Project Resilience: A Core Curriculum For Group Facilitation

The Justice League

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INTRODUCTION

Project Purpose & Description

The objective was to strengthen group facilitation skills among Project Kinship (PK) staff, In efforts to create more dynamic and responsive group environments. A Peer Navigator Group Facilitation training was developed and three 90 min workshops were implemented with the goal of improving facilitation techniques, boost participant engagement, encourage consistent attendance, and ultimately enhance the overall effectiveness of PK's group programs. This effort supports the development of trauma-informed, participant-centered practices that foster deeper connection and impact.

Social Problem & Target Population

Decrease homelessness and recidivism rates within the Santa Ana community by strengthening PK's service delivery with foundational skills of working in group settings.

Scope of Social Problem

Structural racism, economic inequality, and carceral systems disproportionately affect Santa Ana residents, particularly Latinx individuals:

Secondary Data
70% of individuals unsheltered report a history of incarceration in CA (Franco et al., 2018)

Homelessness in **Santa Ana** has **increased by 44.2%,** from 990 to 1,428 from 2022 to 2024 (City of Santa Ana, 2024).

Formerly incarcerated individuals are 10 times more likely to experience homelessness in the U.S. (Augustine, 2022).

From 2015 to 2023, 59% increase in the unhoused population of the Latinx population in the U.S. (Orejuela, 2024)

> *"There has been a worsening homelessness issue and a housing crisis, and it has forced a lot of families out of Santa Ana and it's obviously because of the cost of living"*
>
> (Male, Hispanic, social worker)(personal communication, October 2, 2024)

Alignment to Specialization

Social justice impacts mental well-being by addressing systemic inequalities that contribute to chronic stress, anxiety, and trauma—especially in marginalized communities. When people feel seen, valued, and treated fairly, their sense of self-worth and emotional safety improves. Greater access to equitable healthcare, education, and safe environments supports long-term mental health and resilience.

PROJECT OVERVIEW, OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES

PROGRAM GOAL:
To decrease rates of homelessness in Santa Ana

LONG-TERM OUTCOME OBJECTIVE:
By May 2027, recidivism rates in Santa Ana will decrease by 0.5% as evidenced by data from Bureau of Bureau of Justice Statistics*

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME OBJECTIVE:
By September 2025, an increase of 10% of participants will attend and engage in Project Kinship group programs as evidenced by data from partnering agency

Initial Outcome Objective #1:
By April 2025, peer navigators will increase knowledge of group facilitation skills by 10% as indicated by pre/post surveys

Initial Outcome Objective #2:
By April 2025, peer navigators will increase ability to utilize storytelling of lived experiences by 10% as measured by pre/post survey

Initial Outcome Objective #3:
By April 2025, peer navigators will increase their confidence in group facilitation by 10% as measured by pre/post survey

Process Objective #1:
By early March 2025, peer navigator trainings will be available as documented by creation of curriculum

Process Objective #2:
By early March 2025, a measure will be available to collect data on effectiveness of peer navigator training by creating pre/post surveys

Process Objective #3:
By 4/06/25. a series of 3 trainings will be delivered to a minimum of 15-20 peer navigators at Project Kinship as indicated by sign in sheets

*(Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2025)

METHODS

This study utilized a pre-experimental, pretest-posttest design to evaluate the effectiveness of a peer navigator training series. Quantitative data were collected from 20 participants using Likert-scale and multiple-choice surveys administered before the first session and after the final training session. The pre-survey included 3 demographic and 11 content questions, and the post-survey included 14 questions. Questions measured knowledge of group facilitation skills (5 questions), the ability to utilize storytelling of lived experiences (2 questions), and confidence in group facilitation (4 questions), with 2 additional questions in the post-survey to measure the likelihood of participants using attitudes and knowledge gained from the training in their work, and 1 question regarding number of training sessions attended. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, applying descriptive statistics and independent t-tests to assess changes in participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes to apply core peer support skills.
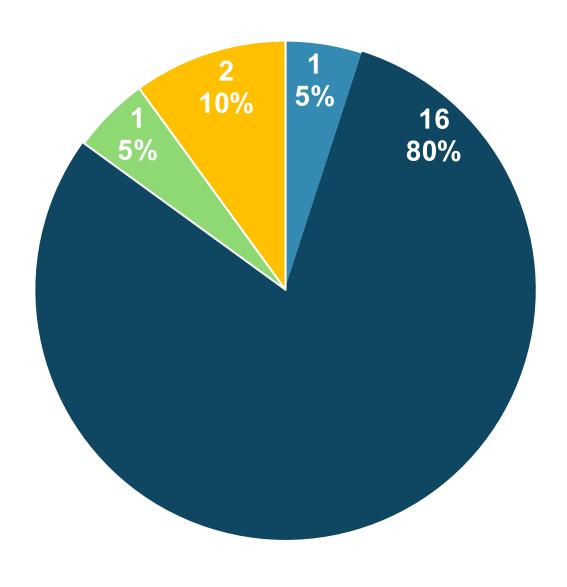
RESULTS

Participant Characteristics

Table 1. Participant Characteristics

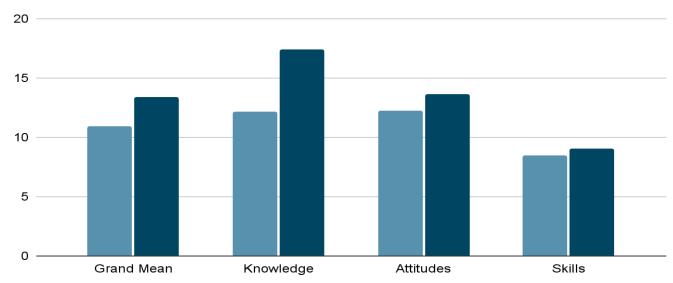| Variables	n	%
Time as Peer Navigator (n=20)		
Less than 6 months	3	15.0%
6-12 months	3	15.0%
1-2 years	6	30.0%
3-5 years	2	10.0%
More than 5 years	3	15.0%
No response	3	15.0%
Education (n=20)		
Some High School	3	15.0%
High School Diploma/GED	4	20.0%
Some college/trade school	4	20.0%
Associate's degree	2	10.0%
Bachelor's degree or higher	7	35.0%

Ethnicity of Participants (n=20)

- African American/Black
- Latino/Hispanic
- White/Caucasian
- Other

1 5%
2 10%
1 5%
16 80%

Descriptive and Inferential Results

Table 2. Post survey responses to outcome questions measuring attitudes and knowledge

As a result of this training series…	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
This training helped me develop new skills or improve existing ones that are relevant to my role as a peer support navigator	0%	0%	0%	37.5% n=6	62.5% n=10
I feel confident in applying what I learned from the training in my work with participants	0%	0%	0%	25% n=4	75% n=12

Table 3. Independent t-Tests for Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes

Pretest ■ Posttest
Grand Mean | Knowledge | Attitudes | Skills

An independent t-test was conducted to evaluate participants' knowledge, attitudes, and skills. The overall grand mean increased from 10.96 (pretest) to 13.37 (posttest), indicating notable improvement. **Knowledge** scores showed a significant increase of 42.91% (M = 12.16 to 17.38, *p* < .001), while **attitudes** improved by 10.97% (M = 12.28 to 13.63, *p* = .007), also statistically significant. **Skills** increased by 7.3% (M = 8.45 to 9.07), though this change was not statistically significant (*p* = .072).

RESOURCES

- Augustine, D., & Kushel, M. (2022). Community Supervision, Housing Insecurity, and Homelessness. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 701*(1), 152–171. https://doi.org/10.1177/00027162221113983
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- *Recidivism and reentry.* Bureau of Justice Statistics. (2025). https://bjs.ojp.gov/topics/recidivism-and-reentry
- Orejuela, A.(2024). *Examining Latino homelessness.* National Alliance to End Homelessness. Retrieved November 15, 2024, from https://endhomelessness.org/blog/examining-latino-homelessness/

CONCLUSION

Analysis of Findings

The Peer Navigator Group Facilitation Training in partnership with Project Kinship showed significant gains in knowledge by 41.9%, 10.97% in attitudes, and though not statistically significant, 7.3% in skills. While the training was impactful, these findings suggest a need for extended hands-on practice time to improve overall outcomes.

Limitations & Improvements

One notable limitation of the evaluation was inconsistent attendance which may have impacted outcomes. Another limitation was the limited timeframe of the training sessions, sessions had valuable content but condensed, which restricted opportunities for in-depth discussion and hands-on practice.

To address these issues and improve the effectiveness of future trainings, it is recommended to extend the training by either adding a fourth session or implementing on the job coaching to enhance skill integration.

Recommendations & Implications

Practice
The training reinforces the importance of trauma-informed care in underserved communities like Santa Ana, where only 34.5% of Hispanic adults receive behavioral health care despite high rates of psychological distress. It is recommended to incorporate peer training into onboarding for group facilitation roles. This will build confidence and standardizes trauma-informed, participant-centered care.

Policy
The project suggests the need for systemic recognition and investment in peer-led interventions as a community-rooted approach to addressing homelessness and reentry challenges. It is recommended to advocate for city/county stipends, certification, and professional development for peer navigators. This recognizes lived experience as professional expertise while increasing retention and value, especially in communities with high rates of homelessness and substance use.

Research
Findings suggest peer-led interventions can lead to measurable improvements in knowledge, attitudes, and skills, but further research is needed to evaluate long-term retention and impact. It is recommended to conduct longitudinal studies to assess how peer navigator training affects group outcomes, participant engagement, and sustainability over time.

COMMUNITY PARTNER

Project Kinship
Mission: To provide support and training to lives impacted by incarceration, gang and violence through hope, healing and transformation

Name of Collaborator	Contributions
Raymond Sanchez (MSW) *Dir. Of Peer Navigation* Project Kinship Raymond@projectkinship.org	•Contributing key topics of interest to the training curriculum. •Assisted in managing peer navigator attendance. •Secured and provided a working space to accommodate training activities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS