Boise VAMC’s Guide to Behavioral Health Groups and Workshops

Mission:
The Behavioral Health Service’s mission is to maintain and improve the health and well-being of Veterans through excellence in health care, social services, education, and research.
Behavioral Health Levels-of-Care

Each Veteran receiving care through the Behavioral Health Department is individually assessed to ensure the optimal level-of-care is provided for each unique situation. Treatment plans are tailored to each Veteran’s needs, strengths, and resources. Our multidisciplinary team of professionals is comprised of psychiatrists, psychologists, licensed social workers, licensed mental health counselors, peer support specialist, nurse practitioners, nurses, pharmacists, and occupational therapists. Chaplaincy services are available upon request. As a training facility, we have multiple professional trainees, as listed above, participating in our programs that provide additional services with supervised care.

This guide has been created to provide Veterans and family members a comprehensive resource describing the many psychotherapeutic groups available at the Boise VAMC Behavioral Health Department. Psychotherapeutic groups offer many benefits in the treatment of mental health recovery and substance abuse recovery. Groups are often as efficacious as individual therapy. Groups offer the opportunity for peer support and interaction.

Please use this guide to better understand the groups offered so our Veterans can receive the best possible treatment for their mental health needs.

Please talk to your Behavioral Health provider if you’re interested in being referred to the groups listed. In the event you do not have an assigned provider and you are interested in attending one of the groups listed, please contact:

Behavioral Health Service
(208) 422-1108
(208) 422-1145

Peer Support – (208) 422-1000 + Option 1 + extension
Daniel Chapman ext: 7123
Cameron Rail ext: (208) 891-6418
Steve Walker ext: 7047

A Recovery Model for You!

Recovery is a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential. Recovery is about finding your way in the world:

The way that works best for you so you can live the best life possible. So, you can live in the community you choose and do the things that keep you healthy.

Recovery is about living well.
- It is about moving beyond any label.
- It is about deciding who you are. Not about how others decide who you are.
- It is about creating a good life of your own choosing.

Change the focus from “what is wrong with you?” to: “What is right with you?”

In using this guide, please note that:
- Unless otherwise specified, all groups are located in the Behavioral Health Building (114)
- GR = Group Room

Last updated on 3 June 2021
MONDAY

**SUD Recovery Process Group**
Sue Hicks  
M 10:00-11:00 am, Building 23- IN PERSON/TELE  
1-833-558-0712  CODE: 199 267 3616

**Progressions Moral Injury Program Phase 2**  
"ACT for the Treatment of Betrayal-based Moral Injury"
Chaplain Rachel Mikaelson  
M, 10:00-11:30am, March 1st – May 3rd, 2021
In the Phase 2 group, Veterans learn Acceptance and Commitment Therapy processes of Acceptance and Self-As-Context, Spiritual processes of storytelling, making amends, and reclaiming personal power. This group is co-facilitated by Chaplain Mikaelson and a mental health provider.
A Veteran is eligible for referral to Phase 2 programming after:
1.) Veteran has completed an evidence-based treatment for trauma-processing and mental health provider assesses that the Veteran meets criteria. OR
2.) Veteran has been attending Lodestone for a period of time and through a joint assessment between Chaplain Mikaelson and the Veteran’s mental health provider.
A Phase 2 Veteran:
• Has done the hard work of trauma-processing and their PTSD symptoms are well managed.  
• Is attuned to their own experience of guilt and shame and able to take a deeper look at the meaning and significance of their moral injury.  
• Is at the beginning stages of understanding paradox and mystery and can embrace irreconcilable tension.  
*(Please send referrals to CH Mikaelson or Dr. Angela Enlow)*

**SUD SOBER LIFESTYLES GROUP**
Sue Hicks  
M 11:00-12:00, Building 23- (In-person only)

**MHICM Recreation Group (MHICM ONLY)**
Julie Orozco  
M, 11:30-2:00pm. Bldg. 114
Veterans to engage in various recreational opportunities in the community. Activities include bowling, playing pool, going on walks and to the movies.

**Social Skills Group (MHICM ONLY)**
Julie Orozco Geoff Hall  
M 10:30-11:30 am, MHICM Kitchen
Social Skills group is an evidenced base group for individuals with severe chronic mental illness. The group consists of learning one particular skill each week, like making a request, or expressing a negative emotion. Each skill consists of 3-4 steps that are practiced in a series of role plays by each member. Referrals are accepted yearly.
Participants must learn the 4 basic skills through individual sessions prior to starting the group which usually begins in February and lasts four to five weeks.

**ACT group**
Angela Enlow  
M, 1200-1300pm VVC
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT, pronounced “act”) focuses on learning ways to accept emotions and thoughts and commit to a quality life. You are not asked to think differently; instead you will learn to “see” your thoughts in such a way that they don’t continue to guide your behavior. We also don’t try to change emotions; rather, we’ll focus on acceptance of emotion, but not in a “just give up” fashion. We will do this in a way that helps you notice that you have emotions and that you can carry emotion with you compassionately and still work to live the kind of life you want to live. If you have patients who would be a good fit for ACT and one of those availabilities works for them, please send me a referral either via email or cosigning me onto a note. This group is not going to be diagnosis specific. The group description is below.

**SUD Emotional Regulation Group**
Sue Hicks  
M 1:00-2:00 pm, Bldg.23 (In-person only)

*Last updated on 3 June 2021*
**SUD Relapse Prevention**  
Sue Hicks  
M 2:00-3:00 pm, Building 23- IN PERSON/TELE  
1-833-558-0712  
CODE: 199 471 9717

**Healthy Habits group**  
Julie Orozco  
M, 2:00-3:30pm. VVC  
The group is designed for all individuals enrolled in general behavioral health who are in the preparation and action stages of change. It will explore developing an identity that supports their desired change behaviors to reinforce long term improvements. Participants will learn strategies and skills to implement that will support their desired behaviors, habits and routines and minimize old negative behaviors and patterns. For example, veterans will look at the cues, craving, response and reward cycles of unwanted vs desired habits to problem solve interventions that can disrupt or reinforce the cycle. The group will be broken down into education, homework assignments and problem-solving barriers. Group size will be limited to 8 to facilitate in depth discussions and problem-solving opportunities. It will be a 90-minute 8-week VVC group that will meet on Mondays at 2pm beginning Oct 12. Depending on interest, the group has potential to be extended to a maintenance group that meets weekly to review habit trackers and to support intended outcomes. If you know of a veteran who would be interested, please call my extension @1339 or email me julie.orozco@va.gov.

**Trauma Symptom Management (PTSD) Group**  
Dr. April Rose  
M, 3:00-4:00pm, VVC  
This group is for veterans who have experienced significant trauma during their life. A PTSD diagnosis is not required for this group. People on the anxiety spectrum may find this group useful. Trauma symptom management group teaches veterans how to better manage common signs and symptoms associated with exposure to traumatic events. Examples of signs and symptoms include, but are not limited to avoidance, hyperarousal, intrusive experiences, emotion regulation, and sleep disturbances. Specific traumatic events experienced by participants are not discussed in group. The group is held for 8 weeks on Monday from 3:00-4:00p.m.
**Vietnam Support Group**
Joshua Echeverria
Tu, 10:00 a.m.-11 am, Bldg. 114 GR 1, 2
This group is for Vietnam COMBAT veterans. This group is populated with totally disabled, PTSD/depression/now sober combat veterans. This group provides socialization and supportive psychotherapy. It provides an opportunity to talk about current issues related to relationships, gaining, chronic illness, and to re-examine traumatic experiences (if that is what is needed).

**MOVE/Weight Program**
Mona Randall
Tu, 10:00-11:30am, Bldg. 54
This group is for veterans wishing to work on weight issues.
This group takes a holistic approach to weight loss and healthy lifestyle changes, focusing on behavioral health, diet, and exercise.

**DBT Tuesday/Thursday (Dialectical Behavioral Therapy) Skills Group**
Josh Bode
Tu & Th 10:00-11:30am, VVC
Please ask your provider to submit a consult for this group. This group provides the opportunity to learn coping skills to decrease interpersonal chaos, labile emotions and moods, impulsivity and confusion about self. This group offers veterans skills training in mindfulness, distress tolerance, interpersonal effectiveness, and emotion regulation. The group involves homework and outside skills practice and lasts approximately 32 weeks.

**SUD Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)**
Dave Baumgart
T 11:00-12:00, Bldg. 23/VVC
In person or Video Group:
Contact Dave Baumgart at 208-422-1000 x7533 to get on the list for Veterans Video Connect

**Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) Support Group**
Susie Klepacki
Tu, 12pm-1pm, VVC
This support group offers LGBT Veterans with peer support in a safe, supportive, educational environment.

**Housing-Up Group**
John Randall
Tu, 2:00 pm-3:00 pm, River St. Conference Room
Ongoing, weekly group for veterans with HUD VASH Vouchers seeking housing. Veterans will develop skills and opportunities to decrease barriers to housing.

**Progressions Moral Injury Program Phase 1 “Lodestone”**
Chaplain Rachel Mikaelsen
T, 2:30pm-4:00pm, ongoing
The Phase 1 group called “Lodestone” is where we cover topics such as: what are morals, where do they come from, how moral injury happens, PTSD/Spirituality, Spiritual Values, Grief & Loss, Whole Health, and moral injury through the lenses of various religions. This is an ongoing group with rotating topics. Veterans may start in the group at any point. This group is meant to be a starting point and landing pad for them to return to at any point in their healing journey. It also serves as a safe space to experience community and comradery.
To be eligible for Lodestone, Veterans need to be able to maintain sobriety for a minimum of 30 days prior to starting class, and have access to a mental health provider, or be starting an episode of care with a mental health provider. This group also is appropriate for Veterans who are:

- New to the VA
- New to mental health treatment
- Recently in recovery
- Able to see the world through a black & white lens
- Able to respectfully sit in a pluralistic group
- Have a desire to change

*(Please send referrals to CH Mikaelsen or Dr. Angela Enlow)*

**MHICM (Family Group)**
Chalice Silflow & Kevin Sligar
Every 4th Tuesday 3:00pm-4:00pm GR 2
Must be in MHICM Program

_Last updated on 3 June 2021_
**Trauma Symptom Management (PTSD) Group**
D. Naomi Johnson
T, 5:30pm-6:30pm, VVC or GR1
This group is for veterans who have experienced significant trauma during their life. A PTSD diagnosis is not required for this group. People on the anxiety spectrum may find this group useful. Trauma symptom management group teaches veterans how to better manage common signs and symptoms associated with exposure to traumatic events. Examples of signs and symptoms include, but are not limited to avoidance, hyperarousal, intrusive experiences, emotion regulation, and sleep disturbances. Specific traumatic events experienced by participants are not discussed in the group. The group is held for 10 weeks.
Brain Health
Brienne Dyer
W, 10:00-11:00, GR 4
The Brain Health group is an 8 session 1-hour class that teaches veterans important information about the brain. During the group, you will learn how to improve everyday problems with memory, attention, and problem solving. You will also learn how good sleep habits, stress management, healthy eating, and exercise will help your brain.

ACT group
Dr. Watford
W, 1000-1100 VVC
Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT, pronounced “act”) focuses on learning ways to accept emotions and thoughts and commit to a quality life. You are not asked to think differently; instead you will learn to “see” your thoughts in such a way that they don’t continue to guide your behavior. We also don’t try to change emotions; rather, we’ll focus on acceptance of emotion, but not in a “just give up” fashion. We will do this in a way that helps you notice that you have emotions and that you can carry emotion with you compassionately and still work to live the kind of life you want to live. If you have patients who would be a good fit for ACT and one of those availabilities works for them, please send me a referral either via email or cosigning me onto a note. This group is not going to be diagnosis specific. The group description is below.

SUD Recovery Process Group
Sue Hicks
W 10:00-11:00, Bldg. 23//VVC
1-833-558-0712 CODE: 199 267 3616
This group runs for 12 weeks and uses the WarriorRenew Curriculum. This is a psychoeducation group focusing on such topics as sleep, triggers and anxiety, anger, understanding trauma, defining relationship patterns, guilt and shame, losses and grief, healthy intimate relationships, effective communication and finding meaning, purpose and joy. If interested in attending, veterans or providers can contact me at x3500 or sarah.earney@va.gov.

Pain Management (offered through Telehealth)
Rebekah Kintzing
W, 11:00-12:00pm, VVC
This group is for veterans who suffer from chronic pain. This eight-week pain management class is a psycho-educational group that addresses the bio-psycho-social aspects of chronic pain. Veterans learn cognitive behavioral interventions aimed at improved pain management and increased overall functioning.
SUD Relapse Prevention Group
Sue Hicks
W 2:00-3:00, Bldg. 23/TELE
1-833-558-0712  CODE: 199 471 9717

STAIR Group
Melissa Kremer / Naomi Johnson
W, 2:00 – 3:00, VVC or BLG 114 (Hybrid)
STAIR: This group will focus on developing emotional awareness, the ability to regulate emotions, and skills for navigating relationships. This group will help you understand the unhealthy patterns you have developed in relationships and learn ways to increase assertiveness, flexibility, and closeness with those you care about. This is a 12-week group 60 min group.

DBT Skills Group
April Thorndyke
W, 2pm-3pm, VVC
This is an open cohort DBT group that supports individuals in learning skills to cope with emotional distress in productive ways. It’s a great option for individuals who do not meet criteria for 32-week DBT group, desire a refresher in all skills or one specifically, or someone who would benefit from skills to decrease symptoms. This is an open cohort group; individuals may choose to attend certain weeks if they are only interested in specific topics. The topics of DBT, Distress tolerance, Emotion Regulation, and Interpersonal Effectiveness will be rotated, spending four weeks on one topic with two weeks of mindfulness between each topic. For example, they could attend the 4 weeks of distress tolerance, yet opt out of the 2 weeks of mindfulness that follows.
Email, message, or attach April Thorndyke, LCSW to a note in CPRS

CPT Graduate Group
Melissa Kremer
W, 3:00 p.m. -4:30 p.m. bldg. 23 (2nd and 4th Wed)This group is for those who have completed CPT to touch point for worksheets and questions. Short term participation

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)
Adam Brotman, Trina Elsasser
W, 3pm-4:30pm, GR 1 & 2
This is a clinically proven program of meditation and mindful movement practices for alleviating stress, anxiety, PTSD, depression and other conditions. This powerful approach shows you how to develop present moment attention in order to permanently change the way you deal with stress. You will learn how to replace stress-promoting habits with mindful ones – skills that will last a lifetime! This is an 8-week program. Please Contact Adam or Trina for Referrals

Anger Management
Thomas Madden
W, 5:30-6:30pm, GR 1, B114
This group is for veterans who are self-referred, clinician-referred, or court-ordered to anger management. Managing Anger is a psycho-educational and therapeutic process group that meets each Wednesday’s from 5:30 to 6:30 pm for eight consecutive weeks. The group focuses on cognitive, verbal/behavioral coping skills to manage anger using the SAMHSA program. New referrals are welcome!

Trauma Symptom Management (PTSD) Group
Rodney Dotson
W, 5:30pm-6:30pm, VVC and GR 3&4
This group is for veterans who have experienced significant trauma during their life. A PTSD diagnosis is not required for this group. People on the anxiety spectrum may find this group useful. Trauma symptom management group teaches veterans how to better manage common signs and symptoms associated with exposure to traumatic events. Examples of signs and symptoms include, but are not limited to avoidance, hyperarousal, intrusive experiences, emotion regulation, and sleep disturbances. Specific traumatic events experienced by participants are not discussed in group. The group is held for 8 weeks on Monday from 3:00-4:00p.m.
Progressions Moral Injury Program Phase 2
“ACT for the Treatment of Betrayal-based
Moral Injury”
Chaplain Rachel Mikaelson
TH, 10:00-11:30am,
March 1st – May 3rd, 2021
In the Phase 2 group, Veterans learn Acceptance
and Commitment Therapy processes of Acceptance and Self-As-Context, Spiritual
processes of storytelling, making amends, and
reclaiming personal power. This group is co-
facilitated by Chaplain Mikaelson and a mental
health provider.
A Veteran is eligible for referral to Phase 2
programming after:
1.) Veteran has completed an evidence-based
treatment for trauma-processing and mental health
provider assesses that the Veteran meets criteria.
OR
2.) Veteran has been attending Lodestone for a
period of time and through a joint assessment
between Chaplain Mikaelson and the Veteran’s
mental health provider.
A Phase 2 Veteran:
• Has done the hard work of trauma-
processing and their PTSD symptoms are well
managed.
• Is attuned to their own experience of guilt
and shame and able to take a deeper look at the
meaning and significance of their moral injury.
• Is at the beginning stages of understanding
paradox and mystery and can embrace
irreconcilable tension.
(Please send referrals to CH Mikaelson or Dr. April
Rose)

DBT Tuesday/Thursday
(Dialectical Behavioral Therapy) Skills
Group
Josh Bode
Tu & Th 10:00-11:30am, VVC
Please ask your provider to submit a consult for this
group. This group provides the opportunity to learn
coping skills to decrease interpersonal chaos, labile
emotions and moods, impulsivity and confusion
about self. This group offers veterans skills training
in mindfulness, distress tolerance, interpersonal
effectiveness, and emotion regulation. The group
involves homework and outside skills practice and
lasts approximately 32 weeks.

Trauma Symptom Management (PTSD)
Group
Th 11:00-12:00, VVC or in-person
This group is for veterans who have experienced
significant trauma during their life. A PTSD
diagnosis is not required for this group. People on
the anxiety spectrum may find this group useful.
Trauma symptom management group teaches
veterans how to better manage common signs and
symptoms associated with exposure to traumatic
events. Examples of signs and symptoms include,
but are not limited to avoidance, hyperarousal,
intrusive experiences, emotion regulation, and
sleep disturbances. Specific traumatic events
experienced by participants are not discussed in
the group. The group is held for 10 weeks on
Thursdays from 11-1200 via VVC or in-person.

SUD Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT)
Dave Baumgart
T 11:00-12:00, Bldg. 23/VVC
In person or Video Group:
Contact Dave Baumgart at 208-422-1000 x7533 to
get on the list for Veterans Video Connect

Community Based Employment Services
(CBES)
Allen Willard
Thurs, 10:00 a.m., Bldg. 23-Basement
This group is for veterans that are ready for re-entry
into competitive employment. This group offers job
leads, resume, cover letter assistance and
avocation for the veteran with prospected
employers.
**Mindfulness/Meditation**  
Wendy Cary  
Th, 12:00-1:00pm, B114, GR4  
This weekly experiential group is for all veterans who feel they might benefit from becoming more mindful and aware as they move through their daily life allowing them to make better choices that positively support their health and well-being. Participants will also have the opportunity to explore and practice a variety of meditation techniques to help with issues such as insomnia, pain, and stress.

**Transforming Group**  
Chris Drouillard  
Th, 1:00-2:00pm, VVC  
This group is for all veterans who struggle with maladaptive coping mechanisms, (addiction of any sorts, eating disorder, emotion regulation, boundaries, and much more) This group meets weekly to provide mutual support and insight. Provider helps veterans by using a variety of therapeutic modalities including CBT, Motivational Interviewing and Group Support.

**Pain Management (offered through Telehealth)**  
Rebekah Kintzing  
Th, 2:00-3:00, VVC  
This group is for veterans who suffer from chronic pain. This eight-week pain management class is a psycho-educational, skills-focused group that addresses the bio-psycho-social aspects of chronic pain. Veterans learn cognitive behavioral interventions aimed at improved pain management and increased overall functioning and quality of life.
MHICM Breakfast
MHICM Staff
F, 8:00-10:00 am, Community
This group is for veterans in the MHICM program. This group encourages healthy social and interpersonal skills.
--The vets need to be referred to the MHICM program before they can attend!

Reasons for Living
Tiffany Foley
F, 9:00 am – 10:30 am VVC/TELE
This group is for veterans on the High Risk for Suicide List or referred by their provider due to a significant suicide attempt, ongoing suicidal ideation and/or desire to die. This group is part support, part CBT, and Distress Tolerance Skill Building.

SUD Recovery Process Group
Sue Hicks
F, 10:00-11:00 am, Bldg. 23/TELE
1-833-558-0712 CODE: 199 267 3616

Bereavement Group
April Thorndyke
F, 10:00-11:30, VVC
This is a closed cohort 10-week bereavement group that helps individuals normalize the intense impacts of grief and loss. The loss can be from a death of a person and/or any type of loss, identity, role, position, employment, etc. if it has traumatically impacted the life of an individual. It provides a safe and nonjudgmental space, for individuals to process there are emotions and struggles around loss, changes and identity, roles, and relationships. This group enables individuals to learn self-acceptance, self-compassion, resiliency, as they mourn the loss and learn how to embrace the pain that accompanies loss in a way that moves them forward.

MOVE Exercise Class
Mona Randall
F, 11:00-12:30pm, BLDG 54
This group is for veterans wishing to work on weight issues. This group takes a holistic approach to weight loss and healthy lifestyle changes, focusing on behavioral health, diet, and exercise.

Friday

SUD SOBER LIFESTYLES GROUP
Sue Hicks
F, 11:00-12:00, Building 23- (In-person only)

SUD Emotional Regulation Group
Sue Hicks
F, 1:00-2:00 pm, Bldg. 23 (In-person only)

MOVE Support Group
Mona Randall
F, 2:00-3:00pm, Bldg. 54
This group is for veterans wishing to work on weight issues. This group takes a holistic approach to weight loss and healthy lifestyle changes, focusing on behavioral health, diet, and exercise.

SUD Relapse Prevention Group
Sue Hicks
F, 2:00-3:00, Bldg. 23/TELE
1-833-558-0712 CODE: 199 471 9717

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