

Families Make the Difference

Implementation tips



“This is very comfortable, it gives us space to express our feelings.”

” Maryam*, a mother of two children, Kasulu, Tanzania. Photo: K. Shoecraft/IRC *pseudonym

Frequency

- > **Do's.** It is recommended to implement one session per week. In exceptional cases, when the target population is very mobile, sessions can be implemented twice a week with a minimum of 3 days between the sessions.
- > **Don'ts.** Do not merge sessions, implement more than 2 sessions per week or one session per month. This will affect the quality of the program as well as the retention of participants.

Room setting

- > **Do's.** Caregivers can sit on the floor or on a chair, as culturally relevant. Ensure that participant sit in circle to enhance participation. The environment should be safe and conducive to experience sharing and confidentiality.
- > **Don'ts.** Avoid classroom setting where caregivers feel “back at school”, noisy environment, people from the community coming in and out of the room or “watching”.

Composition of the group

- > **Do's.**
 - Group of 20 caregivers maximum. You can start with a group of 25 to cater for drop out.
 - The selection of caregivers is done on a voluntary basis following an information session in the community.
 - Caregivers can also be referred through case management to address issues of neglect, violent discipline or difficult parent-child communication. Attending parenting sessions is then part of the action plan.
 - Be aware of gender dynamics and how this affects the retention and the participation male and female caregivers.
 - Use the gender analysis to identify the most suitable group composition.

- > **Don'ts.** Mix gender in the same group in countries where it is not culturally accepted.

How to boost retention?

- > **Do's.**
 - Give a certificate to caregivers who have completed at least 80% of the sessions.
 - Organize a closing ceremony with community members and leaders.
 - Give in-kind incentive to caregivers who have attended at least 80% of the sessions (the items should be for children such as toys, clothes, school materials, etc.)
 - Serve tea and coffee during the sessions. As appropriate, create a space where men and women will enjoy going to the session. E.g. Allow men to smoke in the Middle East. Organize a ritual culturally relevant for opening and closing the sessions. E.g. Telling jokes, singing, group hug, football game etc.
- > **Don'ts.** Give attendance fees to caregivers to attend the sessions, only transportation fees if the training venue is of not walking distance.

Facilitation skills

The facilitation skills of the facilitator as well as the atmosphere in the session are determinant factors to the success of the program.

- > **Do's.**
 - Use role-plays, even if it is challenging in some context, it is a key element to behavior change. Practicing through role plays difficult concept such as empathy will give caregivers the confidence to implement new techniques with their children.
 - Create a nice atmosphere where all caregivers feel comfortable sharing their problems in a confidential manner.
 - Regular monitoring of the sessions is essential to provide feedback to facilitators. In case of low retention rate, facilitation skills of facilitator should be checked.
 - Check the facilitation videos for additional guidance [here](#).
- > **Don'ts.**
 - Use a "lecture" tone and approach, particularly for young facilitators without children to compensate their lack of credibility. Caregivers don't want to feel lectured, they want to feel listened to and understood.
 - Blame or judge caregivers using negative discipline or coping mechanisms but rather empower them with practical positive parenting skills.