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## Appreciative Socialization Group: Rules of Implementation

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# Appreciative Socialization Group: Rules of Implementation

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**Abstract:**

*Appreciative socialization group is the result of a strong collaboration between a NGO from Iasi, Romania, active volunteers and service users involved (disabled persons). In this paper we aim to offer the rules of implementation of this model. It is important to respect some rules in order to obtain the desired result - social integration of disabled persons in our case. Apprecitive socialization group is based on a number of elements taken from the literature that treats this subject, and a number of elements of appreciative inquiry, the process of socialization, the process of empowerment and also the partnership process.*

**Keywords:**

*appreciative socialization group, appreciative inquiry, empowerment, partnership, equalty, rules of implementation*

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### The origin of Appreciative Socialization Group

Appreciative socialization group came from an active collaboration of specialists within the Office of Assistance and Counselling for people with disability from Caritas Center (www.caritas-iasi.ro), active volunteers and the service users involved. Appreciative socialization group is based on the following principles:

- Creating an own framework regarding social and personal development of people with disabilities – clients of the service concerned;
- Adapting the support and information groups, previously implemented with the same persons between October-December 2008
- Adapting a meeting group for volunteers - "Coffee Morning" - made in the UK, by the organization Home Star Home, twice a year, attended by Simona Ponea, initiator of appreciative group socialization;
- Organizing a social group for beneficiaries who wish to participate in group activities, current activities of the mentioned organization.

It should be added that an important role in the process of analyzing the needs of the clients participating in group (Davies, 2009). The analysis was conducted in a pragmatic way as their experiences of clients involved as volunteers, other volunteers involved in practice, and by analyzing records of these clients, particularly social surveys. An important role was played by the clients'opinions and the volunteers' desire to get involved in these activity.

### Organizers

The organizational stage were particularly realized by the group moderator, active volunteers and professionals from the Office of Assistance and Advice for people with disabilities, from Iasi, Romania, within Caritas Centre Iasi. For precise determination of the organization of appreciative socialization group we started from a brainstorming aimed at identifying the views of all those involved in this action. Brainstorming phase was followed by a series of discussions on how to organize a group, how to start with a press release to announce this activity, laying all stages of the first meeting, establish goals and

objectives. Apprecitive socialization group aimed mainly at expanding social network of members participating, social integration, increase of self-esteem of the participants.

During the stages of organization there have been established a series of milestones for this activity as:
- − Conducting group on equal footing
- − Establishment of a "friendly" environment friendly (UNICEF, 2004) for all those present
- − Providing coffee before the meeting and break
- − Establish together with members of the group elements such as duration, topics that are meant to be discussed, group rules, addressing the group etc.

**Target group**

The target group of the apprecitive socialization group was formed of persons with locomotor disabilities, members of their families, with their participation in volunteer groups and other stakeholders (Popa, 2008). In determining the target group there was a condition imposed by age, ie each member participant must have at least 18 years old.

We explain the choice of each of the categories of participants as follows:
- − People with disabilities - represents the target group for the program,
- − disabled family members - on the one hand they were targeted because they are the ones who always accompany the participating members, and on the other hand was considered important their participation in this type of group, resource persons for social integration of persons with disabilities;
- − volunteers - we believe that is an important component of all social services, particularly at NGOs. Volunteers who are not disabled and those who are disabled, ease of integration, creating a cross-cultural framework inclusive, favoring social relations based on equality.

**The conduct of the first meeting of appreciative socialization group**

The first meeting of appreciative socialization group  was held on March 4, 2009. At this meeting, attended by 22 people including 10 recipients, 3 passengers, 6 volunteers and 2 specialists from the Bureau of Assistance and Advice for persons with disabilities. This meeting lasted about 2 hours with a break of 15 minutes. During the 2 hours were pursued:

- knowing each other;
- playful activity - Tree of expectations;
- Discussion on expectations of members;
- Inform all participants about the purpose and objectives;
- Establish organizational details such as meetings' duration, frequency of meetings, group type (open / closed), and so on;
- Establish group rules;
- Establish themes that are meant to be discussed during the meetings;
- Establish next meeting and the topic of discussion.

**The conduct of the next meeting**

As representative items for each meeting we underline the following:

- Establish themes with the participating members;
- Establish co-moderators according to their desire;
- Identify the group of possible activities consistent with the purpose and objectives;
- Establish activities aimed at the interests of the closest participating members.

One of the key elements of appreciative group socialization  is provided by a partnership (Madrid, 2008) between all participating members regardless of their position,  or the social status they have.

In line with the wishes of the participants and also group targets one of the meetings was held outside the headquarters of the implementing organization. Also there were three meetings that were conducted as exchanges with members of two ohert different groups of social clients, namely young people within a social rehabilitation centre,

and a group of young mothers participating in another support group from Caritas Centre, Iasi.

### Themes established at meetings

As previously mentioned, the topics of discussion were established with all members participating from a meeting to another. Were involved in planning and structuring the next meeting the moderator, co-moderator, specialists and volunteers subject to availability.

The topics mainly focused on:
- Active ways of social integration
- Ways leisure
- Stories
- transformation solutions to problematic situations into opportunities for self-growing
- legislative issues
- expanding social network

### Used tools during appreciative socialization group's meetings

The worksheet is established for each meeting in two steps. On the one hand, make a brief discussion at the end of each meeting mainly aimed at establishing the following topics and identify those sub-sections that need to be met and are of interest to the group participants. In the second part realize short "working meeting" between moderator and co-medator set for the meeting concerned and plann the activities. In this framework decide, according to information provided at the meeting preceding, the subparagraphs order, the tools, techniques, and instruments, and the involvement of moderator and co-moderator of the sesion.

### How to choose the co-moderators

The co-moderators are one of the key factor of appreciative socialization group. They represent significant examples of the implementation process of empowerment, and increase the "power of example". We believe that taking the comoderator out of the participating members of the group we are able to facilitate different positive processes, such as increased self-esteem, empowerment,

overcoming their own barriers, involvement in social life from a new perspective. Co-moderators are dependent on the willingness of involvement of each member. In this respect the moderator encourages the participation and involvement of a large number of members in the process.

### How to involve co-moderators

As previously mentioned co-moderators play an important role in the organization and implementation of appreciative socialization group's meetings where they have an important position. We also notice that one of the benefits 'hidden' behind this position is that they assist in the transmission of positive behaviors among all group members. We note that there have been co-moderators whom assumed this role during meetings conducted within appreciative socialization group and members who did not want such a role.

### The involvement of group's members

One of the key elements of the proposed model is given by the existence of an established partnership among all members. We affirm this active involvement of participants both in the establishment of topics for discussion between all relevant issues, as well as proposing different techniques and ways to achieve the desired topics.

### Liaise group

Therapist believes group cohesion (Necula, 2007) as one of the issues to be made in the first meeting to support further development of the group as a whole and of each member. Appreciative socialization group is considered an important factor in achieving cohesion and was represented by a low level of inter-existence among most participants. On the one hand, as mentioned above, some of the clients of this social service are active volunteers in the Office Assistance and Advice for persons with disabilities and they already have experience working together in various activities and projects.

Another category of group members experienced before appreciative group socialization was the participation in other two groups, namely a group of information on professional integration and support group.

Regarding volunteers, specifically students of the social work specialization, some of them already had a number of links generated by participation in training sessions for volunteer service and many of them knew each other from previous projects .

### Conclusions

In this respect we recommend the usage of this steps in forming a group based on the model and principles of appreciative socialization group.

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