

MAY 2024 - DECEMBER 2024

STUDENT OBSERVATION POLICY

Support groups at Mental Health America of Ohio are intended for members of the public who have lived experience with the group topic as a space to give or receive support. Each of our groups follows a set of guidelines and protocols to preserve the intention and safety of the space, including to prevent the joining of individuals who do not meet the above eligibility.

Our goal in developing a Student Observation Policy is to balance the benefit of helping future mental health professionals to gain experience with group dynamics while also honoring the integrity of the space and mutual consent.

Biannually, facilitators are asked to communicate with group members about the potential of observations and decide collectively whether their group will be open for observations. The following groups are **open for observation** for the duration of May 2024 to December 2024:

- In Person: Families In Touch (Riverside)
- In Person: Families In Touch (Twin Valley)
- In Person: Voices Worth Hearing (Pathways)
- Online: Voices Worth Hearing (CSN), with one-week advance request
- Online: Voices Worth Hearing (Concord)
- In Person: Anxiety (Fairfield)
- Online: GOALS for OCD, with one-week advance request

IF A GROUP IS NOT LISTED HERE, IT IS NOT OPEN FOR STUDENT OBSERVATIONS AT THIS TIME.

When attending a group as a student observer, we ask that students review and adhere to the following guidelines.

■ **Introduce yourself to the group as a student observer.**

This allows participants a chance to make an informed choice about what and with whom they are sharing. It also helps our facilitators to know whether you are intentionally being quiet in the group, or if you are a new group member who may need some encouragement to feel comfortable participating.

■ **Observe the facilitators, not the participants.**

Focus your notes and observations on the facilitators' technique and approach, and the overall dynamic of the group. If you are looking to hear and reflect on individuals' unique stories, we recommend publications such as The Mighty or TEDtalks where individuals have consented to open up their story to the general public.

■ **Practice de-centering yourself from the conversation.**

Practice humility in yielding the space to participants and their needs. Unless you are attending as a participant seeking personal support, refrain from inputting your personal or professional opinion into the conversation. Everyone in a support group, regardless of role, is asked to be respectful and seek to understand difference.

■ **Confidentiality is key.**

Our confidentiality guidelines, shared at the beginning of every group, apply to everyone. Be cognizant of dual relationships, avoid disclosing attendance information to those outside of the group, and do not use identifying information or personal details in any reflections after the group.

We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in maintaining these support groups as low-barrier, authentic spaces for individuals who are looking for genuine community in their journey with mental health. If you have questions about what would be appropriate and available to you as a student observer, contact our Support Groups Manager at eduncan@mhaohio.org or 614-257-7122.