



**The Support Network**  
Champions for Children's Emotional Health

## Why Attend a Support Network Support Group

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As a parent /caregiver of a child with social, emotional, or behavioral challenges one often feels alone, isolated and stigmatized. We don't often discuss our child's difficulties with extended family, friends, neighbors, and community members for fear of being blamed, judged, or because of a lack of understanding of what we are experiencing. A place to turn for mutual support and connection is one of the Support Network's support groups. Online support groups can be very beneficial for some; however, personal connection in a traditional face to face group can help one feel even more connected and supported with others facing similar experiences.

### What is a support group?

A support group is an organization of people who share a common experience or difficulty who meet together to discuss their experience, share ideas, and provide emotional and mutual support for each other. The group is typically led by a facilitator who has training in leading group discussions and has their own lived experience. A support group differs from mental health treatment which brings people together with similar situations under the guidance of a trained mental health counselor. Our support groups are not a form of clinical treatment.

### What are the benefits of attending a support group?

- Feeling less lonely, isolated or judged
- Gaining a sense of empowerment and control
- Improving and developing coping skills
- Talking openly and honestly about feelings which can reduce stress, anxiety, and/or depression
- Information and resource sharing
- Learning to navigate the system
- Greater knowledge and understanding of your situation
- Getting positive feedback and ideas on how to deal with your challenges
- Freedom to express negative feelings as well as humor in what you are experiencing
- Establishing long term connections with others in the group to form natural supports and friendships
- Occasional guest speakers on topics of interest
- Nutritious snacks are served
- Child care available at some groups

### Basic rules of support groups?

Confidentiality – everything that is said in the group stays in the group

Respect – No personal attacks or judgments are allowed

### Guidelines for the support group:

- Support group is open to new members at any time
- Support group is a community resource open to all the parents/caregivers whose children have mental health needs
- Support group is peer facilitated by a person with lived experience
- Support group does not have required attendance policy
- Support group is free of charge
- Support group provides all members an opportunity to speak if they choose to do so
- Support group provides support – no blaming and shaming is allowed
- Support group members are respectful, don't interrupt when others are speaking, and do not have side conversations
- Cell phones should stay on vibrate and if one gets a call they leave the room to answer it

Attending a Support Network group for the first time can be an intimidating or anxiety provoking experience for some people. Please contact your Family Support Specialist or Family Partner if you have any questions or concerns so they can assist you with this experience. Longtime members are wonderful welcoming newcomers to the group and provide a wealth of knowledge and experience in navigating the challenges we all face as well as sharing their success stories. Please see our support group schedule on our website: [www.childrenseotionalhealth.org](http://www.childrenseotionalhealth.org) or on our Facebook page.