

BREAKOUT GROUP SESSION ON HOMELESSNESS

AGENDA

- 20 mins.** Opening remarks(including ground rules), exercise/video/prep for small group work
- 40 mins.** Small group simulations (7 groups led by a group facilitator)
5 minutes for preparation
25 minutes for simulation; 10 minutes for processing
- 25 mins.** Large group discussion; each group's secretary give 2-3 minute report
- 5 mins.** Wrap-up

DIRECTIONS FOR SMALL GROUP FACILITATORS:

Step 1. Review ground rules (100% participation, respectful communication, no laughing or giggling (i.e. one person talks at a time and they try to help each other attentively listen to each other and to whomever is speaking).

Step 2. Assist group to select a reporter who will share the group's ideas with the large group. Facilitators are the secretary.

Step 3. Read the group's scenario and then have each group member select a role for the scenario (random approach...each in turn pulls out a slip of paper from the envelope). I'm guessing that you may need to help with making sure each member understands his/her role and has picked a fictitious name for him/herself. You can let them know that they can ad-lib the role beyond what is written on the paper. If there are more kids than roles, have several kids take the same role...making sure that each person has a role.

Step 4. When all understand what they're doing, ask them to introduce themselves all around (by role only...no additional detail) and then try to solve the problem they have been given. As the role-play proceeds prompt them as needed to stay in the role.

Step 5. I'll alert you when you have 10 minutes left---

- ensure that the secretary has what s/he needs to report the group's work to the large group, and
- help the kids reflect upon their role playing...the group dynamics, insights they have about how they worked or did not work together, lessons that adults could learn from their experience...

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!!!

SCENARIO FOR GROUPS 1 & 2

Urban Scholars Small Group Scenario A (to be read by the group facilitator):

Your community is Affluent, MA. The town officials are getting pressured by the state housing agency to build some low cost housing that can be made available to homeless families and individuals from other parts of the state. This wealthy town does not meet the state's 10% standard for production of low cost housing units. A lot of disagreement exists among residents in the town on this issue.

Come up with a plan that will enable this town to make a contribution to solving the state's homeless problem. Keep in mind that each of you has a different idea about what should be done and very strongly held views on the issue.

Your task is to make sure you understand each other's point of view and that you work toward a solution that takes all these points of view into account by identifying your points of agreement, disagreement and issues for which you all may need more information or time to settle the disagreement.

Secretary's and reporter's roles: **Secretary** takes notes during the discussion, keeping track of the different points of view and the ideas that they came up with for solving this problem. The **reporter** shares group's ideas when they come back to the large group. Facilitator is also asked to email the notes to Donna Haig Friedman (donna.friedman@umb.edu).

Roles for Scenario A: (Groups 1 & 2)

Town Manager: You want to keep your job as Town Manager and are worried that you will be blamed by a majority of voter residents if you allow low cost housing to be built in the town.

Shelter Director: You know that many of the families in your shelter used to live in this town. You know how harmful it is for children and their parents to be discriminated against for being homeless. You also know that families' stays in shelter will be longer if this and other wealthy towns do not do their fair share in creating low cost housing for families in the state.

School Superintendent: Your school district is dealing with severe budget cuts. You don't know for sure but you assume that school costs will increase if low-income families move into the district.

Homeless Parent: You grew up in this town and have relatives and friends who still live there. You were hurt in a car accident that led to a loss of job, loss of housing and resulted in homelessness. In your wildest imagination, you never thought you'd be unable to work or pay the mortgage on your home or keep a roof over your children's heads. You feel a lot of anger and shame about your situation and want to live in your hometown again.

Homeless Parent: You grew up in this town and have relatives and friends who still live there. You were recently divorced and couldn't keep up the mortgage payments. You are working but your wage is not high enough for any of the apartments in your hometown. You and your kids lived with your parents for a while, but that didn't work out, so you've been living in a shelter for 3 months. You feel a lot of anger and shame about your situation and want to live in your hometown again.

Wealthy homeowner: You consider yourself a compassionate person, and you and your family spend a good deal of time volunteering at soup kitchens. You want to help people, but sometimes you wonder if you can make a real difference. You are aware that affordable housing needs to be built, but you don't want to jeopardize your own investments. Like others in the town, you are worried that if low-cost housing is built the value of your home will go down.

Wealthy homeowner: You consider yourself a compassionate person, and you and your family spend a good deal of time volunteering at soup kitchens. You want to help people, but sometimes you wonder if you can make a real difference. You are aware that affordable housing needs to be built, but you don't want to jeopardize your own investments. Like others in the town, you are worried that if low-cost housing is built the value of your home will go down.

State housing agency official: You have been working for over 20 years in state government trying to prevent homelessness. You have little patience with officials in wealthy towns who resist doing their fair share in adding to the state's supply of low cost housing.

Town's State Senator: You are very torn about what to do. You need the support of town residents to be re-elected, but you do not agree with their resistance to building low cost housing and you are upset by some residents' prejudices against low-income families.

SCENARIO FOR GROUPS 3 & 4

Urban Scholars Small Group Scenario B (to be read by the group facilitator):

Your community is Urban Melting Pot, MA.

In the past five years, your community has had an enormous influx of refugees and immigrant families from Latin America, Pakistan, Brazil and Nigeria. A few years ago, many of these families were able to make ends meet because the parents found work, mostly in low wage jobs in your community. With the economic downturn, many of them have lost their jobs and their housing, and are now seeking emergency shelter. The large numbers of families in need overwhelm shelter providers who have little experience in serving families with different languages and cultural traditions.

You, as a group of concerned people, has asked for a meeting with the Mayor to get help with this problem. Through this meeting with the Mayor, come up with a plan to ensure that the shelter providers are better prepared to serve these families.

Keep in mind that each of you has a different idea about what should be done and very strongly held views on the issue. Your task is to make sure you understand each other's point of view and that you work toward a solution that takes all these points of view into account by identifying your points of agreement, disagreement and issues for which you all may need more information or time to settle the disagreement.

Secretary's and reporter's roles: **Secretary** takes notes during the discussion, keeping track of the different points of view and the ideas that they came up with for solving this problem. The **reporter** shares group's ideas when they come back to the large group. Facilitator is also asked to email the notes to Donna Haig Friedman (donna.friedman@umb.edu).

Roles for Scenario B:

Official from the state's Center for Refugees and Immigrants:

You have come to the meeting ready to use the resources of your agency to help out with the problem that the families and shelter providers are having.

Shelter Director: Your agency's budget is very tight; you have a lot of staff turnover; and your shelter is full to capacity most of the time. You are serving families who speak languages that you and your staff do not speak. You often resort to having the children in these families act as translators, which is awkward for everyone concerned. You want to find a way to provide better service that respects these families' cultures and traditions.

Father of homeless family from El Salvador: You want to get back to work so that you can afford to get your family out of the shelter as soon as possible. You are frustrated by not being able to communicate with the shelter staff in your own language, as your English is very limited.

Mayor of the City: You are a strong advocate for refugee and immigrant families in your City. You have agreed to this meeting because you want to help, however, the city's budget is very tight.

Mother of homeless family from Pakistan: You want to get back to work so that you can afford to get your family out of the shelter as soon as possible. You are frustrated by not being able to communicate with the shelter staff in your own language, as your English is very limited.

Teenager in a homeless family from Pakistan: You are very ashamed about being homeless and living in a shelter. You often have to translate when shelter staff speak with your mother. On the one hand, this makes you feel important; on the other hand, you know that this adds to your mother's sense of shame. You wish that at least one staff person spoke your language and understood your family's customs.

Parent of homeless family from Brazil: You want to get back to work so that you can afford to get your family out of the shelter as soon as possible. You are frustrated by not being able to communicate with the shelter staff in your own language, as your English is very limited. You desperately want to learn English; you feel shame that your teenager has to translate for you.

Teenager in a homeless family from Brazil: You are very ashamed about being homeless and living in a shelter. You often have to translate when shelter staff speak with your mother. On the one hand, this makes you feel important; on the other hand, you know that this adds to your mother's sense of shame. You wish that at least one staff person spoke your language and understood your family's customs.

SCENARIO FOR GROUPS 5 & 6

Urban Scholars Small Group Scenario C (to be read by the group facilitator):

Your community is Urban Melting Pot, MA.

In the past five years, your community has had an enormous influx of refugees and immigrant families from Latin America, Pakistan, Brazil and Nigeria. A few years ago, many of these families were able to make ends meet because the parents found work, mostly in low wage jobs in your community. With the economic downturn, many of them have lost their jobs and their housing, and are now seeking emergency shelter. The large numbers of families in need overwhelm shelter providers who have little experience in serving families with different languages and cultural traditions.

Come up with a community approach to prevent these families from losing their housing by figuring out a way that they can get into jobs with wages high enough to support their families.

Keep in mind that each of you has a different idea about what should be done and very strongly held views on the issue. Your task is to make sure you understand each other's point of view and that you work toward a solution that takes all these points of view into account by identifying your points of agreement, disagreement and issues in which you all may need more information or time to settle the disagreement.

Secretary's and reporter's roles: **Secretary** takes notes during the discussion, keeping track of the different points of view and the ideas that they came up with for solving this problem. The **reporter** shares group's ideas when they come back to the large group. Facilitator is also asked to email the notes to Donna Haig Friedman (donna.friedman@umb.edu).

Roles for Scenario C:

Official from the state's Center for Refugees and Immigrants:

You have come to the meeting ready to use the resources of your agency to help out with the problem that the families and shelter providers are having.

Shelter Director: Your agency's budget is very tight but you are applying for funds from the federal government to enable your agency to set up a job training and employment readiness service for the families you serve. You are interested in making this a program that really helps the parents in your shelter to get and keep jobs that pay a wage high enough to support their families.

Father of homeless family from El Salvador: You want to get back to work so that you can afford to get your family out of the shelter as soon as possible. You are frustrated by not being able to communicate with the shelter staff in your own language, as your English is very limited.

Mayor of the City: You are a strong advocate for refugee and immigrant families in your City. You have agreed to this meeting because you want to help, however, the city's budget is very tight. You are prepared to kick in some City funds if the proposal being written by the shelter director for a federally-funded job training and employment program is successful.

Mother of homeless family from Pakistan: You want to get back to work so that you can afford to get your family out of the shelter as soon as possible. You are frustrated by not being able to communicate with the shelter staff in your own language, as your English is very limited.

Teenager in a homeless family from Pakistan: You are very ashamed about being homeless and living in a shelter. You often have to translate when shelter staff speak with your mother. On the one hand, this makes you feel important; on the other hand, you know that this adds to your mother's sense of shame. You wish that at least one staff person spoke your language and understood your family's customs.

Parent of homeless family from Brazil: You want to get back to work so that you can afford to get your family out of the shelter as soon as possible. You are frustrated by not being able to communicate with the shelter staff in your own language, as your English is very limited. You desperately want to learn English; you feel shame that your teenager has to translate for you.

Teenager in a homeless family from Brazil: You are very ashamed about being homeless and living in a shelter. You often have to translate when shelter staff speak with your mother. On the one hand, this makes you feel important; on the other hand, you know that this adds to your mother's sense of shame. You wish that at least one staff person spoke your language and understood your family's customs.

SCENARIO FOR GROUP 7

Urban Scholars Small Group Scenario D (to be read by the group facilitator):

Your community is Urban Village, MA.

Some members of the community want to have the city's public housing development torn down rather than have the town accept funds from the state to renovate the apartments that need repair. They are especially concerned about using state funds to renovate public housing at a time when local aid is being cut back and there isn't enough money to pay for afterschool sports and other activities. If the housing project is destroyed, some families will lose their housing and will be unable to find another affordable place to live in this town. Also, the state's overall supply of low cost housing will be reduced and the destruction of this housing development will worsen the state's already serious homeless problem.

Come up with a plan that will enable this town to make a contribution to solving the state's homeless problem.

Keep in mind that each of you has a different idea about what should be done and very strongly held views on the issue.

Your task is to make sure you understand each other's point of view and that you work toward a solution that takes all these points of view into account by identifying your points of agreement, disagreement and issues for which you all may need more information or time to settle the disagreement.

Secretary's and reporter's roles: **Secretary** takes notes during the discussion, keeping track of the different points of view and the ideas that they came up with for solving this problem. The **reporter** shares group's ideas when they come back to the large group. Facilitator is also asked to email the notes to Donna Haig Friedman (donna.friedman@umb.edu).

Roles for Scenario D:

Town Mayor: You want to keep your job as Town Mayor and are worried that you will be blamed by a majority of voter residents if you allow the public housing development to be renovated and remain in the town.

Shelter Director: You know that many of the families in your shelter used to live in this town. Destroying the housing development will make it harder for your families to find housing they can afford. Also other towns with public housing will follow in the footsteps of your town, thus reducing rather than increasing low cost housing units for families in the state.

School Superintendent: Your school district is dealing with severe budget cuts, which also have affected extracurricular activities such as athletics and other student clubs. You don't know for sure but you assume that school costs will decrease if the families who live in the public housing development move to another town.

Homeless Parent: You grew up in this town and have relatives and friends who still live there. You were hurt in a car accident that led to a loss of job, loss of housing and resulted in homelessness. In your wildest imagination, you never thought you'd be unable to work or pay the mortgage on your home or keep a roof over your children's heads. You feel a lot of anger and shame about your situation and want to live in your hometown again.

Homeless Parent: You grew up in this town and have relatives and friends who still live there. You were recently divorced and couldn't keep up the mortgage payments. You are working but your wage is not high enough for any of the apartments in your hometown. You and your kids lived with your parents for a while, but that didn't work out, so you've been living in a shelter for 3 months. You feel a lot of anger and shame about your situation and want to live in your hometown again.

Wealthy homeowner: You consider yourself a compassionate person, and you and your family spend a good deal of time volunteering at soup kitchens. You want to help people, but sometimes you wonder if you can make a real difference. You are aware that affordable housing needs to be built, but you don't want to jeopardize your own investments. Like others in the town, you are worried that if the public housing development remains in your town the value of your home will be lower than if the development was destroyed. You feel that this town has done its fair share of building low cost housing and that other towns should be doing more.

Middle class homeowner: You consider yourself a compassionate person, and you and your family spend a good deal of time volunteering at soup kitchens. You want to help people, but sometimes you wonder if you can make a real difference. You are aware that affordable housing needs to be built, but you don't want to jeopardize your own investments. Like others in the town, you are worried that if the public housing development remains in your town the value of your home will go down. Also, you know very few people with low incomes and assume that they are very different from you and your family. Yet you consider yourself a compassionate person who wants to help people help themselves.

State housing agency official: You have been working for over 20 years in state government trying to prevent homelessness. You have little patience with town and city officials who resist doing their fair share in adding to the state's supply of low cost housing, especially when the state is providing funds for renovation of the public housing development.

Town's State Senator: You are very torn about what to do. You need the support of town residents to be re-elected, but you do not agree with their resistance to renovating the public housing development and you are upset by some residents' prejudices against low-income families.