



THE POWER OF DEPENDABLE SOULS

INTERVENTION MANUAL

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Temple University
Collaborative

On Community Inclusion of Individuals with Psychiatric Disabilities



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Introduction to PODS from the Director of the Collaborative

I worked at the Philadelphia Veterans Affairs Medical Center where I was fortunate to be a part of the development of a new Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC). One of the aims of PRRCs is to promote community inclusion and participation of veterans with significant mental health issues. The staff who were involved with this PRRC tried some novel approaches that were consistent with our emerging thoughts about the fundamentals for promoting community inclusion. One strategy was to decrease or eliminate scheduled leisure activities that occurred onsite, such as bingo, and instead offer to support veterans in engaging in these activities in typical (i.e., not at the VA facility) environments. It was believed that encouraging participation onsite does not substantially generalize to participation offsite. Onsite activities are fun and keep people occupied, but do not lead to long-term independent participation. A second related strategy was to increase meetings between staff and veterans in the community, such as a local church, community center, library, or coffee shop, instead of meeting at the VA facility. The idea was to communicate that the goal of the PRRC was for veterans to participate more in their communities and that bringing them onsite was not always conducive to meeting this objective.

A third strategy emerged out of observations made in groups that the program ran. In one group where veterans discussed their community participation interests, it was not uncommon to hear veterans say things like, “I like to go fishing, but have no one to go fishing with.” This was often followed by another veteran who would later say the same thing – “I like to go fishing, but have no one to go fishing with,” and another veteran who would say the same thing. It is common in these situations for staff in such situations to organize and lead a fishing trip. We decided to try something different. We had staff work with the veterans who expressed interest in fishing to organize and lead their own fishing trip. By doing so, veterans can support one another in choosing a day that works for them, getting equipment, and getting to and from the fishing spot. It is believed that these person-directed activities will more likely teach the skills that veterans need to go fishing or anything else they might want to do and learn how to support one another without needing to wait for a paid staff member to be available to organize the activity and take care of transportation. We have concerns that “co-participation,” where staff attempt to model how to be more engaged in the community by going with individuals, rarely leads to independent participation. This is partly because staff are ineffective in gradually lessening their involvement in the activities, and partly because they are not focused on helping veterans identify, build, and utilize natural supporters – people who are not paid, such as family, friends, or other peers, who are more readily available to go places with them compared to program staff.

It is the building and utilization of natural supports that is at the core of the PODS intervention.

There are a few examples of similar intentional efforts to build and utilize natural supports in promoting inclusion and participation that exist. These include COMPEER and Circles of Support, which have been well-known and used at times in mental health, but not enough. There are also specific initiatives, such as Club 21, which was created by Dennis Rice and his colleagues at Alternatives Unlimited in Whittinsville, Massachusetts (now called Open Sky Community Services), which significantly inspired PODS. The Strive For Five campaign during the pandemic developed by the Alliance for Rights and Recovery was another influence. These are the kinds of ideas and approaches that inspired the development of the PODS approach, which we believe is a novel and feasible approach to supporting individuals with significant mental health issues to support one another in moving toward more sustainable, long-term engagement in meaningful activities.

Mark Salzer, Ph.D.

Temple University

Testimonies

Hear from Past Facilitators:

“PODS is helping us provide a service that we’ve always wanted to provide. One of the missing pieces to the pie for many years has been **people being able to connect socially outside of program**, being able to have fun and recreation and excitement in lives. And it’s really helped fill in the gap of what we all need to live well and happily. So, thank you, PODS.”

“We have a large population of older participants, and a lot of them live in personal care homes and PODS gave them hope. ...they don’t have a lot of community interaction. They don’t have a lot of friendships. And seeing the excitement about maybe being able to go on a little trip or go out with friends or do something was pretty amazing, **just to see them excited about life**. And it was awesome.”

"I think that some of the participants in our program just have learned to settle with where they are in life. And I think they just figured this is how it's gonna be. **And you know [with PODS] when they started to believe that there could be more**, that they could have social connections out in the community and do things that were actually fun, with people who wanted to be with them, who chose to be with them in a way that other people were enjoying their lives and interacting with the world... **I think that was a powerful realization.**"

Hear from Past Participants:

“I used to be shy. So, when I started doing PODS, **I got out there more in the community, helped me make friends that are out of group** and made me feel more than my mental health is bringing me down. So, I use PODS to cope with the stuff I can do instead of always being isolated and stuff.”

“It (PODS) made me a little bit braver in some ways, and I think it **helped give me the confidence to even start the promotion process at my work**. I’m now assistant manager at (redacted) and some of that confidence was just from me being able to go out into the community and do my own thing and be like, ‘okay I can do this. So why can’t I do this at work, too?’ ... So, it’s having that experience of ‘ok, yeah, I’m a normal person. This is a part of life.’ That gave me a little bit more confidence.”

Using This Manual

Thank you for your interest in facilitating PODS- pronounced as one word rather than the letters spelled out (like P.O.D.S)! We are so excited to help you support participants as they increase meaningful community participation.

How to use this manual:

There are three main sections of this manual: a PODS Program Foundation section, a PODS Implementation section, and a PODS in Practice section.

The PODS Program Foundation has important information related to the program. This information is good to know in order to understand the purpose of the program and the way we would like you to approach different aspects. This section is filled with information that staff should be familiar with in order to facilitate PODS.

The PODS Implementation has information directly used for facilitation. This includes resources like session guides, session worksheets, and planning templates.

The PODS in Practice session includes examples of how other agencies implemented PODS during the pilot, as well as troubleshooting tips and frequently asked questions.

You can also find videos about PODS on our YouTube Channel- [click here for the PODS playlist](#) or find us on our page [@TUCollab](#)

If you're interested in receiving free technical assistance as you work on implementing PODS, please reach out to us at TUCollab@temple.edu.



PROGRAM
FOUNDATION

Understanding the Purpose and Philosophy of PODS

What is PODS?

The Power of Dependable Souls (PODS) is a group-based mutual support program co-developed by the Temple University Collaborative on Community Inclusion along with advisory groups with peer specialists and peer specialist supervisors. The primary goal of PODS is to increase social connections and community participation among adults experiencing mental health conditions. This happens through supporting participants to connect through shared interests and overcome barriers together with their peers. Rather than people having to figure out things alone or relying on staff, they can group together and overcome barriers together, each contributing their own strengths.

Why is PODS a needed intervention?

Individuals with mental health conditions often experience significantly higher levels of loneliness and isolation and lower rates of community participation. Barriers such as stigma and lack of social support frequently prevent community engagement.

Community participation is a fundamental human right and a medical necessity. Engagement in the community has been shown to improve cognition, increase physical activity, foster positive mood, and mitigate negative health impacts associated with isolation and loneliness, such as chronic stress and higher mortality risk.

PODS provides hope that life can be different and helps individuals realize their capabilities, as well as facilitating space to build skills and confidence.

What are the key outcomes of PODS?

Through PODS, individuals can build stronger social connections, overcome isolation, gain confidence for community participation, and realize their own capabilities. They can learn to lead in their recovery journey and make more decisions in their lives.

Common Misunderstandings:

PODS is **not**:

- The facilitator organizing set clubs (e.g., a book club and a volunteering club) that participants can choose to join
- The facilitator planning community participation for participants
- Agency providing funding for events and outings
- Agency providing transportation or removing barriers to participation
- Limited to social, recreation, or leisure interests. It could also focus on employment, education, and other similar interests.

PODS is:

- Participants meeting each other and finding common interests- then developing their own pods based on shared desire for types of community participation
- Participants planning their own community participation, with support from peers and facilitators
- Participants navigating barriers to participation (finances, transportation, etc.), with support from peers and facilitators
- Participants learning how to plan their own community participation in sustainable ways
- An opportunity for participants to pursue interests that could be social, recreational, or leisurely- or things like employment, volunteering, or education.

Foundational Principles

PODS is built on four core theoretical areas:

- 1. Friendship Development:** The program is rooted in relationship science, emphasizing that friendships develop through spending time together and shared activity interests. Engaging in common activities creates shared experiences and fosters connection with less pressure. Research says that a close friendship can be established with approximately 140 hours of contact and that to become “best” friends, it requires about 300 hours of contact¹. Doing things together that everyone enjoys is a great way to build friendships. When people realize they have shared interests, they often feel more connected and want to spend more time together. These shared activities help create memories and give people things to talk about, which can make their bond stronger over time.
- 2. Collective Efficacy:** PODS members develop a shared belief in their group's ability to overcome challenges more effectively together than individually. This group unity and trust provide support to resist stigma and tackle participation barriers. Sharing successes among pods further reinforces this belief. Instead of one person needing to figure out where to go, how to get there, and go alone, they can figure it out together and have someone to go with.
- 3. Natural Support System:** PODS promotes reliance on non-paid supports from naturally developed social relationships, like family, friends, and other peers. PODS members are encouraged to offer mutual emotional, instrumental, and material support, reducing the need for paid staff availability. This is at the core of the PODS intervention. Think about it- staff is only available for so many hours during the day. Building and relying on unpaid natural supports means participants can have people to rely on outside of traditional working hours- and they also have the opportunity to be that support for others as well!
- 4. Participant-Led ("Dignity of Risk"):** A central tenet is allowing participants the freedom to take the lead in planning and problem-solving, even if it involves mistakes, as this is essential for personal growth and an enhanced quality of life. Facilitators are expected to be "hands-off," supporting participants to brainstorm solutions rather than providing direct answers. This can be very challenging but ultimately can be more rewarding for participant independence and sustainable change.

¹ Hall, J. A. (2019). How many hours does it take to make a friend? *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 36(4), 1278-1296.

Overview of PODS

You will recruit and support a group of participants² at your agency to join and make up a “collective.” From that collective, participants will work to establish small groups of individuals – what we call “pods” – based on shared interests in areas of community participation.

The PODS facilitators will meet with the group to explore interest areas related to community participation as well as working with each individual to set goals. Once the collective begins to meet, the PODS Facilitators will introduce the PODS concept and facilitate brainstorming to develop ideas for pods that participants might be interested in, including gardening, volunteering, community advocacy, faith-based activities, and more (see Figure 1).

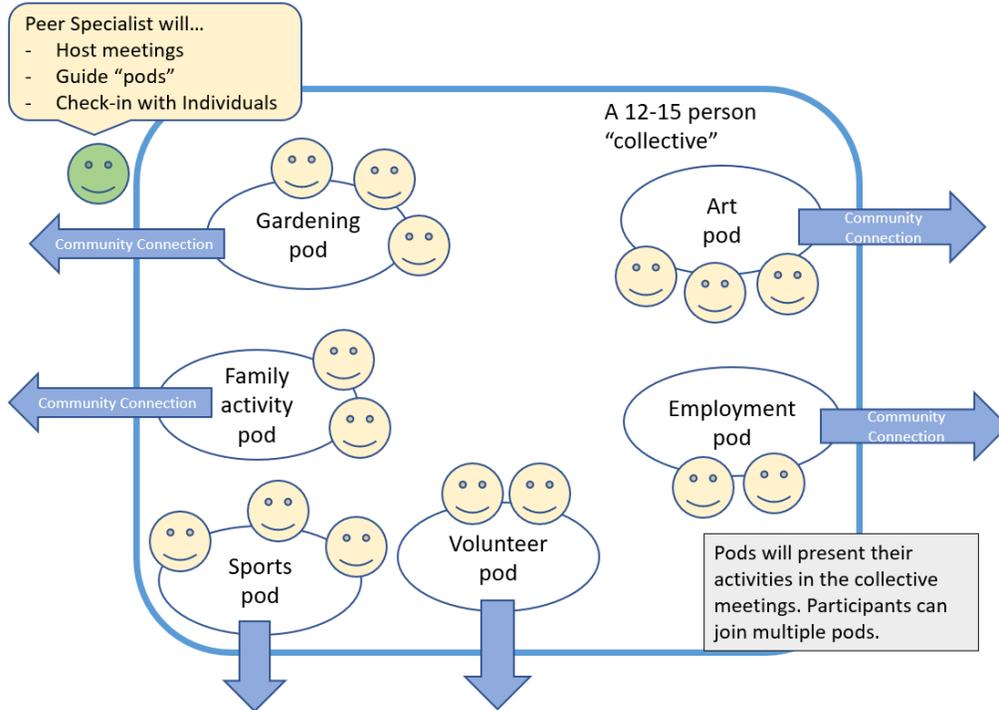
Participants will start to participate in collective meetings. During the first few collective meetings, participants will build rapport and divide into pods of common interests. The purpose of the pods is for each participant to find a group of people who share the same activity interest. The interests of collective members may be diverse, but there typically are a few people in the group who have similar activity interests. Meeting with people who share a specific activity interest is important because it makes them feel similar to one another, which can lead to friendship. The groups will be created by the initiative of the participants, and new groups can be created throughout the intervention period. Duck’s model of relationship³ suggests that people become closer through engaging in an activity that they commonly like. PODS are not set in stone, and groups are encouraged to be creative and try different things. Participants can also choose to engage in diverse activities together before settling on specific pods.

Throughout this project, pod members will be encouraged to share pictures of their activities and what it felt like engaging in the activity, which may include stories about enjoyment, improved relationships among the members and with community members, and challenges they encountered and how they overcame them. Sharing their experiences with other pods in the collective is intended to enhance the belief that they can overcome their challenges through seeing people like them succeeding⁴.

² The number of members in the collective was determined by Dunbar’s Sympathy Group² concept, which proposed that an appropriate group size is large enough, so people do not feel pressured to develop close relationships with everyone in the collective, yet small enough to develop and maintain emotional connections with everyone they desire. We recommend up to 15 people, but many agencies started with just a couple participants.

³ Duck, S. (1994). *Meaningful relationships: Talking, sense, and relating*. Sage Publications, Inc.

⁴ Hoogsteen, T. J. (2020). Collective efficacy: Toward a new narrative of its development and role in achievement. *Palgrave Communications*, 6(1), 2. doi: 10.1057/s41599-019-0381-z



Testimonies about Friendship Development:

"Since the PODS program, I've gotten a lot closer with all my friends here. I've connected more, and I'm not afraid to speak to them. It really helps me a lot. ... Because of the way we connect, not just by electronics, but in person. ... Like when we're outside doing some stuff. It is really like team building; it really helps us get to know each other better. More than we already do."

Testimonies about Collective Efficacy:

"Getting out in the community more often, I feel more comfortable. And because before I wasn't. I struggled getting out in the community. But going out with my fellow members and these others that I'm planning this stuff with... it feels better for me and everyone around me too. I see that it's helping us all that have struggled to get out in the community. And it's really helped us a lot, and it wants us to do more of these things."

"I feel like, for me, it was a lack of motivation to get out of my own comfort zone and, go out in the community. But like when I did, I felt a lot better, being around my friends. So, it helped me like, feel more comfortable, not so stimulated and made me feel like I was like, welcomed there."

Our Approach to PODS

Everyone supporting individuals recovering from mental illnesses has their own approach, strategies they find useful, and personal. Because many people sometimes approach the same task differently, this next section previews our suggested approach to facilitating PODS. There are a few different scenarios highlighted, but if you have any questions, feel free to reach out to the Collaborative for technical assistance at TUCollab@temple.edu.

What we don't want to do:

- Plan outings for the pod
- Set goals/expectations for the pod
- Take the group out in the community indefinitely (as facilitator)

What we do want to do:

- Support participants to plan the outing
- Support participants to set their own goals/ expectations

A group of participants in your collective have decided to form a gardening pod! What now?

Option 1 (what to avoid): We make a plan for the gardening pod

We could reach out to local churches and find one that's in need of some landscaping in some flower beds. We could partner with that church, communicating with staff to set a budget, make a plan for buying the supplies, set a day/time for when the pod could do the gardening, and when/how they would get to the church for the gardening.

There's nothing inherently wrong with the statement above- we want our participants to engage in the community and connect with people with similar interests. This may be how we approach services normally! However, while they get to experience the benefits of gardening with a group of peers and giving back to the community, in this scenario, they would be missing out on the learning experience of doing the planning themselves. As a result, this PODS program may not lead to intended outcomes.

Option 2 (A better approach): We support the gardening pod to make their own plan

Let's meet with the pod. We could have a discussion to brainstorm factors we need to consider when planning community participation. Here, you (or a group volunteer) could take notes on a whiteboard, laptop, or paper!

Some common things to consider:

- What are the resources required for participation?
 - Supplies
 - Money
 - Transportation
 - Knowledge, skills, abilities
 - Etc.
- How will we gain access to the resources required for participation?
 - Supplies
 - Money
 - Transportation
 - Knowledge, skills, abilities
 - Etc.
- When will you do this activity? (day, time, etc.)
- How often do we want to do this activity/ how often can we do this activity?
- Where will you do this activity?

Once the group is happy with the results of their brainstorming, move forward into making a plan based on those specific items everyone mentioned.

Why is it important to let the group plan the outing?

The more we do something, the more confident we usually feel in our ability to do that thing. The first time you do something can be pretty stressful- you had to work up the courage up give it a shot knowing you may fail. There are so many logistics to think about, and so sometimes it feels safer to not do that new thing.

Now, someone could plan it all out for you and just tell you to show up at a certain time at the bus stop, and they go with you and everything is fine.

However, what about the next time you go to do that thing, that person who went with you isn't available? You're back at that point of doing something for the first time.

What if we approached this differently? What if that person who provided support did it in a different way? If they supported you as you did the research, made the plan, and figured out where to go and when to be there, you would have gained experience in a supported environment. Then, the next time you go to do it alone, you would've had some experience and a bit of confidence based on success. This is what we are aiming for with PODS! Beyond just participating in something with you, they will be learning how to plan and execute these things independently. We are, in a sense, '*working ourselves out of jobs*'. You can think of this like an evolution in your role- helping individuals develop a different support system and develop a wider variety of skills.

Promoting Independence and Doing Hands-Off Implementation

In addition to shifting how participants engage in the community and approach community participation, we are also shifting your practices as a practitioner. We cannot expect our participants to make changes if WE do not make changes. **This is not always going to be easy.** Doing nothing (or doing less) can be significantly harder than stepping in and ensuring someone or something has success. Stepping back and giving space for people to figure things out and for things to be messy can be incredibly difficult. But it can be incredibly rewarding- both for us and for the people we're supporting.

With PODS- your goal is to essentially work yourself out of a job (on an individual basis). With everything you do, remember that you don't need to have the answers for everything- and you shouldn't give answers for everything. Instead, focus on posing the question back to the group and supporting them to instead brainstorm solutions.

Quotes from the past PODS facilitators:

"It was our job to kind of plant the seed, maybe do a little watering and a little pruning here and there, but it's the most beautiful thing to sit back and see, you know, kind of what happens. The little seeds will drop and, you know, hopefully more plants will grow."

*"The whole hands-off thing is the biggest strength of PODS, but it is the hardest thing for us to do as facilitators. We're trained to be very hands on, so whatever program comes in here and says "Oh, yeah, you don't do much. You just kind of let them talk." That's pretty difficult. ... I want to give them the solutions and just tell them what to do. **Fighting back against that is hard. And it is definitely a learning process.** So, while yes, the hands-off approach, I think, is the best thing about it, it's also the hardest thing to learn for us as facilitators, and I think, in some regards, our individuals as well. **They have kind of learned in some of their services have ingrained them that, "Hey, you know, you can't go and do that by yourself." Not that they meant to do that, I don't think. But you know that is inherently what they ended up learning.** So, I think pushing back against that idea from us and our individuals has been a pretty big challenge. But again, it pays off significantly."*

*"I sometimes, when there's issues going on, I want to kind of jump in and fix it for them. But I think PODS has really sort of reinforced the belief that, you know, **these individuals are capable of doing things** and being successful with the help of each other. So, I think it's just kind of also reinforced that hope for me that they can succeed when they put their mind to it and just the power of connection for them and working together in order to do that"*

Embracing Dignity of Risk

Dignity of risk refers to the concept that people are afforded opportunities to challenge themselves to try new experiences, and deal with natural successes and failures. For successful PODS, facilitators should consider the dignity of risk, which may involve shifting (possibly unconscious) overprotection from risks to respecting PODS participants' choices and freedom – even if they make mistakes, as it leads to human growth.

Quote from a PODS facilitator:

“...the freedom that we give these folks to succeed, I think is huge. A lot of the times ... people really aren't given the chance to succeed. It's kind of like very hand-holdy and “Nope. Do it this way because this is what works.” Well, that doesn't always work for everyone. And so, PODS has this ability to allow people to do things how they think is fit. And allow them to make the mistakes and allow them to trip and stumble but then have a support system that isn't giving them the exact answers on how to fix it. Therefore, teaching them the skills to, whenever these things do happen, to be able to kind of pick themselves back up. It's that freedom aspect again that I think really kind of allows people to take the shape that they're meant to take.”



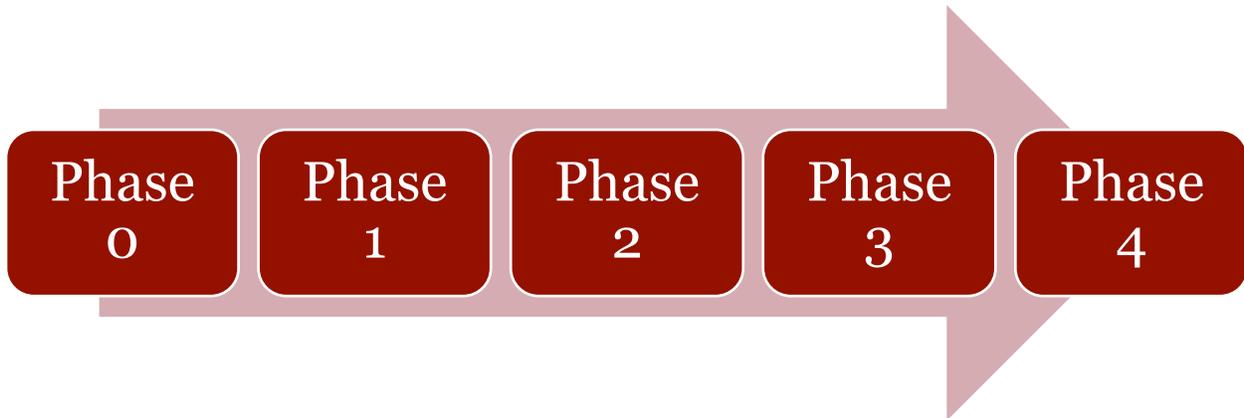
IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

Overview of PODS – PODS Phases

We have divided PODS activities into different phases. Phases 0 and 1 are program management-focused. This means it's all about preparing for the program and then recruiting people to join; this portion is staff driven. Phases 2, 3, and 4 are focused on participant support, so actually running groups and supporting participants to make friends, develop pods, and do things in the community.

Please note- this is not a rigid model. These phases can be thought of like milestones to progress through. This may be cyclical, meaning that a group moves through the program and no longer needs support. It could also mean that new people may join PODS and participate in existing pods groups, with existing members taking on leadership roles. It could also mean that the agency takes a break and re-starts with new (or old) folks.

This graphic will appear each time we shift into a new phase.



Four Phases Briefly Explained

Program Management

Phase 0: Program Preparations

The PODS Facilitators prepare to implement this by learning about the program and working with the agency to establish protocols.

Phase 1: Marketing and Recruiting

The PODS Facilitators will recruit PODS participants strategically. Consider language used in recruitment materials and potential sources to recruit from.

Participant Support

Phase 2: Onboarding

The PODS Facilitators support participants to explore interests, introductions, and rapport-building. This will occur during the first initial meeting between the PODS Facilitators and each participant.

Phase 3: Group Development

This phase is focused on identifying desired pods. The PODS Participants will share their activity interests and find common activity to make a pod.

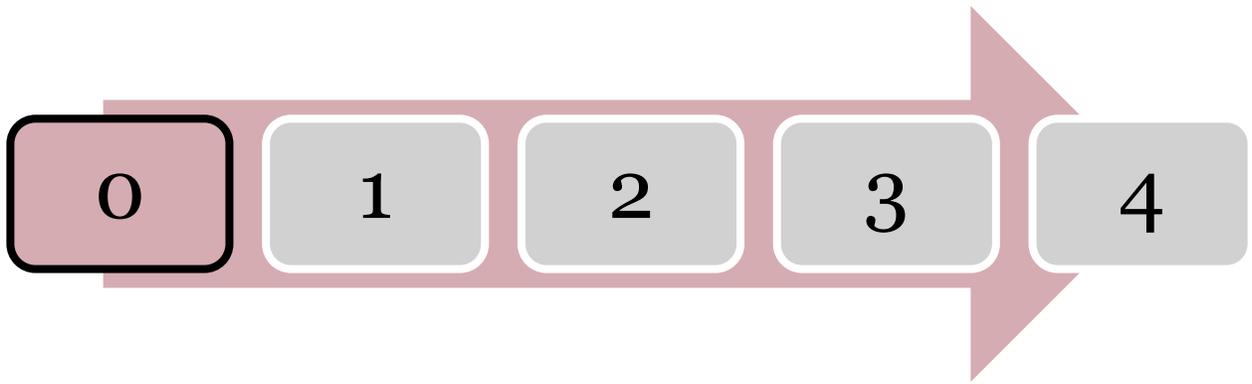
Phase 4: Group Support

In this phase, the PODS Participants continue to engage in independent community participation and the PODS Facilitators are to monitor and support only when the participants need help.

Phases and Roles

Check out this table to see what staff and participants are responsible for throughout the project.

Phase	0: Program Preparations	1: Marketing & Recruiting	2: Onboarding	3: Group Development	4: Group Support
Purpose	Prepare agency, facilitators for PODS	Educating agency staff about PODS Educating consumers, recruiting, and encouraging folks to try out PODS	Identifying individual needs and activity interests, establishing rapport	Forming interest-based groups (pods), planning the activity and problem-solving the activity and while identifying barriers	Monitoring the progress
Activities	<p>Administrator / Facilitator Review training materials Plan details Create marketing materials</p> <p>Participants N/A</p>	<p>Facilitator Creating flyers and spreading the word. Host an information session. In-person communication recommended</p> <p>Participants N/A</p>	<p>Facilitator Gather collective meetings and have the participants share their activity interests</p> <p>Participants Join the collective meetings and share your activity interests</p>	<p>Facilitator Continue encouraging collective/Pod meetings. Bounce back ideas but not give answers so that participants initiate problem-solving</p> <p>Participants Find peers who have similar activity interests. Initiate developing a pod. Initiate problem-solving</p>	<p>Facilitator Check-in with the pods and individuals as needed</p> <p>Participants Engage in community activities with peers. Those who can take a leadership role – take over the management of collective/pod meetings</p>



Phase 0: Program Preparations

After spending time diving into the PODS Program Foundation and trainings, it's time to prepare for the program! Below are some planning considerations. There may be others you find necessary. You can use this optional guide to help with your planning.

Planning Consideration	Your Notes
Find space for the program. A meeting room with a whiteboard would be ideal. If you can't find space with a whiteboard, find large post it notes or interactive boards to promote group interaction. Confirm availability and reserve, if needed	
Modify recruitment materials to be appropriate for facility	
Make a plan for recruiting/ marketing- including target dates or timeline	
Schedule recruitment or interest/ informational meetings, or plan recruitment strategy	
Establish tentative meeting schedule appropriate to facility	
Set goals for how many collectives the agency will work with (you may have more than one, if desired)	
Set staffing plan Include a backup plan – for example, when a staff turnover occurs, someone goes on leave or vacation, or is out sick Have at least two people trained in PODS so there can be coverage	
Goals/ objectives: If necessary, how will you add these to ISPs? How will you ensure PODS activities are covered in folks' support plans?	
Consent forms, paperwork for onboarding (if needed by agency)	
Seek out additional support/training in areas uncomfortable with. Use the self-paced training resources or consult TU Collaborative	
Ensure billing procedures are in place, if necessary	

Making PODS Compensable

IMPORTANT SIDE NOTE: be sure to prepare appropriate paperwork to ensure compliance with regulations and agency policies. Your agency may require additional paperwork (e.g., consent forms for participating in group activities, etc.). If so, the PODS Facilitators must work with agency supervisor to establish these protocols.

The PODS program may appear to be a program of pure socialization, recreation, and leisure; and you may feel PODS program is not compensable because services with such nature are not compensable. Given that most state Medical Assistance (Medicaid) programs have statements that specifically exclude “Time spent doing, attending, or participating in recreational activities unless tied to specific planned social skill training or other therapeutic interventions related to a person-centered plan goal,” it is understandable that there may be hesitancy to implement PODS related to socialization, recreation, or leisure. The PODS program has been designed to be delivered as a community integration program, aiming to develop planning and problem-solving skills to achieve community integration. Also, this behavioral change can bring about change in clinical status. People with mental health conditions tend to be socially withdrawn, with a consequence of depression and loneliness. PODS program could be a remedy to these conditions via increasing community engagement. In sum, PODS program aims to use leisure activities as a tool for health behavioral change.

For many programs, in order for PODS to be compensable, it needs to be covered in the Individual Rehabilitation Plan or support plan and correspond to specific goals. For these, the facilitator can work with the individual participant to identify participation goals for interest-based community activities. The Facilitator will use the principles of motivational interviewing, navigating participants to identify their interest-based goals. Participants will also identify personally relevant barriers & strengths

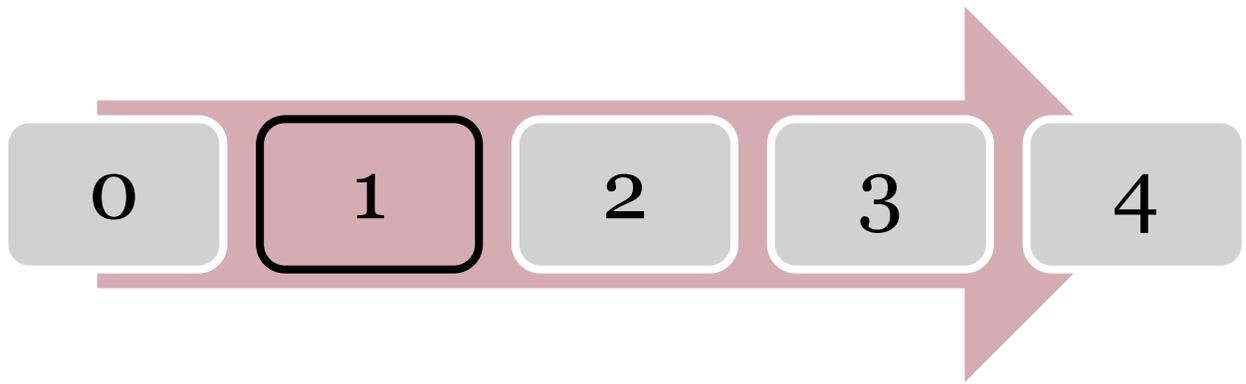
Sample community participation goals can be related (but not limited) to:

- Developing positive natural support systems
- Navigating transportation to access desired community locations or activities
- Managing finances
- Learning how to access resources in order to overcome specific barriers to community participation

Some goals may be related to interactions with others – which might be achieved through engaging in community activities (e.g., they would meet new people during the activity, they can bring family members to the activity). Some individuals may not feel connected with their community, so enhancing the sense of community may be an area to explore. Other goals may be related to the nature of activities, and this may include being exposed to nature, being creative, or engaging in spirituality. Further, goals can be

related to outcomes of community participation, which may include increased physical activity and increased time being out of the house. Ultimately, however, the goal setting process should be driven by the participants, and goals must originate from the participant, rather than the Facilitator.

The PODS goals should align with each participant's individualized plan and goals and include a reference to group services. Occasionally, the Facilitator will help the individual reflect on their behaviors and progress towards desired goals over the past month, as well as develop action steps based on this reflection.



Phase I: Marketing and Recruiting

Once you are ready to run the PODS program, let's start recruiting participants! The PODS Facilitator team should decide how many people to recruit, which depends on billing requirements, agency structure, and more. You can start with as few as 2 people! Recruitment likely will never end. You can bring new people into the program any time.

This phase has flexibility in terms of length and strategies. Each agency is unique and may have ways of recruiting that are not listed in this manual. This is not all inclusive but can be used as a guide for recruiting. There is a sample flyer available that you can modify- or feel free to create your own!

Who is a good fit for PODS?

Participants should be adults (18+) at your agency living with a mental health condition⁵, with a desire to build social connections and increase engagement in the community. While each agency has discretion in terms of inclusion criteria, it is recommended that participants have the ability to move freely around the community. This doesn't mean they DO move freely around the community- however, if someone lives in a residence in which they are not allowed to leave without staff, this may be an extra consideration for if PODS is a good fit. There may need to be extra advocacy work and support.

How should I describe PODS to people?

Try to avoid getting too in-the-weeds about the program. Focus on some of the expected outcomes, something like:

- Supporting you to do more activities in the community
- Supporting you to get out of the house
- Supporting you to build confidence and skills related to community participation
- Promoting independence-NOT staff led programming (Staff can support)
- Supporting you to ...

Quote from participant:

"Just give it a time and just try and see if you like it. If you don't, if you don't have to, you don't have to continue it. But if you like it, you can be something you will be great at because it will help you make more friends than usual."

⁵ This may not apply to some agencies. You may allow people without mental illnesses to join PODS if appropriate. Number of people in collective should not exceed 15.

Quote from facilitators:

“... more importantly, I’ve always told them that it’s directly driven by y’all. I mean, we’re always there available as a safety net. But they are the drivers of it all. I mean, they will determine if it’s gonna have successes or barriers or if it’s going to go great or it’s going to fail.”

What if people seem hesitant?

Hesitancy should be expected- especially if this is different from how your agency normally operates! Change can be hard, and it can be scary.

Encourage people to come check out the meeting(s) and emphasize they don’t have to commit long-term. Talk to people 1:1 about their goals and dreams and explore how PODS can support in these areas. Explore WHY people are scared/nervous- make a plan to discuss/address these. Involve other staff in recruiting people. Once people are on board with PODS, encourage THEM to reach out to their peers. Word of mouth can be a great tool.

Potential recruitment options

You may choose to just recruit individuals at your agency, or you may choose to recruit externally.

- Contacting specific agency consumers
 - Case managers, peer specialists, or other providers may encourage their clients to engage/ recommend they engage
- Presenting information to patient councils, clubhouses, drop-in centers, or support groups
- Posting flyers or sending flyers to consumers
- Hosting information sessions
- Guest speaking at events/groups to provide info about PODS
- Encouraging word of mouth
- Posting or sharing on social media

Quote from Facilitator:

“So, I think that was a challenge figuring out how to kind of jump in ... so, I think that, you know, it was just talking to the people at our site-based psych rehab program, just talking about what [PODS] is. I think [PODS] was kind of hard concept to explain a little bit. And so, we just kept talking about it and talking about it, which I think took a while because we have 5 days of programming and different people may come on different days. So, we wanted to make sure there was a general understanding. And then we gathered [a collective meeting].”

As the above facilitator quote says, it may take some time for consumers to understand the concept of PODS. Don’t sweat! PODS is indeed different from the typical psychiatric

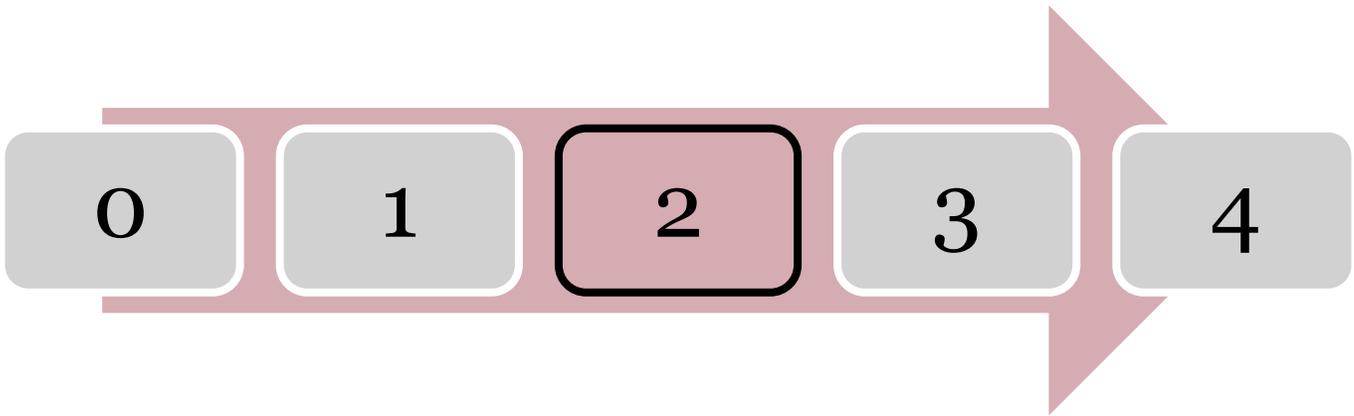
rehabilitation programs, which requires conversation and time to figure out how to make it work for your agency.

Sample Recruitment Information Sheet

We have developed an information sheet that can be used to assist with recruitment. You can modify this to fit your agency- feel free to make any changes you want to! This is on the next page. Feel free to modify within the manual and then print that page individually or copy/paste it into a separate word document. This document could also be used in an orientation or information meeting about PODS. You can find this in the appendix.

Sample Recruitment Flyer

We have also developed a flyer that can be used to assist with recruitment. You do not have to use this. You are welcome to create your own or edit to make it work for your agency. **You can find this in the appendix.**



Phase 2: Onboarding

Your initial group of participants have identified that they want to join! Let's get started. The purpose of phase 2 is to establish positive group dynamics within the collective. The length of this phase is dependent on the group dynamics that emerge. Please note that this phase may take more than two collective meetings- and that's ok! Each group will likely be different.

During this phase, the main component is Collective meetings. The following sections will focus on the components, including 'how to' guides and additional information.

Overview of the process for Phase 2 PODS activities

This may take a different amount of time for each agency. The general steps are outlined here. These can happen over a few meetings. These are all included in more detail in the session guides, but here is an overview as another view.

- As a collective:
 - Introduce the program
 - Emphasize independence of program
 - Complete ice breakers, get to know each other
 - Establish tentative collective agreement
 - Lay the foundation for out-of-group communication
 - One option is to create a sign-up sheet with contact info- everyone can take a picture of it when completed
 - Another option is to have someone create the group text and have everyone text their name
 - Complete TUCP
 - Review TUCP, discuss desired pods/activities

The next pages contain collective meeting outlines based on this process. You can follow these but be sure to focus more on meeting your clients where they are rather than sticking rigidly to these session plans.

Phase 2 Collective Meetings

We have included four session outlines for phase 2 collective meetings. You may need to meet additional times (or it may take you less time) in order to develop your pods- if this happens, no worries! Future collective meetings during this phase should continue to focus on figuring out group interests and empowering participants to make decisions about community participation. Remember, it's ok for the group to plan some type of community participation to try new things and then later break out into specific pods. These collective meetings may occur within the structure you already have in place for group meetings (e.g., weekly if you already offer group services which meet weekly) or you can schedule these at a different frequency. We recommend meeting weekly or bi-weekly at the start of the program to maintain momentum, before then decreasing the frequency if desired later in the program.

First Phase 2 Collective Meeting

Length of time: 60 minutes⁶

Pre-Session: Compile worksheets. Pick an ice breaker to use!

Materials:

- Temple University Community Participation Measure (TUCP)
- Outside communication information
- Optional: any ice breaker materials you need
- Whiteboard, chalk board, or post it board

Main purpose:

- Introduction to PODS- answer any questions & clear up any misunderstandings
- Ice breakers & rapport building
- TUCP completion
- Organize outside communication

Content	Process
Welcome & introductions	Facilitator welcomes everyone to the session! The PODS Facilitators will ask the participant why they wanted to join the PODS program. The Facilitator can briefly share a story of their own community participation accomplishments and how connections with others had played a role.
Ice Breaker	Facilitator will implement an ice breaker of their choosing.
Program overview/ introduction	Facilitator should introduce what the PODS program is- emphasize how participant-driven the program is. Include overview of pods VS collective.
Temple University Community Participation Measure (TUCP)	Facilitator can next facilitate group completion of the TUCP. This community participation measure will help to identify areas of community participation that are important to participants as well as identify areas that participants would like to do more. The results can be used later to guide a discussion with the participant about possible pods they might want to join, as well as to assist goal development of the participant.
Pod introductions	The facilitator will introduce interest-based subgroups, named “pods,” and present some ideas about pods that participants might be interested in. Broad-based participation areas will be covered, such as gardening, sports, art and craft, family-based leisure, faith, volunteering, community advocacy, education, and employment. *Use chalkboard, whiteboard, or large post it notes

⁶ Dependent on billing structure, this may last longer than 60 minutes if desired.

<p>Outside communication</p>	<p>Facilitator should share that participants may want to create a way to communicate outside of groups. Group members can discuss the best way to coordinate this. As a group, identify etiquette related to this outside communication.</p> <p>*Seek approval for signup sheet- name email, number, signature- facilitator should keep originals and others can take a picture</p>
<p>Closing</p>	<p>Identify the next collective meeting date/time and what you'll do in the next meeting</p> <p>Identify action items</p> <p>Discuss ways to support follow through (e.g., do folks want to write this on paper? In their phone? Need a reminder?)</p> <p>Thank everyone for attending!</p>

Second Phase 2 Collective Meeting

Length of time: 60 minutes⁷
Pre-Session: Compile worksheets.
Materials:

- Completed Temple University Community Participation Measure (TUCP)
- Optional: any ice breaker materials you need
- Chalkboard, whiteboard, or post it boards

Main purpose:

- Review TUCP
- Develop collective agreement
- Identify potential pods
- Set initial community participation goals

Content	Process
Welcome & introductions	Facilitator welcomes everyone to the session! The Facilitator can briefly share a story of their own community participation accomplishments and how connections with others had played a role.
Ice Breaker	Facilitator will implement an ice breaker of their choosing.
Program overview/ introduction	Facilitator should do a reminder overview of what the PODS program is- emphasize how participant-driven the program is. Include overview of pods VS collective.
Figure out the “WHY”	Facilitator can use motivational interviewing to inquire about each individual’s WHY for joining pods. Lead group discussion and use board to track.
Collective agreement	During the group meeting, participants will discuss the benefits of having a collective agreement. The Facilitator will lead discussion, using the collective agreement page as a guide- to develop a collective agreement. As the program progresses, participants and Facilitator can edit these with group consensus. This is a general list of ideas. The collective can have a completely different list. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. I will respect the privacy of each person here. ii. I will respect everyone regardless of their personal beliefs and backgrounds iii. I will follow through on my commitments iv. I will work hard to withhold judgment for others

⁷ Dependent on billing structure, this may last longer than 60 minutes if desired.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v. If someone needs time away, if and when they return, I will welcome them with open arms. vi. If someone makes a mistake that impacts me, I will work to forgive them while still respecting my own boundaries vii. I will support others, but I am not responsible for them. I will accept support from others, but they are not responsible for me. viii. I will communicate using “I” statements” ix. I will not speak over others during discussions. x. I will take co-ownership over this group. xi. When I communicate with my peers outside of groups, I will follow social media/ communication guidelines.
<p>Review Temple University Community Participation Measure (TUCP) and explore activity interests</p>	<p>Review the TUCP from the first session! Start to explore potential shared interests. These can be more specific than items on the TUCP</p> <p>Participants will discuss what they would like to do. If they cannot think of it easily, then they can start talking about activities they are currently enjoying or enjoyed in the past. Write every activity on the board and keep adding. You can have folks write their top activities on a board and others can tally when their desired activity is already on the board, or you can go around the circle and verbally identify interests.</p> <p>Be flexible in how you approach this!</p>
<p>Pod identification (If applicable)</p>	<p>If it gets to a point where folks have identified pods to join, have them finalize these pods. Write down who wants to be in each pod. If your group doesn't get to this point, wait until the next few meetings for this.</p>
<p>Meeting closure</p>	<p>Identify the next collective meeting date/time and what you'll do in the next meeting</p> <p>Identify action items</p> <p>Discuss ways to support follow through (e.g., do folks want to write this on paper? In their phone? Need a reminder?)</p> <p>Thank everyone for attending!</p>

Phase 2 Materials

The next pages include phase 2-3 materials. This includes:

Examples of community activities for pods

Temple University Community Participation Measure (PODS Version)

Goal Planning Worksheet

Introducing the pods: Examples of Community Activities

Book clubs (traditional or silent)	Theater: concerts, drama, musical
Hobby clubs: improv group, knitting/crocheting group, photography, cooking, comedy/stand-up	Arts, crafts, wood working
Community gardens	Games: Board game, card game, virtual reality, drone,
Going to a restaurant/coffee shop	Volunteering: Animal shelter, soup kitchen, civic/political activity,
Walking groups	GED prep classes
Fitness groups: yoga, Zumba, dance, running/jogging	Computer skills classes
Sports: Adult sport leagues, tennis, pickle ball, bowling, martial arts,	Language classes (English, or other languages)
Going to a place of worship (church, synagogue, mosque, temple, etc.)	Attending college
Singing: Choir, rap, karaoke	Attending vocational/technical school
Outdoor activities: hiking, camping, canoeing/kayaking, mountain biking, birdwatching	Classes for life skills: cooking, financial management, home management
Hunting and fishing	Fan clubs: Athletes, idols,
Seeking employment	Family-focused leisure: play dates,

In our pilot agencies, there were a wide range of pods! Here are some examples:

Silent book club: participants met in the community (e.g., library, coffee shops) and read their own books while spending time with each other out of their homes.

Cooking groups: participants met at the agency in their kitchen, in people’s own homes, or in people’s apartment complex’s community kitchens to make food together. They picked meals ahead of time and decided who was bringing what. A future goal is to donate the food they make to community organizations in need or as thank you (e.g., a fire station)

Volunteering: participants got together to volunteer at food banks, homeless shelters,

Shopping: participants walked from their agency to local shops during breaks

Movie theaters: participants met regularly to watch movies

General group activities: some agencies chose not to break out into pods right away. Some took turns choosing things to do to try different things out and then later broke out into specific activity-based pods.

Temple University Community Participation Measure- Pods Program Version⁸

PARTICIPANT NAME: _____

DATE: _____

QUESTION 1: I am going to ask you about different activities you might have done **during the past 30 days** without a staff person going with you (i.e., someone from an agency or program you are in who is paid to help you). Please indicate the **number of days** during the **past 30 days** you have participated in each activity outside of your home without a staff person going with you.

QUESTION 2: Do you do this activity, **Enough, Not Enough, or Too Much?** (circle the correct response)

INTERVIEWER NOTE: If respondent has NOT done an activity in the past 30 days, the number of days would be 0. See the Library example below.

- If respondent did NOT want to do the activity in the past 30 days, indicate: “Enough.”
- If respondent wanted to go to the Library but did the activity 0 times during the past 30 days select: “Not Enough.”

QUESTION 3: Is this activity important to you? (circle the correct response)

Example:

A. How many days during the past 30 days did you do the following activities without a program staff person going with you:	B. Number of Days (without a staff person)	C. Do you do this activity?			D. Is this activity important to you?	
		Enough	Not Enough	Too Much	Yes	No
9. Go to a library	<u>0</u> (# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
24. Entertain friends in your home or visit friends in their homes.	<u>5</u> (# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0

⁸ Facilitator note: If a participant has not left the house in the past 30 days, after completing this, reflect on past experiences leaving the house. You can still look at items that they don't do enough of that are important to them. Example: 5 years ago, what were some of your interests?

A. How many days during the past 30 days did you do the following activities without a program staff person going with you:	B. Number of Days (without a staff person)	C. Do you do this activity?			D. Is this activity important to you?	
		Enough	Not Enough	Too Much	Yes	No
1. Go shopping for pleasure or entertainment (e.g., at a grocery store, convenience store, shopping center, mall, other retail store, flea market, or garage sale.)	(# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
2. Go to a restaurant or coffee shop.	(# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
3. Go to a church, synagogue, or place of worship.	(# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
4. Go to a movie theater.	(# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
5. Go to a park or recreation center.	(# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
6. Go to a theater to watch a play, concert, dance, or other similar type of cultural event (not a movie theater).	(# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
7. Go to a zoo or botanical garden/arboretum.	(# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
8. Go to a library or museum.	(# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
9. Go to <u>watch</u> a sports event (including bowling, tennis, basketball, etc.).	(# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0

A. How many days during the past 30 days did you do the following activities without a program staff person going with you:	B. Number of Days (without a staff person)	C. Do you do this activity?			D. Is this activity important to you?	
		Enough	Not Enough	Too Much	Yes	No
10. Go to a gym, health or exercise club, or pool, for leisure and recreation.	_____ (# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
11. Engage in an organized sport (baseball, basketball, soccer game) or other organized physical activity (e.g., exercise class) outside the home.	_____ (# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
12. Play games (e.g., chess, card, online gaming) outside the home, such as at a friend's house.	_____ (# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
13. Play games, including online gaming, at your own home where you play with others (they may be physically present in your home or online).	_____ (# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
14. Go to a barber shop, beauty salon, nail salon, or spa for enjoyment (i.e., you do it because you enjoy it and not because you simply need a haircut).	_____ (# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
15. Attend or engage in civic or political activities or organizations (e.g., neighborhood watch or advocacy groups) or professional associations (e.g., conference or union meeting).	_____ (# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
16. Go to a social group in the community. For example, a book club, knitting group, or other group activity with people who have similar interests as you do.	_____ (# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0

A. How many days during the past 30 days did you do the following activities without a program staff person going with you:	B. Number of Days (without a staff person)	C. Do you do this activity?			D. Is this activity important to you?	
		Enough	Not Enough	Too Much	Yes	No
17. Work for pay. This could be full- or part-time work.	_____ (# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
18. Go to school to earn a degree or certificate (for example: GED, adult education, college, vocational or technical school, job training).	_____ (# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
19. Take a class for leisure or life skills (for example, classes for cooking, art crafts, ceramics, and photography).	_____ (# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
20. Participate in volunteer activities (i.e., helping others or an organization without being paid).	_____ (# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0
21. Go to a community fair, block party, community clean- up day, or other community event or activity.	_____ (# of Days)	1	2	3	1	0

Additional Questions

1. How often do you access public transportation?
2. What forms of transportation do you typically use? How reliable is it?
3. How often do you leave your house?
4. How often do you run errands?
5. How comfortable are you with money management?
6. How often do you socialize?

Goal Planning Worksheet

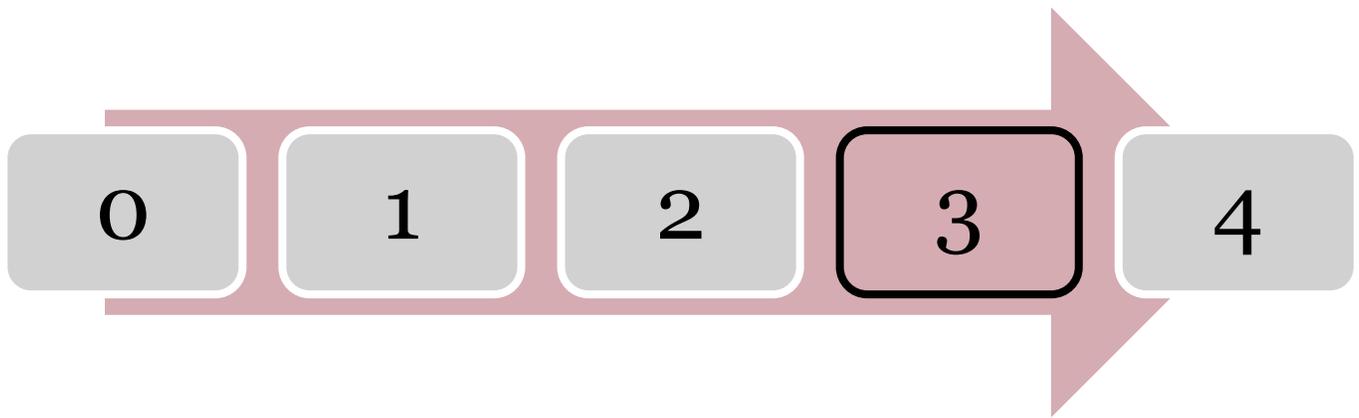
Name:

Date:

Directions:

1. Look at what you are interested in on the TUCP. Choose 1-3 activities that you would like to focus on during the intervention. Write these in the “My Participation Goals” column.
2. Next, use the internet to search for possible destinations that you can travel to. Write the name of the destination and the address in the “Possible Destinations” column.
3. In the last column, write down a few words describing why you want to go to your chosen places. Refer to the example.

My participation goals	Possible destinations	How this relates to my recovery goals...
<i>Example: Go to the gym</i>	<i>YMCA-1724 Christian St Planet Fitness-2359 W Ave</i>	<i>I want to learn how to access public transportation in order to go to the gym. I also want to cope with stress by working out at the gym. Additionally, I hope that I can talk to the front desk attendant to check in and start to feel more comfortable communicating with strangers.</i>



Phase 3: Group Development

The purpose of phase 3 is to develop the initial pods. This phase is 'complete' when each participant expresses that they are content with the pod they have chosen to join, and each pod has engaged in one instance of community participation. Please note- these pods do NOT have to be final. Pods are not set in stone and can shift at any point in time. New participants can also join after this phase is complete- if new people join, be sure to complete the TUCP with them and follow the same process of introductions, gauging interests, and choosing pods.

During this phase, 1 Pod community participation (either with facilitator or independently) will be the main component.

The following sections will focus on each of these components, including 'how to' guides and additional information.

Overview of the process for Phase 3 PODS activities

This may take a different amount of time for each agency. The general steps are outlined here. These can happen over a few meetings. These are all included in more detail in the session guides, but here is an overview as another view.

- As a collective:
 - Continue discussing participants' activity interests – use enough time, possibly a several collective meetings, to get to know everyone's activity interests.
 - From the collective, break out into pods (smaller groups)
- As pods
 - Break out into smaller groups
 - Discuss why each person is interested in that activity
 - Set up group communication for the pod (e.g., group chat for that specific pod?)
 - Discuss potential group roles for the pod
 - Set a goal as a pod (e.g., what do they want to do, how often, etc.)?
 - Plan first community participation!
 - Use the pod planning worksheet to discuss community resources and potential barriers. This can be a time to identify what they want to take advantage of as well as ways to work around barriers.
 - Before leaving collective meeting, each pod should determine next steps
- Continue meeting on a regular basis as a collective, with pods engaging in the community separately as desired

The next pages contain collective meeting outlines based on this process. You can follow these but be sure to focus more on meeting your clients where they are rather than sticking rigidly to these session plans.

Each pod should go out into the community one time during phase 3! They can go into the community with or without the facilitator, depending on the participants' level of comfort and confidence.

Pod community participation without Facilitator

Here are some facilitation tips if a pod (or pods) within your collective choose to go into the community independently at this point!

- Help talk through the outing with the pod before they go. Ask them probing questions (using motivational interviewing techniques) if you notice a gap in their planning efforts.
- Help them think through setting themselves up for success/ following through with their plans.
- Encourage folks to write down these plans and share with the group.
- Encourage open discussion around things they're excited about and things they may be nervous about. Brainstorm ways to handle things they're nervous about and validate their feelings.
- Think about your own experiences with community participation and share these when appropriate.
- Make sure to facilitate discussion about WHY folks want to do these activities to help maintain motivation.
- Follow up with the group before their scheduled activity- share words of encouragement and help confirm their plans.
- Follow up with the group after their scheduled activity- celebrate their efforts!
 - If things didn't go well, or the group struggled to follow through with their plan, try not to get discouraged- have open discussion with folks about what happened and brainstorm ways to have more success in the future. Maybe they want to slightly change their goal and start smaller! Remember to focus on the 'why.'

Pod community participation with Facilitator

Here are some facilitation tips if the facilitator joins the pod for their community participation. Remember to avoid planning FOR the participants and instead plan WITH the participants. It is because participants making plans, executing the plan, and solving problems on-the-go would contribute to achieving the individual outcomes such as identifying community resources, navigating local transportation, and overcoming barriers for community participation.

Please note: if a facilitator goes out with participants, they should consistently remind participants that this is temporary. Discuss ways to build confidence without facilitator.

Before the community participation:

- Use the pod planning worksheet from the pod group session
 - Follow the pod planning worksheet, even if it's not perfect
- Check in with participants to ensure they know where/when to meet

During the community participation:

- Let participants take the lead!
- Ask prompting questions as opposed to directing
 - Example: 'which bus gets us closest to our destination?' as opposed to 'Let's take the Green Bus because it gets us closest to our destination.'
- Concentrate on strengths and discuss barriers
 - Be sure to support folks in navigating barriers, as opposed to you removing hiccups/ barriers
- Be there to support, but don't overdo it

After the community participation:

- Celebrate learning experiences/hiccups
 - Discuss how this is how you learn
 - This can also be a bonding experience to building friendships. Shared experiences/ laughing off mistakes.
 - Go back to their WHY in joining PODS
- Document!! Document required info but also write notes about pod dynamics.
- Take note of anything that could be addressed in collective meeting
 - Both positive and learning experiences!

○

Quotes from facilitators:

“I really do think that “[PODS facilitators] need to let [PODS participants] do this stuff” is completely accurate and that’s how it should be. ... I do think that, that is an issue that a lot of people have run into, which is, “okay, how do I be hands-off”, which is so funny because we are all trained to be very hands-on, you know? And so, whenever you’re doing PODS, it’s kind of going against that training that you received. ... the hardest thing for us to do is to be hands-off.”

“Being ‘hands-off’ involves being there when needed. But it’s nice not being there, if that makes sense, because in this way they can flourish on their own. They could have some failures on their own and they can figure out how to pick each other up along the way.”

Quote from participant:

“There’re a couple of people involved that don’t have transportation, but there’s a couple of people that do so they can give rides. Trying to participate in PODS has produced some of these problems. But it’s useful that we can try to find ways to solve them, to do what we want to do.”

First Phase 3 Collective Meeting

Length of time: 60 minutes⁹

Pre-Session: Compile worksheets.

Materials:

- Completed Temple University Community Participation Measure (TUCP)
- collective agreement
- Optional: any materials needed for ice breaker

Main purpose:

- Finalize pods
- Begin planning community participation

Content	Process
Welcome & introductions	Facilitator welcomes everyone to the session! The Facilitator can briefly share a different story of their own community participation accomplishments and how connections with others had played a role.
Optional: Ice Breaker	Facilitator can implement an ice breaker of their choosing.
Review collective agreement	Review developed collective agreement
Explore activity interests and Pod development	If not done in the previous meeting, continue group discussion about activity interests and potential pods. (As needed, a several collective meetings can be used for this step) Discuss what they would like to do. If they cannot think of it easily, then they can start talking about activities they are currently enjoying or enjoyed in the past. Write every activity on the board and keep adding.
Pod breakouts	Once pods have been chosen (if this happens in this meeting), break out into those small groups. Write down names of who is in each pod and encourage groups to establish a group chat for their pod or share contact information. Encourage each pod to discuss WHY they want to pursue that area of participation.
Discuss pod planning process	Discuss how collective meetings will include opportunities for planning each pod's community participation! Have pods share ideas of their planning guide- then potentially show planning guide that pods can use.

⁹ Dependent on billing structure, this may last longer than 60 minutes if desired.

	Encourage pods to begin planning their first community participation. Pop around to different pods as they are planning their participation.
Meeting closure	<p>Identify the next collective meeting date/time and what you'll do in the next meeting (have pods established their first community participation plan? Will they continue planning in the next collective meeting?)</p> <p>Have participants identify action items/ their next steps</p> <p>Discuss ways to support follow through (e.g., do folks want to write this on paper? In their phone? Need a reminder?)</p> <p>Thank everyone for attending!</p>

Second Phase 3 Collective Meeting

Length of time: 60 minutes¹⁰

Pre-Session: Compile worksheets.

Materials:

- Completed Temple University Community Participation Measure (TUCP)
- collective agreement
- Pod planning worksheet

Main purpose:

- Finalize pods
- Begin planning community participation

Content	Process
Welcome	Facilitator welcomes everyone to the session Ask someone to read collective agreement Ice breaker of facilitator's choice
Pod breakouts	Instruct folks to join their pods in small group breakouts
Pod Comfort Agreement	Facilitate development of pod-specific comfort agreement, if desired by participants.
Group roles discussion	Facilitator will discuss different roles that go into groups Start by broadly facilitating discussion about different groups and roles that may go into it. Ask for participant input. After discussing general group roles, work with participants to identify potential pod roles. Emphasize that these are voluntary, and it is a learning process, and that perfection is not expected. Discuss mutual accountability. These roles are not pre-determined, should not be assigned, and are not mandatory. Instead, you should have a conversation with participants about what roles may go into sustaining a group. Potential roles may include (but are not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Treasurer: keeps track of pods materials and costs of activities• Secretary: takes meeting notes

¹⁰ Dependent on billing structure, this may last longer than 60 minutes if desired.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spokesperson: shares pods updates with collective • Mentor: if someone new joins the pod, this person is their point of contact/welcomes them to the pod
Pod goals	Develop goals for the pod- how often to meet, what they want to do, etc. Decide as a group how to keep track of these goals.
Pod Planning worksheet	Use the pod planning worksheet to discuss community resources and potential barriers. This can be a time to identify what they want to take advantage of as well as ways to work around barriers.
Facilitator check in with each pod	While pods are in their small groups planning their participation, pop around to the different pods to check in with them and see how their discussions are progressing. Ask pods if they are comfortable going out for the first time solo or if they would like facilitator to join them. Make note and follow up.
Come back to large group!	Have all pods rejoin as a large group. Encourage pods to share what they have planned so far. Remind folks to try not comparing yourself to other pods.
Next steps	<p>Identify the next collective meeting date/time and what you'll do in the next meeting</p> <p>Have participants identify action items/ their next steps</p> <p>Discuss ways to support follow through (e.g., do folks want to write this on paper? In their phone? Need a reminder?)</p> <p>Thank everyone for attending!</p>

Quote from a participant:

“Well, [PODS] differs [from typical psych rehab programs] because with PODS, you can do what you want to do. Usually like in psych rehab, it's structured like they give you information and like topics to talk about during groups. PODS, it's you form your own, you form your own like meeting and like you go to places that you want to go to outside of group.”

Phase 3 Materials

Pod Planning Sheet

Name of the pod: _____

Names of the pod members:

Activity interest: _____

Where are locations that pod members can engage in this activity?

Address: _____

Ways to get there: _____

Does this activity cost money?

Do you need equipment/material? What kind of equipment? What is the cost? Where can you get it? _____

Do you need to do paperwork to begin the activity (e.g., volunteer application)?

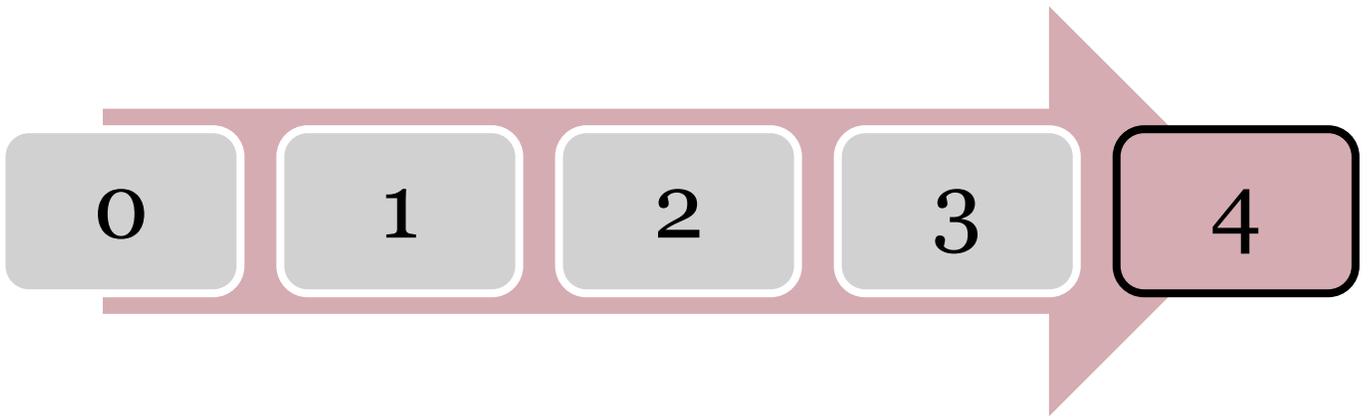
What goals do we want to set as a pod?

Barriers to Participation and Strategies to Overcome

There are a lot of things you might want to prepare for before engaging in a community activity! Different people may want or need to prepare for different things, based on needs and preferences. Knowing what is hard or challenging to each pod member, or **barriers**, can help the pod overcome those obstacles as a group with just a bit of pre-planning. Discuss among the pod members and list them in the left column.

With the group, come up with one way you could plan ahead to overcome each barrier you listed. You can use the table below to write down the pod’s strategies so that you’ll always have them on hand when participating in the community!

Barriers to participation	Strategies to Overcome the Barriers
Example: Participant is low on money, but the pod wants to go to a museum or see an art exhibit	Example: find a day with discounted admissions



Phase 4: Group Support

This phase will be the majority of time with the PODS project.

There is no set timeline for how long everything should take or for how long the program should last. The program should meet the needs and wants of program participants, so during this phase check in with what is working for participants.

Remember that new people can join PODS, so think about ways to incorporate new members into the program.

During this phase, participants will begin by meeting with the entire collective. The collective can increase or decrease the frequency of these meetings as needed, with consensus from facilitators and participants. Each pod will be engaging in activities of their choosing outside of the collective meeting. The facilitator can also meet 1:1 to check in with each participant on an as-needed basis, if needed. Additionally, the collective will be engaging with each other via a social media platform or texting if desired by the agency.

During this phase, there will be three main components:

- a) Pod-Driven Community Participation
- b) Outside Communication
- c) Collective meetings

Self-Directed Pod Community Participation

During this phase, each pod will begin meeting to engage in the community based on their pod interest and self-determined goals.

The facilitator can randomly choose one pod occasionally (potentially each month or a different frequency, pending facilitator and participant preferences) to support and participate with the pod in the community. These shared experiences will enhance their connections with the pod, facilitate further discussion of pod goals, and provide context for additional resources and support they might offer to the pod. Ultimately, this experience will allow the facilitator to offer more effective verbal persuasion to enhance the group's collective efficacy.

Outside Communication

We encourage the collective (and individual pods) to identify a form of out-of-group communication platform that allows participants to communicate between meetings while maintaining privacy. Especially as meetings decrease in frequency, outside communication and check-ins may increase. Agencies may use a social media platform or could embody the Strive for Five Model¹¹ using phone calls. There is a lot of flexibility here!

Participants at most agencies simply create a group chat so participants can text each other. You may also use social media, such as discord or a private Facebook group.

¹¹ Strive for give model: Participants may be encouraged to call five other participants each month to talk. These discussions are meant to be informal and help increase connections between participants. Things they may discuss could include their pets, plans they've recently made, TV shows, movies, books, or podcasts they're recently started, or anything going on in their life.

Collective meetings

This is a continuation from phase 3. During phase 4, these meetings may occur in the same structure as other groups (e.g., weekly) or less frequently, at the discretion of the Facilitator and with input from participants.

The typical collective meeting can run approximately 60 minutes and has four sections:

- a) Group check-in
- b) Pod Updates
- c) Pod Breakouts
- d) Social connections discussion

A: Group Check-in

At the beginning of the session, the Facilitator will facilitate a group check-in. This is when they can review collective comfort agreement and check in with how everyone is doing prior to the session. This can be structured however facilitators and participants see fit.

B: Pods Updates

During this time, the collective will meet as a large group together. Pods will take turns talking to the collective about progress they may have made in their desired participation area. Pod members may share pictures of their activities and what it felt like engaging in the activity, which may include stories about enjoyment, improved relationships among the members and with community members, and challenges they encountered and how they overcame them. Sharing their experiences with other pods in the collective is intended to enhance collective efficacy of other pod members through vicarious experience. During the meeting, the Facilitator should continue to use the principles of motivational interviewing. For example, the Facilitator should help with celebrating successes and overcoming barriers, which can boost pod members' self-efficacy. Also, the Facilitator should be empathetic when things did not go as planned, so that pod members do not feel as if they are letting others down. Reflective listening is key. During this, the group can also discuss whether participants are following the comfort agreement in their community activities.

C: Pod Breakouts

After all the presentations are done, each pod will meet and discuss plans for further engagement in the community. Pods may use Pod Breakouts Form to guide their time.

D: Social Connections Discussion

At each collective meeting, a short discussion on a topic related to friendship can be led by the facilitator. The topics are informed by Fehr's friendship theory¹² and Vassilev and colleagues' collective efficacy theory¹³, which includes reciprocity, sharing resources, self-disclosure, support, trust, resistance to stigma, and continued commitment. The discussion can run up to 30 minutes, with the facilitator presenting the topic for 10 minutes and collective discussion for 20 minutes. Participants will also be encouraged to submit topics that they want to learn about. These could be topics that emerge during their time in the PODS (e.g., communicating with a group, overcoming negative group dynamics) or general topics they want to learn about. Examples of topics include¹⁴:

- Empathy
- What is friendship?
- Social skills
- Fun and relaxation
- Maintaining friendships
- Self-disclosure
- Conflict and anger

These are not required to occur; this can be an occasional part of meetings, and if it does not fit the vibe of the meetings participants are aiming for, that is ok.

¹² Fehr, B. (2008). Friendship formation. In A., Wenzel & J. Harvey (Eds.), *Handbook of relationship initiation*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.

¹³ Vassilev, I., Band, R., Kennedy, A., James, E., & Rogers, A. (2019). The role of collective efficacy in long-term condition management: A meta synthesis. *Health & social care in the community*, 27(5), e588-e603.

¹⁴ Topics will come from Fehr's Friendship Processes (1995), Perry, Pescosolido, and Borgatti's *Egocentric Network Analysis* book (2018), as well as other sources

Pod Breakouts Form

This form can be useful so anyone who misses meetings can go back and look at meeting notes and see what they missed!

Today's Date:	Pod Name:
Members Present:	
What have we done since last collective Meeting	
What do we want to accomplish today during Pod breakout?	
What community resources will we be using/accessing next?	
What are some potential barriers/how can we overcome them?	1 2 3
What did we do today?	
What do we need to ask staff about/ for?	
What are our next steps?	

Outcomes of PODS – from testimonies

Testimony from facilitators:

“I do have an individual who has been doing their pod by themselves, which is really cool. They go to, like, a board game night that happens monthly at one of the libraries here and they go by themselves. ... and so, I am seeing in certain individuals more drive to go out and do things ... Even some of them are going out and doing stuff more often. So, I think that a broad sense of just going outside and going and doing things has kind of started because of this overall kind of talk of pods and everything else.”

Testimonies from participants:

“Going to the bowling with [other PODS members] and my fellow members, it was a good experience, and it was a good time. And making my friendships stronger with [other PODS members], it was really good bonding with them and having a good experience with them at the arcade. And I would like to do that again. Like, it was a really fun time. And that's why I like to plan these activities and to build my bonds and friendships stronger.”

“I used to, like, I was shy to get out in the community. But, ever since the PODS, I got out of the community more with friends, hanged out with them. I used to stay in the home, not going outside to hang out.”



PODS IN PRACTICE



Examples of Implementation

Site-Based Psych Rehab: Day-long Meetings, Officers, and Fundraising

One site-based psychiatric rehabilitation agency in a rural area of Pennsylvania developed formal officers after roughly 6 months of meetings. As a group, they identified positions required for a group to function independently (President, VP, Secretary, etc.). These officers organized group meetings which occurred once a month and lasted multiple hours (all day).

Officers: They had 1 president, 1 vice president, a secretary (& backup), and a treasurer (& backup). The officers met prior to each collective meeting to establish an agenda, and they made sure notes were posted where anyone could review them after the meetings. They keep a calendar with scheduled PODS outings and activities posted in a public space in the agency with information about how to connect with those individuals to join.

Fundraising: Finances were a big barrier for most of their participants, so they decided to develop fundraisers. The members created a system in which they clearly defined how participation in the fundraiser equated to a certain amount of money earned to go to that individual. They made and sold sandwiches to start, only selling to people within the agency. It then expanded to making and selling other types of food, as well as purchasing and re-selling treats made by community members. They began selling to people outside their agency as well. They have treasurers who maintain each person's account, and participants can utilize these funds to cover their desired community participation activities.

Site-based psych rehab program: Shifting Away from Collective Meetings

Another site-based psychiatric rehabilitation agency hosted regular collective meetings- started biweekly, then shifting to monthly, before no longer hosting regularly. This change occurred as participants began independently doing community activities. As they no longer hosted collective meetings, PODS check-ins began occurring informally as needed during wider agency community meetings and other group meetings. The facilitator plans to begin hosting collective meetings again when new participants express the desire to join or existing participants express the desire for more regular meetings.

Mobile-psych rehab (run by peer specialists)- Budgeting and “Chuck it”

An agency which offered mobile psych rehab services, facilitated by a peer specialist, identified a community space in which they could host collective meetings- a local library which has a private meeting space. The group decided to all go bowling on

discount night, after calling and learning about the options in the community. They became regulars in the bowling alley, building connections with other bowling alley patrons outside their own group. They leaned in on comfort agreements and used this as a base to come back to and navigate group conflict or challenges- since the peer specialist didn't go to the bowling alley normally, they used collective meetings to debrief and work through these challenges. The facilitator checked in with one person who expressed he wanted to go but didn't follow through- he learned that the person couldn't afford to pay the couple of dollars to go bowling and was embarrassed, so he didn't go. The peer specialist and participant spoke about it, and it turned out the person could afford it but was struggling to budget and set the money aside. The peer specialist introduced an envelope system to the participant, and he began using it and it helped him afford to go bowling most months. They also spoke about other ways to connect at the group outings even if he can't bowl- so on some months when he couldn't afford to bowl, he still went with the group and hung out at the bowling alley.

Additionally, the group had a common phrase they started saying together, which was "chuck it" (imagine a different word in place of chuck). The group used this to encourage themselves and others to get out of their comfort zone and try something, saying "chuck it, let's give it a shot" recognizing they weren't happy with their current activity levels and sharing a desire to switch things up and be brave in the face of risk.

Site-Based Psych Rehab: On Site Activities with Community Participation

This group had a mix of folks who could get out into the community and those who couldn't, initially. They decided to have a mix of community activity pod outings while also planning once-a-month game days on the site of their program. Participants still planned everything, and staff did not facilitate the games, but this allowed the group to build connections with everyone and keep participants motivated to participate even when they couldn't get into the wider community.

They also started to offer hybrid collective meetings to navigate challenges of not having overlapping schedules of when people would be on site.

Group Homes: Slow & Steady

An agency with group homes implemented PODS and residents expressed that they do not want to go do things without staff. Rather than forcing this, staff began by co-participating with residents. They slowly worked on building confidence and promoting independence when possible. For example, rather than taking company vehicles, as a group they took public transportation so residents could learn the bus system. Then, staff would go with residents out in the community but would then remain in one spot while residents explored without staff.

General Troubleshooting and Frequently Asked Questions

Community participation is unique to each person. As challenges arise, be creative and empower participants to try different strategies. Here are some common challenges folks have experienced. Please feel free to try some of these troubleshooting tips OR feel free to be creative in your own ideas.

Breaking barriers

PODS participants will face many challenges and barriers along the way. Although your role is not solving the problems for them, a solid understanding of how you can facilitate problem-solving is helpful for facilitators. Below are the summary of typical community participation barriers and the strategies you might be able to use.

Barrier	Strategies PODS can address
Limited finances	Help participants figure out strategies for finding discount days; finding free/cheap activities (e.g., community fairs; budgeting discussion in collective meetings)
Limited access to transportation	Hybrid model for collective meetings; pod members sharing transportation; education re: transportation options
Limited knowledge of community resources	Collective meetings time spent educating on/ exploring community resources
Perceived lack of belonging	Group approach to community participation; discuss in collective meetings to challenge this narrative/ discuss how community is for <i>everyone</i>
Unwelcoming space or community	Partnering with/ meeting with community organizations to discuss welcoming spaces/places
Low self-efficacy for engaging in the community	Maximizing collective efficacy- group together pursues community participation

Helping break out of tradition

PODS may be similar to your approach in your work supporting folks; however, it may be very different. Your agency may typically plan events and outings for participants-

shifting so participants are in the driver's seat can be a tough transition for people sometimes. If this describes your scenario, be sure to explain the rationale to participants- the benefits they can experience when organizing their own community participation. There may be some resistance or discomfort- be sure to support folks through this and remain persistent. This is where it's especially important that folks are choosing areas of community participation that truly matter to them- people are typically more motivated to pursue things they choose for themselves as opposed to goals chosen by someone else. Be patient with yourself and with your participants as you shift this approach.

It feels like we keep hitting walls and we're not getting anywhere!

It can feel frustrating when you (as a facilitator) aren't seeing progress as quickly as you may have hoped. For example, perhaps participants are struggling to break out into groups or are struggling to follow through with their plans. You're definitely not alone in feeling this way!!

Try to approach this with a sense of curiosity. Remember that this is participant driven- meet people where they are and support them as they currently are. Maybe break things down and set smaller goals- re-evaluate if the goals are attainable and what the participant wants to pursue.

My participants started off strong but aren't following through...

This is ok!! This doesn't mean you as a facilitator have done anything wrong. It also doesn't mean the program and/or your participants are doomed, even though it can sometimes feel that way.

Changing our behaviors and trying new things can be difficult.

More often than not, when we see folks disengaging or struggling to follow through with commitments, there are factors contributing that we may not see or hear about directly. For example, participants may be feeling ashamed if they are struggling to pay for PODS-related activities. If you are able to connect with them, you can help them identify ways to work around this (e.g., budgeting, finding discount days, picking a cheaper activity) and discuss ways for them to remain involved.

Work with participants to identify barriers that may be preventing participation- if possible, work with the individual to find ways around that barrier, or strategies that may reduce the barrier to participation. If you and the participant are struggling to figure out ways to overcome this barrier, encourage group problem solving! We as individuals don't know everything, but in a group of people it's likely that someone knows a little more about something and can help by sharing that information, idea, or strategy.

Regardless of the reason for decreased participation, try to use motivational interviewing techniques and help show participants the gap between their goal and their actions. Use your best judgment as a facilitator in how you may best handle this. Other group members can also help encourage folks to come back to the group.

This may take a bit of persistence at first- feel free to express creativity in how you're supporting folks! Also, remember that growth isn't always linear.

Maybe you as a facilitator could provide extra support to help encourage growth. This extra support shouldn't be seen as permanent- gradually plan to decrease any extra support to facilitate independence.

My group is super small! I'm struggling to recruit people!

We have found that new programs can be intimidating for folks to try out at times. Regardless of how many people are in your group (even 2!), it's better to start somewhere than not do anything. Oftentimes things spread via word of mouth, so you can start with small numbers and then more people may join once things get more established and they hear about their peers' experiences with the PODS program. Consider strategies you didn't originally use when recruiting for PODS- check out the marketing and recruiting section for more ideas, but feel free to try alternative methods.

Finding the group hitting a lull?

Ask participants what they want the group to look like. Maybe they want to develop new pods or pursue new areas of community participation. Are there certain skills they want to work on?

Maybe they want to expand their goals and even branch out individually into the community. Perhaps folks can increase their ties and networks outside the collective. Does anyone want to intentionally build friendships with someone in their community workout group? Is there someone at their place of worship they want to invite out to coffee?

Always redirect to the why- if individuals are getting stuck or disinterested or aren't feeling it, bring it back to why they joined to begin with. Encourage fun!

What if my participants don't know where or how to start?

Any place you start is better than not starting at all!

As a collective, maybe you want to rotate through a variety of community participation interests to try new things in the community. If you do this, make a list of potential community activities- then when you meet as a collective, vote to decide on what to

pursue next and then plan! This can help folks decide what pods they want to break out into. It can also be helpful to remind participants that they are not locked into any specific pod. They can try something for a while and then switch to a new activity. They may not like everything they try, and that's ok! Even trying things and not liking it is a positive thing because it's helping folks identify things they do and don't enjoy doing. You often don't know until you try!

Appendix

Check out the next couple of pages for a sample information sheet and recruitment flyer. You can find an editable word document version of these documents on our website.

PODS Information Sheet

PODS (the Power of Dependable Souls) is a group-based mutual support program focused on increasing community participation! Once you join the program, you'll work with a staff person to identify some ways you might want to participate more in the community. Then, you'll meet the other program participants and work on finding shared interests. People with common interests will develop small groups and will then work together to pursue their interests. For example, you might be interested in fishing, and a few other people are also interested in fishing- you could create a fishing group. As a group, you will support each other to start fishing more, together!

What do we mean by community participation?

Community participation means anything you want to do in the community. Some examples of community participation include:

- Attending sporting events
- Shopping at markets or stores
- Running errands (going to the post office, bank, laundromat)
- Joining a religious organization
- Going to the library
- Participating in a social group in the community (book club, movie club, dinner club)
- Attending school (college, adult education, GED)
- Taking classes (cooking, photography)
- Volunteering
- Working

Why might I want to join the PODS program?

PODS is designed to help you connect with peers and improve skills that help with community participation. Some of these skills could include:

- Accessing transportation
- Budgeting/ money management
- Social skills
- Finding/accessing resources
- Planning community participation
- Personal care

What is the commitment for joining the PODS program?

Most of the commitment is up to you and what you want to do! There will be group meetings held on an ongoing basis that you will be asked to attend. You will be responsible for covering activity costs- however, you can work with your peers to identify activities within your budget.

What should I do if I am interested in joining, or if I have questions?

Please contact ___ at ___ or ___!

BUILD CONNECTIONS. FIND YOUR COMMUNITY.

INSERT YOUR
LOGO HERE



PODS is a group-based program to help you build connections and get into the community. MODIFY THIS INFO TO DESCRIBE YOUR SPECIFIC PROGRAM.

Insert contact information- what people can do to join or learn more