

Taking the Next Step: Group Proposal  
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## Taking the Next Step: Group Theory Proposal

**I. Title of group**

Taking the Next Step

**II. Type of Group**

This group will be a psychoeducational and supportive group for high school seniors who are rising first-generation college students. The group is time limited to a 45-minute class period and will take place every week starting in January and ending in June. The group is a voluntary and heterogeneous group, with the make-up of both female and male first-generation students from the senior class.

**III. Rationale**

First generation high school students would benefit greatly from group work to assist them with the stress and anxiety involved with the process of moving on to higher education. Choi (2001) finds that 59% of first generation students enrolled in higher education, compared to a whopping 91% of those who have parents who have achieved a degree. With typical development, seniors partake in Advanced Placement classes, participate in extracurriculars, and send out applications to many different colleges/universities (Holland, 2014). However, with these typical developments come hurdles that high school seniors must overcome. One challenge that high school seniors face involves their upcoming transition to work, military, or higher education. Students will be leaving high school and entering the real world. Worries involving this transition include money, being successful in college or the workforce, and about leaving friends and/or family (Daigneault & Wirtz, 2008). First generation high school seniors have these challenges, as well as what Dockery (2012) finds, which is that first-generation college students have parents who may be ill-equipped to assist their children in accessing higher

education and frequently lack information about college. Interestingly enough, a recent trend is that first-generation students are more frequently rating parental influence as an important factor in their choosing to attend college (Saenz, Hurtado, Barrera, Wolf, & Yeung, 2007). Another concern regarding these first-generation students is their ability to complete college. According to Choy (2001), first-generation college students are more likely to leave before earning their degree. Once these students get to college, there is a higher risk of them leaving within the first year (Choy, 2001).

Students will benefit from this group in several ways. First, they will be able to learn from the similar experiences of others. Second, they will benefit from the coping skills that they will learn from the group experience. Finally, they will gain the confidence they will need in order to be successful during their time as a first-generation college student.

#### **IV. Goal and Objectives**

The primary goal for this group is to provide support and opportunity for first-generation college students. Group members will also gain the necessary skills and confidence to tackle the challenges that they will face on their journey to higher education.

The objectives for this group are as follows:

1. To identify individual strengths that they may encounter
2. To gain coping strategies that will be used on this journey and through the rest of life
3. To build confidence in themselves and their abilities

#### **V. Basic Information**

The group facilitators would send out a survey to the senior class. The survey would ask questions such as:

- Are you planning to attend college?
- Would you be a first generation college student?
- If so, would you be interested in joining a support group to help you through the college process?

Once the survey has been completed by all students, facilitators will review the data. The group will include the students that stated they would be first-generation college students, and expressed interested in joining a group. Students who were not planning to attend college, were not going to be first-generation college students, and/or stated that they would not like to join the group, would be excluded. The group would contain 5-7 participants. Others will be on a waiting list. The group would meet on Wednesdays during third-period study for 45 minutes. The group would take place in the Art Room.

#### **VI. Basic Group Rules**

Due to the group being made up of teenagers and the location of the group being in the school, the facilitators have decided the rules are as follows:

1. What happens in the group, stays in the group.
2. Unless the student is absent from school, they must attend group for every session, and on time, as they would any other class.
3. Everyone should have a turn to speak in group.

The facilitators would also like to open the floor to further rule suggestions during the first session of the group, so that everyone will feel safe and comfortable.

#### **VII. Possible Topics and/or Therapeutic Activities**

There are several topics that would be likely to be the focus of the group. During the timespan of the group, possible challenges will be explored by group members. These challenges may take place either before or during their first year of college. Also, coping strategies will be

discussed with the group. Coping strategies will be extremely helpful when dealing with challenging situations that are going to be explored. Finally, confidence will be built throughout the group. This newfound confidence will allow them to believe in themselves, which they will be able to bring to the college/universities they chose to attend. This confidence will also allow them to be successful in the coming years.

For activities, the group will do a wide range of things. One of these activities would be a research-oriented scavenger hunt involving their college of choice. The group facilitators would compile a list of information for group members to find, such as “What is the name of the school library?” or “In what building could you find the Financial Aid department?”. The members would then have to find the information from the college website. The activity would conclude by having group members share what they learned and how they felt about the experience. A second activity that would be done is Coping Skills Bingo. Group members would discover new coping skills in a fun manner. The activity would conclude by having a discussion about coping skills and how they could be used during freshman year. A third activity that will be done is a game that deals with challenges and emotions these rising college freshman may face. During their turn, each member will pick up a card and read the card out loud. Each member of the group will then respond to what the card says, whether it is how they would deal with a challenge, a time they may face a specific emotion, or answering a fun surprise question.

### **VIII. Best Practices**

The Association for Specialist in Group Work, a division of the American Counseling Association, devised a set of guidelines to address group facilitators’ responsibilities in planning, performing, and processing groups (Thomas & Pender, 2008). These guidelines, known as Best Practices, are separated into three stages to be completed throughout the entire group process

(Thomas & Pender, 2008). The stages include planning, performing, and processing the group. The facilitators of *Taking the Next Step* have followed these stages throughout their journey.

First, group facilitators worked on planning the group. The group facilitators attended a Group Theory class at Bridgewater State University that helped to further develop their skills and to better educate themselves on the concept of group counseling. The first preparation task was to read *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy* (Yalom, 1985), which facilitators completed before the class began. In class, several activities were done to assist in the planning process. These activities include watching videos of group sessions, reading scholarly articles found through independent research, and completing a formal group proposal with the help of the instructor.

Next, the facilitators will move to the performing stage. This stage involves actually conducting the proposed group. The facilitators will be given the task of helping group members find meaning within it. Live supervision will be provided by both the class instructor and peers within the classroom. Additionally, the facilitators will have personally experienced the groups led by others.

For the processing stage, facilitators will be receiving feedback from their instructor and peers about their performance. Taking the Next Step facilitators will next reflect together regarding how they did as a team. Thereafter, they will reflect individually. This will thus conclude the group process.

## **IX. Special Considerations**

Individual consultation can give to students during the school day per their request. Since the group is a small close knit group, there is always a possibility of deeper problems coming out of individuals in the group. Also, the environment in the individual school counseling sessions

that could take place may bring out deeper problems as well. Referrals will be suggested to these individuals if these problems do come out. Some ethical issues that are present with seniors in high school is the possibility of working with minors. This is the year that many seniors turn the age of eighteen, where they are not considered a minor anymore. Confidentiality is another ethical issue that will be present within the group setting. Finally, since we are in a school, all school rules and regulations will apply to this group. Also, as mandated reporters, we might have to break confidentiality if topics come up that need immediate actions.

### References

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