Variety of groups



Early bird or night owl groups



Groups for specific caregivers—moms only, dads only, kinship caregivers, LGBTQ+ parents

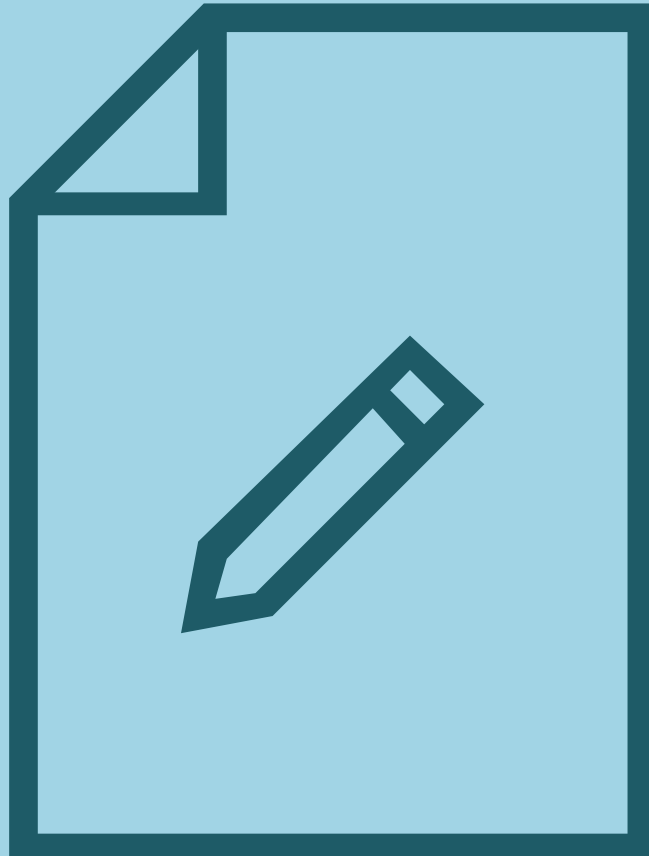


Groups on specific topics—FASD, parenting teens, transracial placements



Many families enjoy pop-up support groups

Post in private Facebook group/page or send out an email to reach folks for a spontaneous group.



Audience poll

Online support groups

- Practice beforehand.
- Send instructions and troubleshooting tips to members.
- Have paper ready for notes.
- Start with introductions.
- Limit group size and expect less participation.
- Do *not* post links in public spaces.

Questions for introductions



Name one positive thing that has come out of the health crisis.

What activity does your family love to do together?

What self-care have you practiced lately?

Questions for introductions



If someone wrote a book about your life, what would the title be?

What animal would you choose to be and why?

What is a childhood memory that makes you smile?

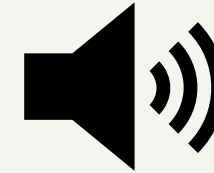
Technical considerations



View options on Zoom



Gallery view



Speaker view



Zoom pro tip

If on mobile or tablet, Zoom users can swipe to see other attendees.

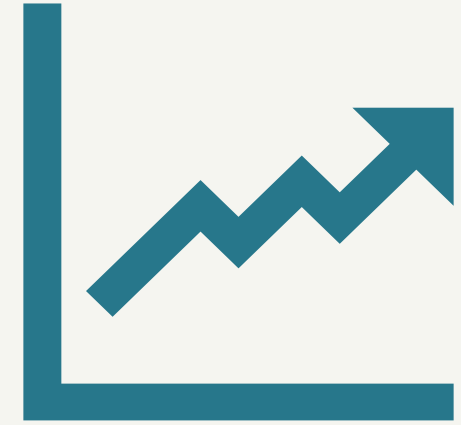
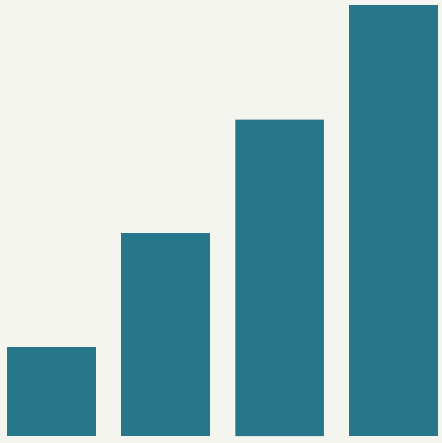


Don't forget, you can mute people!



Breakout rooms in Zoom

- Split participants into two or more breakout rooms
- Automatically or manually



Polling

- Check “polling” in the settings under account management before using polls during a meeting.
- Poll answers will show up as people are answering, and you can share the results with the group immediately.

Sharing your screen

Share a video clip, image, slides, anything you want!
Have the item open on your desktop before sharing
your screen.

Images to share



IF YOU WANT TO NAP WHILE THE KIDS ARE HOME, JUST SAY "WAKE ME UP IN 30 MINUTES SO WE CAN CLEAN THE HOUSE." THEY WILL THEN DO LITERALLY ANYTHING TO AVOID WAKING YOU.

TP

Self-Care Check-In

Use the emoji that most describes how you're practicing self-care today.

- 👉 **Physical:** Moving your body.
- 👉 **Emotional:** Honoring how you feel today.
- 👉 **Spiritual:** Something good for the soul.
- 👉 **Personal:** Spending time on a hobby.
- 👉 **Social:** Quality time with someone.
- 👉 **Household:** Cleaning and organizing.
- 👉 **Pampering:** Treating yourself.

BlessingManifesting



Google Drive

Use this Google Drive anytime and add resources to share with other support group leaders!

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1ZQhXU7rbPxefBTUF2iXsCi70uVof8dpZ>

A guide on the side, not a sage on the stage.

“Facilitation is the art of stimulating deeper understanding, fresh thinking, and behavioral transformation.”

How attendees should feel



Welcome



Respected



Valued

Characteristics of an effective group leader

- An optimistic worldview
- Open-mindedness
- Self-awareness and self-reflection
- Capacity for empathy and emotional regulation
- The ability to maintain appropriate boundaries
- Leadership skills
- A strong support system

You are a reframing coach



Facilitation tips

Set a positive tone

Groups that get bogged down in negativity don't last. As leader, set a positive tone for the group.

Engage everyone

Whether aloud or via chat, engage everyone within the first 5 to 10 minutes.

Notice non-verbal cues

Communication is 10% verbal, 90% non-verbal. Paying attention to non-verbal cues will be harder during virtual groups.



Conflict is normal

Accept that you will experience conflict and work through it.



Laughing is crucial!

Proactive facilitators

- Interrupt and redirect unrelenting “storming.”
- Anticipate difficult behaviors.
- Be willing to address issues directly.

Balance in sharing



- You want to establish your credibility and show you are human.
- You do *not* want to consume the group with your own needs.
- Practice self-reflection to learn the difference: are you sharing to meet your needs or the needs of the group?



Learn local resources

It's essential that group facilitators be knowledgeable about local and state resources.

Keeping spirits light

Breaking tension and finding humor in tough situations

What's the wackiest advice you've ever received?

Share your favorite parenting meme.

Suggest they use a sticker chart.

Support group is not therapy

- Be mindful of the group becoming a counseling session for one individual.
- Support all members, but do not cross the line into therapy.
- Have a private conversation if necessary.
- Be careful not to overcommit yourself.

Keeping the flow going



What do you have planned for the holidays (or summer) to keep the kids busy?

What's the best thing someone outside your family has done to help your family out?

When was the last time you were alone in your house?



**Questions or
comments?**



AdoptUSKids resources and services

- Capacity-building services
- Publications, webinars, and tools
- Discussion guides and tip sheets for parent group leaders

Visit professionals.adoptuskids.org/category/support-families/parent-groups.



Contact information

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Need help? Contact consultation@adoptuskids.org to discuss system-specific assistance.



Stay in touch!

Stay informed about upcoming events and publications by signing up for AdoptUSKids emails: adoptuskids.org/newsletter-sign-up.



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