

# Support Group Consent & Confidentiality Notice | Ìyá Pittsburgh Project

## INFORMED CONSENT AND LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY

**Benefits and Risks of Support Group:** Participating in a support group can result in a number of benefits for participants. These benefits can include a better understanding of personal goals and values within the context of peer support, improved interpersonal relationships, and resolution of the specific concerns that led to seeking out group support. Working towards these benefits, however, requires effort from the participants and may result in participants experiencing unexpected emotions such as anger, depression, or fear. Change in oneself can also result in unintended changes in relationships. Group facilitators may utilize techniques such as education, worksheets, and group discussions, and other appropriate materials suitable for group work.

**Facilitators:** Ìyá Pittsburgh Project is an approved field placement site for social science graduate programs at Pennsylvania Western University. Support group facilitation at Ìyá Pittsburgh Project is provided by Master's level interns and Master's level graduates (e.g. MSW, LSW, etc.). The facilitation services provided to group participants are supervised by a Pennsylvania Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), Laura McCarthy (Licence# CW19029). Ìyá Pittsburgh Project also occasionally utilizes presenters and speakers in support groups, who share their expert knowledge on relevant topics for educational purposes.

**Children and Child Care:** Unless otherwise stated, children one year of age and younger are permitted in support groups, whether meeting in-person or online. Ìyá Pittsburgh Project is NOT able to provide childcare during the group time for older children. It is advised that clients arrange for child care of older children during the time of the group, regardless of if the group is meeting in-person or online.

**Group Confidentiality Statement:** The participants understand that there is a need for confidentiality (i.e. Privacy) for all group members. As such, participants agree to not share information including names and content of the group to those outside of the group setting. Participants understand that if they do intentionally or unintentionally share confidential information about a group member, they will be asked to leave the group immediately. Intentionally breaking confidentiality will result in being banned from future groups and social services from Ìyá Pittsburgh Project.

**Absence Policy:** Participants understand that there is often a waitlist for this group. Because of the nature of peer support and the high demand for group admittance, participants understand that if they are expected to attend all sessions unless they have to miss for an emergent reason (sick child, car breaks down, conflicting mandatory appointment, etc.). There are no refunds issued for missed sessions. It is best practice to call/text or email the group facilitator as soon as possible in the event that an absence is unavoidable.

**Online Groups:** Participants understand that attending a support group by phone or Google Meet holds certain risks to confidentiality. Therefore, participants agree to abide by the following rules to maintain confidentiality for themselves and others in the group.

- 1) Participants will join the group electronically in a confidential space, with no other people in the same room. This includes children who are older than one year of age (12 months old).
- 2) Participants will utilize headphones or earbuds while engaging in group to maintain confidentiality.
- 3) Participants will be mindful of who can hear their voices, and understand that other people in their home or the space they are using may be able to hear their content of the session.
- 4) Participants will do their best to remain uninterrupted for the duration of the group session.

### **Participants Rights and Exceptions to Confidentiality:**

- 1) Participants have the right to a confidential relationship with group facilitators.
- 2) Participants have the right to ask questions about the process and course of the support group.
- 3) If asked, the facilitator, can release information about a participant's attendance and progress in a support group with a specified agency or individual. Before releasing information, the participant must fill out a Release of Information which will be kept on file, and the participant can retract this at any time.

a. Facilitators may provide a Proof of Attendance slip per participant’s request after every session without a signed Release of Information form. However, participants should know that this may compromise their confidentiality as a member of the support group.

4) Under certain legally defined situations, the facilitator has the duty to reveal information participants tell them during the course of support group without written consent. The facilitator is not required to inform participants of their actions if this occurs. These legally defined situations include:

a. If a participant reveals information to the facilitator about child abuse or neglect, elder or dependent adult abuse or neglect, physical intimate partner violence, or other instances of criminal abuse, the facilitator must make a report to protective services. When a perpetrator of child abuse is in contact with minors, and there is a reasonable suspicion that they may be abusing minors, the facilitator must report the information.

b. If a participant should communicate a threat of physical violence or harm against themselves or a reasonably identifiable third person and/or property, and they have the apparent intent and ability to carry out that threat in the foreseeable future, the facilitator is required to warn the intended victim and notify the appropriate law enforcement agencies.

5) If the facilitator determines during the initial intake or any time during the course of group, that they cannot help a specific participant, the facilitator will assist that participant in obtaining individual therapy or other appropriate care.

**Emergency Mental Health Procedures:** A mental health emergency is an unexpected event that requires immediate attention and can be a threat to one’s health. If such an emergency situation arises, please call 911 or go to the nearest hospital for immediate attention!

I have read this Support Group Consent & Confidentiality Notice, and:

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand the information provided in this Support Group Consent & Confidentiality Notice. (initial or check)

\_\_\_\_\_ I have had an opportunity to ask questions about this Support Group Consent & Confidentiality Notice. (initial or check)

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Legal Name of Participant

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Legal Name of Guardian if Participant is a minor

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Signature of Participant or Guardian if Participant is a minor

Date Signed

***This signed document must be emailed to [socialservices@iyapittsburgh.org](mailto:socialservices@iyapittsburgh.org) before the first week of group.***