

## SMART Recovery Programme Community Engagement Summary

The report summarizes the feedback gathered from 12 facilitators of the SMART Recovery Programme through in person and telephone interviews from December 2017 to January 2018. The VCH lead for SMART Recovery is seeking input to determine how to better support facilitators, where best to locate groups and how we can improve access. Included in this summary is feedback from a survey sent to our community partners; who currently host or partner with the programme. This collective feedback will inform decisions on the growth of SMART Recovery Groups to ensure VCH is responsive to the needs of our communities and to ensure improved access to the programme.

### What we asked and what we heard...

**50% of facilitators have been in their role for more than 3 years**

**40% for less than 3 years**

**10% for less than 1 year or just completed the training**

**Facilitators who participated are active in locations across VCH including:**

- Ravensong
- Three Bridges
- Robert and Lily Lee
- Pacifica
- Vancouver Detox

### How has your role as a facilitator supported your recovery journey?

Of the facilitators interviewed 65% were on their own recovery journey and 35% had no previous addictions recovery history.

#### Recovery Support

- Detox is the group I really enjoy doing. The people are very attentive. I give them tools to walk a path they can take and ask them what they are going to do when they leave. It helps me in my recovery to help people going through recovery.
- It has been a part of my evolution. Anyone could benefit from CBT. It is reciprocal for me.
- It has opened a door and entire world for me and I will pursue a career in counselling
- I attended AA for a decade, I learned what I needed to do to quit, but not how to do it. SMART helped me with that.
- SMART preparation gives me motivation and allows me to apply the tools and knowledge to my own life. I continue to go to SMART meetings regularly and still have value from these meetings. I anticipate I will continue to attend even though I am facilitating now.
- There is always a chance that it could reoccur. That is how I view the process of alcohol addiction and recovery. I have the tools from SMART to support me to work through my journey and have had success.
- Helps in many ways - the social aspect, the interaction with people, combats isolation, helps to form punctuality practice, supports me to develop life skills dealing with issues, the consistency of participating helps me.

#### General Support

- Training and facilitating is personally beneficial. I can use the skills to apply to my daily life and to support me in making decisions.
- I have benefited greatly, getting to know the curriculum, the materials, the CBT theories, practice and the motivational therapies.
- The recovery manuals are good for anyone in any life stage. e.g. Rational Emotive ABC's.

## What motivated you to become a facilitator?

### Alignment with personal values and choices

- Service and giving back is important to me. I am attracted to the idea of supporting people in their recovery and to lend a helping hand to others who need the support.
- I attended the SMART group, found it aligned with my goals and was impactful, so then decided to become a facilitator.
- It is my way of giving back to VCH for putting me on the road to recovery.
- I wanted to volunteer with VCH. I wanted experience with a public health agency to bolster my career choices.
- I was already a volunteer for VCH and I noticed the invitation for applications for the SMART facilitator and was interested in this opportunity.

### Recovery support

- As a graduate of the program, I was asked if I would like to facilitate and I chose to.
- I wanted to deeply understand the SMART tools as it would give me more insight to my recovery.

## Ideas for improving access to the groups

### Improve the posters

- Large posters that are easy to read and clearly state what the SMART Recovery group is and can support. Put posters on the wall of doctors' offices, in VCH facilities, elevators, hospitals, Pender Clinic, community partner locations, at needle exchanges, Starbucks, public bulletin boards, community centres, and at R&L Lee. Focus on the DTES and post in the social spaces in these communities.
- Currently, the posters are crowded and need to be streamlined. They are not very well designed and do not stand out or provide the adequate information to draw people in and help them to understand what the groups are about. The family and friend poster is clearer, but could still use some updating. At meetings with facilitators, have them review the posters and website for content and messaging.
- People come to groups through posters and word of mouth. Better to hear directly from someone about the program.

### Promote in other venues and with other methods

- Promote in catchy ways on radio programs, like Recovery Radio, and on the bus and skytrain.
- Expand to the DTES to support greater access and provide training to facilitate complex clients.
- Have a bridge program before SMART. Pre-SMART for complex clients to prepare them to join SMART.
- The website is not being trawled by Google and should be. New website needs to have accurate and up-to-date information.
- More consistent use of social media would be helpful. Need to up the awareness of the groups broadly. Most of the new people in the group have found it online and are not aware of any referrals.
- Target new groups like refugees and post-secondary institutions like UBC and with addiction and mental health services.

### Increase referral sources

- The first step is to let the client know about SMART when they indicate readiness.
- Talk with addictions counsellors about SMART and how to refer. It currently seems there is a difference in the criteria and process for referring people to SMART, e.g at Three Bridges people can walk in and be directed to the addictions team and receive resources and referral, whereas at Pender the intake process is more complicated and less accessible.
- Connect needle exchange and SMART in a way to promote, but not overstep. Needle exchange workers should know about SMART and when the opportunity to share information arises they know what to say.
- Need to promote it internally to our own VCH staff to create referral processes. We need to promote it more to GP's.
- A focus on promoting to youth would be good.

## As a facilitator what supports would you like to have?

### Programme Materials

- There is written work and replenishing the work sheets would be nice. Have more forms available for people to fill out.
- It would be great to have the filing cabinet and material updated and filled. I normally do Saturday sessions and there is no one at the site.
- I spend some of my own money, but I don't mind, this is ok. Markers that are new and which work would be nice. Maybe stock the cabinet with markers, Kleenex, a calendar to sign in for the facilitators. Google calendars and a clip board that facilitator's use to record their name and number of participants and where they are in the book. This needs to be done for the entire year. Reminder to the facilitators to complete the calendar.
- Every facilitator should receive the facilitator's manual.
- The printouts are done by the facilitator, so knowing where the printer is would be good.
- I would go on the website and there is a lot of free stuff you could download and would print them out. There were some handouts available, but it was not very organized, so maybe organizing them would be good.
- The SMART materials are a bit wordy and not accessible. May need to seek out other resources that are more effective. The tools are always listed in a way that is counter intuitive. Don't list resources in each section in abbreviation and acronyms (insider language). The book assumes that you follow the book from page 1 through to the end. This may not be the case.
- Giving the manual out during the groups is best done after the session.

### Training and Events

- Specific SMART training for established facilitators with progressive professional development. It would be beneficial to provide role playing training and deepen skills of facilitators by giving them more tools and strategies.
- Ask facilitators to provide input on workshop topics. Great topics would be co-facilitating, supporting new trainees, looking at specific chapters and how to teach them, specific situations and how to deal with them, and the opioid crisis. The speaker at each workshop could be recorded and put on the website for facilitators.
- Have more social events for facilitators. Have mentor opportunities that are arranged where new facilitators come and sit in on groups and the facilitator knows that they are coming. Have established facilitator act as co-facilitators to new facilitators to support their development.
- It appears to be very piecemeal and how there are not a lot of dedicated resources. I have had to take the initiative to ensure what I am doing is following the correct path. I would like some more direct instruction to guide me in the way I facilitate the groups. The two parts of the training is fantastic and was useful as was the online training. I still would have benefitted from a protocol on training on how to begin and where to begin in the manual. Clear principles and practice from VCH would be helpful.
- You are supposed to observe for 5 sessions and shadow for 5 sessions, which in theory is good but in practice don't always happen. There is no real standard in the structure of the program. There's range and diversity of the way groups are delivered.
- I check in with my co-facilitator by phone before each session. We were never trained on how to co-facilitate.
- It would be helpful to have more evolved mentoring, like being matched with a more experienced facilitator for a year or so.
- We receive a PDF of who will lead the session. It would be better to access the training online as opposed to an email PDF.

### Management of groups

- Having an optimum number of people in a group. Once you have over 12 it gets unwieldy and does not seem as effective or beneficial.
- Some sessions only have one person show up and this is demotivating.
- Some facilitators have removed themselves from the norms of the facilitator. They seem to be self-entitled and keep separate from the group.

## Communication and interaction with staff and facilitators

- A communication system and interaction beyond the email would be helpful. I want to reach other facilitators to practice questions, e.g. a call line.
- If a facilitator is going to take on a group, then they should get to know the staff in that facility and understand their roles. Find out if there are addictions counsellors referring people to SMART. Get familiar with the functioning of the location and the staff based there. Some type of orientation would be helpful. Possibly have speakers to come to facilitator meetings on diverse topics.
- I did not meet the staff at Three Bridges and this may have been helpful. It seems quite separate from our groups. Would be good to interact with staff and raise awareness. It feels like we are renting out the space and it is not integrated so let's do it.
- When I was at Ravensong, during the same time slot, there was a friends and family meeting taking place so there was another mentor/facilitator who oriented me to the process and the location, and had a debrief after each session. This was very helpful to me and I really appreciated this mentor being available to me especially when I first began. We are encouraged to shadow, and this is helpful as well.
- Have a chat option for facilitators on the website. There is a chat function for facilitators in the USA that Canadians can participate in.
- Maybe a blog for the facilitators would be helpful in order to ask questions.

## Ideas for improving the groups overall

### Facilitator Development and Support

- Creating a career path and supports would be appreciated. Supports for Curricula Vitae (CV) development and job opportunities.
- It may be beneficial to have facilitator meetings in safe environments that allow for discussion on specific areas of the facilitating and group scenarios.
- The meetings for facilitators have been useless and could be done via email. Most of it is focused on scheduling. It would be great to have more issues focused discussions and professional development for the facilitators.
- Need a formalized feedback process for facilitators established as an ongoing routine process.
- SMART groups in the States have several handbooks they can access. These are good workbooks to use by a person at home.
- The only other meeting I went to was Three Bridges and I could see that everyone is delivering the session differently.
- I prefer doing it by myself and not with a partner. It is difficult to find someone you really mesh with and I have not had that experience very often. I would prefer to not co-facilitate. The location may be key to whether co-facilitation is needed in the event one facilitator can't make it.
- I went to three different trainings and there was one that lacked information on ethics and applying an ethical lens in your role as a facilitator. I believe this is an important aspect of the training for a facilitator. Code of Ethics 1999, received this in training and found this very helpful.
- It would be useful to have reimbursement for travel and parking for facilitators.
- The 7 weeks training was excellent. Oona is an exceptional trainer and guide in skill development. Frankly, I would like to see how she could be better supported to do what she is doing. What kind of supports could she benefit from? It is a large investment of time to train the facilitators. Is she feeling there is a return commensurate with the time put into the training?
- Oona has always been available to support the facilitators. In working with vulnerable populations there is sometimes an urgent need for support. I would imagine that a priority question would be "do we know who to call and where to go in the event of a crisis or emergency situation?" to feel safe supported. I was always able to call her if I needed input or support.
- Oona might offer other training. She trains for non-violent communication and it would be so great to access this training for facilitators. As a way of saying thank you to facilitators offering the training.
- Training is good and the online training was free. Oona is very good for morale. She is a good motivator. She is supportive and has a lot of charisma.
- My relationship with Oona is good and we get along well, she is available and has communicated that she is available to attend and support. It is nice to know someone is there for me.
- I am very pleased and grateful to have Oona and the whole support system. A bureaucracy can encumber and they can be impersonal and that is not the case with this program.

## Locations

- Consider shifting Ravensong to another night of the week. There's too few people to successfully run a course.
- I feel that the SMART Recovery groups have stretched too far too fast and need to be more strategic about how to grow and spread.
- The location and time used to be easy for me. Now it is not the same for me, so that is why I am on hold and no longer facilitating.
- I would appreciate more communication between the facilitators to organize the sessions and ensure consistency for the Vancouver Daytox program.
- Give options to people for meetings at different location on different evenings.
- The Three Bridges room is very old and not welcoming. Nice to have a clean, newer and bright space. Physical space makes a difference.
- At certain locations, it can be a challenge to get attendance. Create an environment for the meetings that is welcoming and comfortable. Create meeting rituals to foster continued attendance. Create warmth in the room. Having food to offer would be nice.
- A larger facility at Daytox would be so great to have, with a big white board.
- I really like that at Pender they have donated baking and coffee for SMART Groups.
- The meeting at Ravensong for family and friends is in a very nice room, very accessible. SMART groups in the basement are not very accessible.
- Consider parking when choosing a location. About 70% of participants drive. Reasonably priced parking would be preferred. Or very good transit connections to a site. This should be a strong consideration when choosing a site.

*The people I work with are very encouraging. I thoroughly enjoy doing this and enjoy the groups. The people are great and there is rarely an issue.*

*I think it is a great program and very valuable. I met with many people who have benefited from this program. It is quite amazing how many people are channeled into this program and receive support. I only have positive things to say about it and I hope it continues indefinitely.*

## Results from Community Partners Report

In January 2018 a survey that was sent out to SMART Recovery community partners, of which 33 responded, to identify community interest and potential geographic areas that would benefit from SMART Recovery Group.

- When asked whether there should be more SMART Recovery Groups, 97% said yes, while 3% said there should be fewer groups.
- When informed that VCH wants to plan for SMART Recovery Groups that meet the needs of our communities and asked what they could do to support this goal, 26% said they could provide ideas for where to locate groups to best meet the needs of the community, 11% said they could provide a location to host a group, 44% said they could help promote the current groups to their clients and community, and 15% said they could meet with VCH to plan for the appropriate growth or relocation of groups in community (5% did not choose an answer).

### Partners had the following comments:

*"Having a range of treatment options in the community, at no cost and with low barrier, is really important and SMART is an essential component of that."*

*"Patients in hospital often speak highly of SMART meetings and ask about availability in hospital, but the nearest meetings are a half-hour walk from hospital and too far for most to go while recovering from illness."*

*"I think it is important for VCH to offer peer-based support groups that are easily accessible. Peer support is evidence-based in helping many people with their recovery."*

*"SMART is great for substance misuse, but also for depression and anxiety."*

*"allow hospitalized patients to attend and become familiar with SMART and then attend groups in their community at discharge."*