

Child Safety Guidelines for DEALS facilitators

Certain issues you address during the DEALS intervention may be considered sensitive topics by children or young people in your group. For example, if you are dealing with issues related to violence, some of the participants may have experienced violence themselves. Here are some of the things you, as the facilitator should do in such cases:

- **Give choices**

Be sure everyone in the group knows at the start of the session what you will be discussing. This means that you could share with the group at the end of the previous session or at the start of the respective session what the session is about. People are given the chance to choose whether or not they would want to share their personal stories. Let them also decide for themselves if they want to stay in the group. They may choose to leave for a short time, or to not speak during some activities. This should be accepted and understood by you and the group.

- **Responding to personal stories**

Don't force anyone to share personal experiences if they don't want to. If they choose to share, respect what they have to say, and let them know that you appreciate what they have told the group. If they express strong emotions, just try to reflect those back. For example, "I can see that this experience hurt you very deeply." Some group leaders worry that, if children/young people talk about issues, they will feel angry or sad. This may happen, but sometimes it also helps them feel stronger. For some, it is a relief to share their story. They can get support from the group and may start to think in new ways about how they to deal with the issue.

- **Confidentiality**

Let children and young people know at the start of working together (or at the start of a session) that you will not share their personal information with others outside the group. Make sure others in the group agree to this as well. They should know that confidentiality is an important value. This however does not over-ride the duty to protect the children and young people. Where you as a facilitator have concerns that a participant or another person, such as a younger relative, is at risk of serious harm, you will have to take action. Make sure you know what to do – see below.

- **What if someone says they are experiencing abuse?**

Children and young people may take the opportunity to tell about abuse they are suffering or have suffered. Others may talk about suicide, or about doing violence to others. If you think someone is at risk of serious harm, listen to him/her and respond in a calm and supportive manner. Make sure you know what to do:

- Do not ask questions to the young person; you are not the investigator;
- Record the information and follow the reporting and responding procedures;
- Reassure the young person that they have done nothing wrong and have done the right thing by disclosing or reporting the abuse;
- Explain that you will have to report the disclosure/abuse to the Child Safety Focal Point, but that this is the only person you will tell.
- Try to help the young person to keep as much control over their situation as possible.

The Child Safety Focal Point in turn, will also have to assess the best interests of the young person to ensure that they are safe and not at risk of further abuse etc. The best interests of the young person should be determined in collaboration and consultation with the young person and their caregivers.