

**SWRK 409**  
**Social Work with Groups**

**Finalizing Group Membership Candidates**  
(Ragg, 2010, Garvin, 2011-2012)

**Ensure your group balance by developing a list of potential members.**

- Demographic balance (how does the age, ethnicity, gender etc. blend? Are there any individual-level vulnerabilities?)
- Problem balance (how will behaviors etc. blend)
- Personality balance (how does each member's approach to issues, temperament, skills etc. blend?)

**Pre-group Contact**

- It is ideal to meet with people before the group so you can explore the potential of group membership and resolve any concerns. Face-to-face meetings are best because it starts the relationship between the worker and members.
- If you can't meet face-to-face, at least have telephone contact to work through potential issues and begin the relationship building process.
- This is also a good time to identify what each member might want to achieve through participating in the group.
- If you are gathering evidence to monitor outcomes this is a good time for pre-tests.
  - Reinforce commonalities
    - Common experiences and challenges (what does this member have in common with others being considered?)
    - Unique traits that will fit with others (what does this member bring that will work well and contribute to group success?)
  - Work through potential resistances
    - Share structure and confidentiality expectations (stress the safe environment and your role in making it safe)
    - Explore why group is better than individual (others who understand rather than professionals, get to learn from each other etc.)
    - Share strengths of other potential members and how they will dovetail (without identifying members)
    - Identify likely activities (use of games, other activities, outings etc. that other groups have enjoyed)
    - Share group philosophy (democratic principles etc. that make group successful)
    - Identify and explore individual-level concerns/vulnerabilities that might prevent participation (invite questions and concerns, tune into unique concerns that might interfere – e.g., culture, school stuff, violence risks etc.)
  - Identify and discuss strengths that the member brings to group..
    - What makes this person a desirable group member
    - How will others benefit from this person's perspective