

## **Executive Summary**

### **S33 Group Services for Social Development and Enrichment**

#### **Social Skills Group**

The Social Skills program is a new program designation since the last accreditation. The program is designed to provide a skill development group service to children from ages 5-17 who are experiencing difficulties with peer relationships. Unlike other programs in this area, our service is meant to reach the child who has not yet been diagnosed with a more serious disorder such as Asperger's Syndrome, anti-social disorder, childhood depression, etc. Rather, our program reaches those children who are struggling to learn more appropriate ways to express themselves in play and in the school settings. It uses a structured, behavioral model that focuses on age appropriate skill development. The program includes the parents through an orientation process and later materials are provided for re-enforcement at home. At the end of the program, parents are given feedback about their child's progress. Recommendations are offered for continuing assistance

Social Skills Group is held at the  
Family Counseling Services site, located at Riggs House,  
148 Prospect Street, Ridgewood, NJ, 07450.

The telephone number is 201-445-7015.

The hours of operation are Monday – Thursday, 9:00am to 9:00pm, Friday 9:00am to 5:00pm.

The program director is Gloria Leder, MSW, LCSW, Director of Clinical Specialties

#### **Program Overview of Social Skills**

Family Counseling Services' Social Skills Program is designed to promote self-esteem and social interaction among children ages 5-17. Many of the children enrolled in the Social Skills program have had trouble learning socially appropriate behaviors and/or picking up on social cues. Thus the program utilizes small groups and structured activities to help teach children more appropriate ways of interacting with others. The goals of Family Counseling Services' Program are to reduce antisocial behavior, to minimize personal distress, to enhance self-esteem and to increase individual awareness of behavior.

#### **Eligibility**

Children between the ages of 5-17, who are not either psychotic or in need of intense one-to-one supervision, are eligible to participate in the Social Skills Program. This Social Skills program is available to anyone requesting service. However, FCS focuses on the needs of the people in Northwest Bergen County, particularly those in Ridgewood, Ho-Ho-Kus, Midland Park, Glen Rock, Waldwick, Wyckoff, Franklin Lakes, Ramsey Oakland, Mahwah, Allendale, Saddle River and Upper Saddle River. Physicians, guidance counselors and others who are interested in or concerned about the behavior of a child, may refer the child's parents to Family Counseling for further information regarding the Social Skills Program. It is expected that the request for intake come from a parent or legal guardian. The Social Skills Coordinator must then complete an assessment and the child deemed appropriate for group before admission is offered. Appropriate

referrals will be made when necessary. FCS provides a barrier free treatment environment and every effort is made to accommodate individual disabilities within our capabilities.

### **Treatment Philosophy**

The commitment of the FCS staff is to provide a warm and caring environment. Included in our philosophy are the concepts of self-esteem and personal growth. FCS staff uses positive reinforcement to increase self-esteem and the ability to stand up for themselves in difficult social situations. Staff focus is on individual growth as well as family-centered interaction. The group members are encouraged to increase personal growth by giving them opportunities to bring in difficult situations or problems that may have occurred at home or in school. They are encouraged to brainstorm within the group different solutions to the problem. Newly learned skills help group members to improve their interactions at home, at school and with peers. FCS staff makes every effort to work with the unique characteristics of each child and family.

### **Fees**

The fee for the Social Skills program is currently \$400 for 8 sessions (one phase of the Program). Most insurers do not directly cover social Skills groups. Staff will assist parents in obtaining reimbursements when possible. If a family cannot afford the full fee and the child is appropriate for group, FCS has three scholarships available to assist with part, or all, of the fee. The Social Skills Coordinator and the Director of Clinical Specialties determine scholarships.

### **Service Elements**

Children enrolled in the Social Skills Program learn new strategies for dealing with social situations through the use of positive reinforcement in a structured environment. This reinforcement is accomplished by the use of a behavior modification system. The materials that we use consist of: Kelso's Choices, which is a child-friendly plan of action for solving small problems. Handouts, role-plays, board games, brainstorming and discussions are also used in conjunction with Kelso's Choices. These techniques are used to help reinforce positive social skills that include anger reduction, stress management, conflict resolution and social interaction among peers. Once Kelso's Choices are learned, the children can then go on to be taught conversation skills, leadership roles, listening skills, self-control, self-monitoring and negotiating skills.

Within the structure of the Social Skills Program, children are allotted time to choose an activity of their choice relating to the session topic. For example: If the group session is on feelings, the options that the children could choose from are: The Talking, Feeling, Doing game, The Feelings Charades, or coloring worksheets.

### **Curriculum**

FCS staff has created a written curriculum for the Social Skills Program. This curriculum includes a session-by-session plan of activities. Each session plan includes the following information: goals of the session, activities planned, any preparation required, materials needed, time requirements for each activity, helpful hints, snack break, and a summary of how to run the different activities of that session.

The Program is offered in three phases, which contains 10 sessions per phase. Each phase has a different curriculum and addresses different aspects of social skills development. Although each phase is run differently, there are certain aspects of the program that remain consistent. These include a rules check, which is a part of our behavior modification system, and prizes, which are

earned when the children meet the expectations of the group. Also included in the consistency of the program is the use of positive reinforcement as well as a parent orientation, which is used to educate the parents on the structure and running of the group. A parent feedback session is also provided at the end of the group to each individual parent/couple, which focuses on the individual child's progress.

Phase I focuses on learning conflict resolution skills and how to handle small problems. Phase II reviews the skills learned in Phase I as well as focuses on getting along, relating to peers and learning to work with others. Phase III reviews the skills learned in Phase I and II as well as focuses on etiquette, getting along with others at home and living with others, hygiene, manners, and random acts of kindness. Some alternative lessons that may be substituted are dealing with family and school crises, setting and achieving goals, using your time appropriately and how to ask for help in public.

**Program Outcomes**

Parents complete a pre-test and post-test on their child's behavior on which they are asked to evaluate interpersonal skills, bullying, concentration, frustration tolerance, understanding and managing emotions, and problem-solving skills. The testing results are forwarded to the Evaluation, Compliance & IT Systems Department of CAFS to be aggregated for reporting purposes. Since this is a new program, these reports have not yet been generated for program review purposes. However, the Evaluation, Compliance & IT Systems Department will distribute the reports as soon as the data analysis is completed.

**Average number of cases by month for 2004**

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Number of Cases	11	11	11	19	19	19	8	8	17	17	17	---
Number of Group Sessions	8	6	6	16	16	8	10	10	6	12	12	---

**Program Operation Procedures**

When an inquiry is made to the Social Skills program, the Social Skills Coordinator assesses whether or not the inquiry is appropriate. If the inquiry is not appropriate for the group, the caller is referred to a service, which can better serve their needs, either at FCS or at another organization. When a inquiry is appropriate, the Social Skills Coordinator then gathers demographic material such as: name of child, name of the parent(s), phone # and address in which the client can be reached, referral source, and a general history of the presenting problem. Once this information is obtained, it is placed in a folder. Along with gathering this information, the Social Skills Coordinator sets up an intake time to meet with the parent(s) and child.

At the time of the in-person intake, the Social Skills Coordinator further assesses the child. This further assessment includes, verbal skills, ability to follow directions, non-verbal communication, and their general level of self-control and functioning. The Coordinator also

assesses the child's awareness as to why he or she would benefit from the group. It is at this time, during the intake that the parent(s) are asked to complete the referral form.

Once the pre-screening is completed and the child is deemed appropriate and registration forms signed, the child is then put into an age appropriate group. At this time, each group has its own folder, in which all material is kept. The initial material in the folder includes: the completed referral form, a copy of the deposit slip, a narrative on each child with the demographics and the welcome letter which gives parent(s) basic group information, such as cost, dates of the group, and contact information.

The first session of each group begins with a parent orientation. At this time, a pre-measure form is completed and parents are given an orientation packet. Both of these materials are placed into the group folder.

For each session held with the children, a behavior modification chart is kept. Any handouts, worksheets and parent pages are also placed in the folder. Staff also offers a question box where parents can write any questions or concerns to the leaders. A copy of this is placed with the child's information. If a parent requests, at any time, that leaders contact school personnel or other professionals, a release of information form is to be signed by the parent or legal guardian and placed in the folder.

Once the 9<sup>th</sup> session is completed, a parent feedback session is held between the group leaders and the individual parent(s). It is at this time, when parents are asked to complete a post-measure and a satisfaction survey. This is also placed in the folder.

### **Facilities and Equipment**

FCS has two rooms available for the Social Skills program. One room is specifically designed for children under the age of seven. In this room, there is a children's table with coordinating chairs; colored, carpet mats are used when group is sitting on the floor. A child's kitchen set is set up for free play and toys are displayed on shelving located on the walls. There is also an easel in the room, which is used to hold the group rules as well as group name. Crayons and markers are readily available for coloring worksheets as well as free play.

Our other room is located on the lower floor of the organization's building. This room is designed for older children and teens due to the fact that it provides a larger working space as well as larger tables and chairs. Board games and other older child toys are available and located in the cabinets. Group leaders set up the materials and activities for each session ahead of time.

If at any time a child is injured during group, their parent/ legal guardian and the Program Director, are notified as soon as possible. An incident report is also filled out. If an injury requires immediate medical attention, then a group leader will call for professional help. If a child is injured while using a toy or other group equipment, further safety assessment is completed. For safety precautions, while children are playing with small toys or game pieces, they are closely monitored by group leaders.

In order to keep our Social Skills rooms clean and safe, the rooms are thoroughly cleaned by our organization's cleaning professionals three times a week. In an effort to keep the rooms clean while group is running, the group leaders clean the tables used before and after snack, as well as pick up any garbage or toys that may be lying on the floor. Both snacks and drinks are kept in

locked cabinets and in their own refrigerator. If a child has put a toy or other object in his/her mouth, staff will clean the toy thoroughly to prevent germs from spreading.

Family Counseling Services does not provide services through any contract in cooperation with other organizations or coordinated service delivery systems

**Staffing**

Supervisor: Gloria Leder, MSW, LCSW 20 years experience  
Group Leader: Tracey Neuman, LCSW, 3 years experience  
Group Assistant (as needed to maintain ratio) Heather Struz, BS

Group leaders are required to have a minimum educational background of a BA with appropriate experience working with children and families. Minimal course work is required in areas of, but not limited to child development, social group work, education, recreation and physical or mental disabilities.

The group leader to participant ratio always remains under a 4:1 ratio. The supervisor regularly monitors this ratio.

**Demographics**

Data collected to date has been limited to age and sex of the child participants. Plans are underway to expand demographic data collections to include parents.

4 & 5 year olds	4	10%
6 & 7 year olds	11	25%
8 – 12 year olds	20	45%
13 – 16 year olds	9	20%

Males - 60%  
Females – 40%

**Case Records Reviews**

Plans are currently under development to have the Social Skills case files reviewed on regular basis in the future as part of the Continuous Quality Improvement process.