



How to use the MOVE! Group Sessions

Welcome

The MOVE! Group Sessions are designed to help Veterans lose weight and keep it off. Keep in mind, though, that for some Veterans, halting weight gain will be their initial measure of success. By creating a group experience that is engaging, inspiring and creates accountability, the facilitator will help participants build and refine their weight self-management skills.

Goals for MOVE! Participants

- It's essential to work with Veterans to establish their own goals for change. Most will identify a main goal to address over time, and smaller goals for weekly work. Engaging patients in personalized goal-setting is critically important.
- Ideally, a Veteran will achieve at least a 5–10% weight loss and complete 150–300 minutes or more of physical activity per week.

General Guidance for Leading Group Sessions

- The sessions are purposefully not scripted, to allow for flow that engages participants.
- As facilitator, you may structure the flow of each session based on the needs and preferences of you and the participants.
- At the beginning of each session, you will see a list of suggested materials in a blue box. They are divided into resources for distribution to participants, and those that are recommended for your preparation prior to the session, and for reference only as needed. It is not recommended that you attempt to use every resource listed during the 60 minute session.
- Groups offer a supportive environment in which new skills can be introduced, practiced, and reviewed. Some examples of these skills include problem-solving, resisting temptation, preventing relapse, self-monitoring, and enhancing or making healthy lifestyle choices. In addition, the group format may be useful in reviewing individual progress and goal setting.

- As group leader your role is to facilitate discussion, not to lecture. Prepare to evoke as much information as possible from the group. For example: Instead of listing some of the barriers to physical activity, ask the group to discuss why they may have had difficulty being physically active. Consider asking about past success with physical activity, to focus on the positive and build confidence. **Solutions and ideas that are generated by the group are much more powerful than those that are taught.**
- Have the group establish guidelines for mutual respect at the first session, such as expectations for participation, confidentiality, and respect. Redirect personal issues that are not related to weight management when appropriate. If a Veteran needs more time to discuss a non-weight-related issue, offer to speak with him/her after the group.
- A Food and Physical Activity Diary is a useful self-management tool, shown to boost weight loss success. It helps Veterans understand their eating and activity patterns before they attempt to make changes to them. The weekly log provides a page for the Veteran to record weekly food and beverage intake and another to record physical activity. Copies may be made of the blank pages. Veterans may also choose to use an electronic or online log.

General Format

- Each session is designed to last 60 minutes.
- Conduct participant weigh-in as privately as possible in your setting.
- Late arrivals should be weighed by someone other than the facilitator.
- Remember to record all weights in the Vital Signs package. This provides objective feedback to Veterans and care providers about their progress toward weight management goals.
- Food and Physical Activity Diary and homework are reviewed at the beginning of each session. This communicates to participants the importance of self-monitoring.
- Each session includes an example of a simple stretch or physical activity. You will find a physical activity break appendix that you may use if time allows. Use this as an opportunity to break things up.
- Individual consultation, if needed, may be scheduled outside the group session. The Health Behavior Coordinator may be a good resource for those who are “stuck” and need extra support.

Content and format for the 16-session MOVE! Group Sessions is based on the National Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) and is consistent with the 2014 VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for Screening and Management of Overweight and Obesity. Some key points include:

- Having one consistent facilitator for all sessions may be helpful in increasing Veteran engagement.
- Having support and participation from a behavior expert (such as the Health Behavior Coordinator) is important.
- Sessions include nutrition, physical activity, and behavior topics.
- Having a group that is closed to enrollment, i.e., Veterans start and finish the program together, appears to enhance group cohesion and may facilitate group interaction and ongoing engagement.
- In order to keep Veterans motivated who are ready to start MOVE! Group Sessions, some facilities have established an “orientation” session to fill the gap when a series is in progress. This could be scheduled weekly or every 2 weeks. In these sessions, Veterans may be:
 - Introduced to key weight management concepts
 - Given a Veteran MOVE! folder with the 11 standard handouts and the Daily Food and Physical Activity Diary, and
 - Encouraged to take the MOVE! 11.
- Alternatively, some sites may wish to provide more rapid access to MOVE! by allowing open enrollment on a rolling basis. So, a motivated patient might start at session 3, then cycle through until all 16 have been completed. This works best if the facilitator is available for an additional 30 minutes after the active group session to meet with newcomers and help them get oriented, review goals, etc. While this model does not support the same level of group cohesion as the closed group, it can be helpful if sites cannot offer enough staggered sessions to accommodate frequent entry and avoid long wait times for program access.

Special Note: Veterans do **not** have to have prediabetes or diabetes to participate in MOVE! Group Sessions.

Planning for the MOVE! Group Sessions

- Complete the MOVE! training on VA's Talent Management System (TMS).
- Attend Motivational Interviewing training and Patient Education: *TEACH* for Success course, if possible, and be prepared to use the strategies learned.
- If you feel rusty with the *TEACH* and MI skills, seek some coaching from your trained HPDP colleagues.

- Establish a process for scheduling Veterans into the group.
- Schedule a room that can comfortably and safely accommodate the group; provide signage and directions to the room.
- Establish a private weigh-in area with a scale that can accommodate up to 450 lbs.
- Arrange seating that encourages group participation, such as a circle, small groups, etc.
- Ensure that chairs are appropriate for overweight and obese Veterans.
- Clarify your facility's process for ordering pedometers, odometers, scales, etc.
- Prepare materials for participants as indicated in each group session.
- You may also choose to provide the following, but these are not required:
 - MOVE! Veteran folder with the 11 standard handouts and copies of the Daily Food and Physical Activity Diary.
 - MOVE! Handout Booklet, which may be available to order (English and Spanish).
 - A pedometer for each Veteran. (If pedometers are provided by your facility, determine and follow facility guidelines to obtain them. If not, list a few local stores where the Veteran can purchase a pedometer.)
- As the facilitator, you may want to have the following available:
 - Pens, pencils, and extra paper.
 - A flip chart and/or dry erase board with markers.
 - A computer with projector to play videos, if possible.
 - Any props designated in the session plans.
 - Pre-write each session's objectives on flip-chart paper or have them available on PowerPoint.

Facilitating the MOVE! Group Sessions

- Coordinate the 16-week series; facilitate the group each week.
- Provide education to team members about MOVE! and offer to interested and ready participants.
- Contact and schedule speakers as needed.
 - For the first and ongoing sessions, make name tags, if available.
- Facilitate the group process (See: A Guide to Good Facilitation section, below).
- Encourage healthy rewards for achieving goals.
- Write major points on a whiteboard, blackboard, or smartboard, if desired.
- Check for participant understanding using a variety of techniques (included in the session materials).
- Summarize key points frequently.

In The Sessions You Will Find:

- Suggestions for an icebreaker to get started.
- A reminder to establish and review guidelines for mutual respect as needed.
- A reminder to invite all participants to actively participate during each session.
- Guidance for encouraging Veterans to share challenges and solutions
- Suggestions for asking permission before sharing information, demonstrating or modeling behaviors and skills, as appropriate.
- Techniques to help participants with self-monitoring, including creating SMART goals and a realistic action plan. See new NCP Clinician Coaching 2.0 video for an example of SMART goal setting in groups.
- Ideas for encouraging questions; soliciting thoughts, feelings, and opinions from participants.
- Ways to encourage sharing of testimonials during the session: Ask the “big loser of the week” to share success strategies – maybe how they avoided food temptations or how they increased their activity. Usually “big losers” are very good about planning activity and it gives others in the room a realistic idea of exactly what it takes to be successful.
- Triggers for obtaining feedback from the Veterans about what went well and what could be better during the group session.

Key Points to Consider at Every Session

- Group participants are more engaged and successful when content is presented in a non-lecture mode; **always strive to create an interactive, engaging group environment.**
- Facilitate the session so the majority of talking comes from the participants and not from you.
- Encourage attendance at all 16 sessions; participants who attend more sessions lose more weight.
- Research has shown that individuals striving to lose weight are more successful when they use a diary or log to document food intake and physical activity. Determine how you will use the daily food and physical activity logs at each session. Will you collect and review each one at every session or review and discuss as a group? You may want to ask participants to review prior weeks as part of planning and problem-solving. Be flexible – some may choose to use electronic tracking.
- Research has shown that attendance is better when brief physical activity is included in each group session.

A Guide to Effective Facilitation

Adapted with permission from: Facilitating Meetings: A guide for Community Planning Groups, Academy for Educational Development Center for Community-Based health Strategies

Effective facilitators possess a variety of qualities and skills. Some of the qualities spring from such innate personality traits as being able to recognize one's own biases while remaining neutral, enjoying interaction with diverse groups, and inspiring trust. Some will develop the skills through practice and with guidance from experienced facilitators.

FOLLOWING ARE FOUR SKILLS TO CONSIDER FOR EFFECTIVE FACILITATION

1. Create a comfortable atmosphere where participants feel valued:

Most people will participate more actively in a group when they feel comfortable sharing their opinions with other members. You and the participants can create this type of environment.

- **Use body language:** Use body language to show warmth and acceptance, and encourage others to relax and respond in kind.
- **Welcome participants:** Greeting each member by name makes the experience more personal and can foster a stronger connection between the group and facilitator.
- **Introduce participants and yourself:** Introductions help participants feel welcome and comfortable with the other group members. Introductions also give you an opportunity to clarify your role as facilitator.
- **Consider an icebreaker:** Suggestions can be found in the session materials.
- **Thank participants:** By thanking participants, you validate and legitimize their comments and contributions.
- **Provide affirmations:** This will help encourage and support Veterans' efforts.

2. Encourage participation and an active exchange of ideas:

As facilitator, you should strive to balance participation from the more outspoken and quiet or reserved group members so that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate.

- **Encourage silent members:** Use comfortable eye contact, invite them to share their experiences or add to what has been shared already.
- **Use open-ended questions:** Questions beginning with when, what, or how usually encourage members to provide detailed answers, and not a simple "yes" or "no", which can spark additional ideas from other members.

- **Consult the group:** When a participant addresses a question to you, ask permission and invite suggestions from others in the group. This also shifts the focus of discussion from one member to the whole group.
- **Use visual aids:** You may choose to vary how you share information, such as writing on a flipchart or whiteboard, using a brief PowerPoint or sharing handouts, etc. Be careful not to overload participants with materials at each session.
- **Avoid falling into the habit of making suggestions and offering advice.** Instead, try asking the group what worked for them, what they have tried, and what they think would be helpful.

Be careful when using “why?”: “Why” can imply judgment and cause some participants to become defensive. Instead of using “why,” ask, “What are some of the reasons...?”

3. Prevent and manage conflict:

One of the best ways to deal with conflict is to prevent it, but some conflict is inevitable and even helpful to the process. Use it to develop options the group would not have considered otherwise.

- **Use team-building activities:** Help members get to know each other better.
- **Develop group guidelines:** The sessions refer to Guidelines for Mutual Respect. Have the group create these together and review them as needed.
- **Search for agreement:** Drawing attention to points that participants agree upon helps create an atmosphere of positive collaboration and forward momentum.
- **Agree to disagree:** Although you would like to resolve all conflicts, it may not always be possible. Urge the group to treat each other with respect even when they disagree.

4. Listen and observe:

Throughout a group session, keep your eyes and ears open and stay tuned in to the whole group, as well as each individual.

- **Listen actively:** Apply the basic skills of one-on-one conversation. Listen before speaking, and ask permission before sharing information, examples or answers.
- **Scan the room:** While maintaining eye contact with the speaker, note how other members are responding to that person.
- **Encourage discussion, but help the group stay on topic:** Sometimes participants will bring up a good question that is not relevant to the discussion. Acknowledge this question, and help keep the group on topic. You can use a “Parking Lot” on the board for these types of questions to be addressed at a later time.