BIAC Support Group Facilitator Handbook

Brain Injury Alliance
CONNECTICUT

200 Day Hill Road
Suite 250
Windsor, CT 06095
Phone: 860-219-0291
www.biact.org

Making visible the invisible since 1982

Table of Contents

Who We Are and What We Do 3
Support Group Facilitator Objective 5
Qualifications of Support Group Facilitators 5
Qualities of a Strong Support Group Facilitator 5
Responsibilities of Support Group Facilitator 6
Support Group Etiquette 8
Membership 9
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Practices 14
Orientation & Training 16
Attendance & Responsiveness 16
Drug-Free Environment 16
Confidentiality 16
Background Checks 17
Conduct 17
Thank you! 17
Support Group Facilitator Waiver 18
Waiver/Confidentiality 18
Facilitator Commitment 19
Facilitator Contract 20
Support Group Attendance Report 21
Support Group Member List 22
List of Appendices 23

Welcome

To the Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut

Our Mission: Raising voices and visibility of people with brain injury and improving lives through support, education, and advocacy.

Support Group Facilitators are a critical part of all that BIAC does.

This Support Group Facilitator Handbook will introduce you to BIAC – its mission, history, policies and facilitator policies. Each Support Group contributes something important to BIAC and to the individuals it serves.

Thank you for agreeing to be a Support Group Facilitator

Who We Are and What We Do

Who We Are

Founded in 1981 by the families of brain injury survivors and the social service professionals assisting them, BIAC's original mission was to advocate for specific rehabilitative services and improved care. After incorporating in 1982, that mission expanded to include prevention. **We have most recently revised our mission in 2023 to include and reflect a stronger focus on quality of life throughout the continuum of a person's life span living with a brain injury.**

As a resource in helping individuals live their best lives possible, our brain injury specialists work to ensure that survivors and their families are connected to the appropriate services and professionals. We also work to facilitate both independent living and meaningful inclusion at home, at school, and at work.

What We Do

Free HelpLine
Brain Injury Specialists provide support and resources for survivors, caregivers, and professionals to ensure that the often-complex challenges they face are negotiated more easily and effectively. https://biact.org/get-help-now/support-groups/

Online Resources
BIAC's website includes community, state and national resources with important information relating to brain injury education, prevention and recovery. Visit www.biact.org for more information.

Individual Consultations
Brain Injury Specialists (BIS) are available to ensure that survivors and their families are connected to the appropriate services and professionals. BIS services may be reached by calling our free of charge Helpline at 860-219-0291.

Brain Injury Navigator
The Navigator is a fee-based service that provides customized, in-depth, and personal direction from a BIAC Brain Injury Specialist, helping those impacted by brain injury find their way back to a life that brings meaning and joy, and the triumph of moving forward. Visit https://biact.org/get-help-now/brain-injury-navigator/ for more information.

Statewide Support Groups
Many meetings throughout Connecticut provide peer-to-peer support for brain injury survivors, family members and caregivers. Support Groups provide emotional support, education, and networking opportunities to all persons with a brain injury, their families, caregivers and friends. Currently, some of these meetings are virtual, some are in-person, and some are hybrid (virtual / in person). All meetings are free and open to any who wish to attend. We also have a support group specially designed for family members/caregivers and another one specifically focused on spouse and partners of those living with brain injury. https://biact.org/get-help-now/support-groups/

Annual Conference
Connecticut's premier brain injury education program attracts more than 200 plus professionals each year to learn the latest developments in the field.

Outreach & Education
Free school, professional and community presentations increase awareness and understanding of brain injury and its prevention. https://biact.org/get-help-now/professionals/

Legislative Advocacy

BIAC supports legislation to improve the quality of life for people living with brain injuries while supporting initiatives to help prevent brain injuries from occurring. https://biact.org/get-involved/legislative-advocacy/

Social Events

BIAC provides opportunities to come together in a social setting, have fun, and meet other people with potentially common life experiences and challenges. These include the Walk for Thought, Spring Social, Fun in the Sun Picnic, in addition to support group led social activities.

Support Group Facilitator Objective

To lead a BIAC sponsored Support Group for brain injury survivors, family members and caregivers. The facilitator ensures that the group process meets the emotional needs of the members. **It is NOT the facilitator's role to provide clinical or medical advice.**

Qualifications of Support Group Facilitators

It is the BIAC protocol to have two facilitators for each meeting whenever possible. Ideally, one facilitator is a professional in the field of brain injury or has experience with group facilitation/group dynamics AND the other facilitator is a survivor or family member/caregiver. We believe this is important to maintain balance of perspective.
The professional must attend meetings regularly and assist with group facilitation.
All groups should have the same facilitators running the group. Groups should not have a rotating facilitator, as this may become disruptive for attendees. Support Group facilitators receive free BIAC membership during their tenure as a Support Group facilitator.

Qualities of a Strong Support Group Facilitator

Various people may facilitate brain injury support groups. A person with a brain injury, a family member, a professional group therapist, or a rehabilitation practitioner can run the group. It is up to the group to decide whether the facilitator should be a person with a relevant professional background or a layperson. It is beneficial, however, if the facilitator has the following personal characteristics:

- Self-confidence
- Sound judgment
- Maturity
- Low anxiety
- Ability to focus

- Perceptiveness
- Flexibility
- Sense of humor
- Empathy, compassion
- Concern for people
- Tolerance, patience
- Ability to interpret and articulate
- Able to connect with other people and maintain a strong sense of self, as he/she will be confronted with intense feelings, such as denial, hostility, and blame. A strong sense of self-means the facilitator understands him/herself and his/her own feelings and can avoid transferring feelings to group members, taking things personally, or becoming involved in power struggles.
- Have a solid understanding of brain injury to facilitate honest interpersonal work.

Responsibilities of Support Group Facilitator

BIAC's Brain Injury Specialists oversee the functioning of support groups, assist with the establishment of new groups, and ensure that the needs of the Support Group Facilitators are met.

- The Senior Brain Injury Specialist is the initial point of contact for a facilitator's questions, requests for information, etc. A BIAC Representative will visit each support group at least once annually. The visit will always be arranged ahead of time with mutual agreement of the Support Group facilitator and the Senior BIS.

- The Senior Brain Injury Specialist, or volunteer as assigned, emails updates, relevant information and notices as necessary to Support Group Facilitators.

- All Support Groups are listed on BIAC's website (https://biact.org/get-help-now/support-groups/)with at least one facilitator's contact information, and in BIAC's monthly newsletter, called *BIAC* Buzz.

- Support Group listings are distributed throughout Connecticut by BIAC staff, as requested.

- Facilitators must communicate directly to the Senior BIS each month (after their monthly meeting) attendance numbers by the first day of the next month (ex. January attendance numbers are due by Feb 1st). This must be done by emailing the **Support Group Attendance Form** (see page 21), which includes the list of new members; BIAC needs their name and contact information, and we are required for reports to the State, Board of Directors, and grantors to provide attendance statistics.

- Facilitators must notify BIAC of changes made to meeting dates and times, whether temporary or permanent.

- If a Support Group facilitator is no longer able to fulfill that role, BIAC and the facilitator will work together to find a qualified replacement, as appropriate. When there is a change in group facilitator, BIAC must be part of the process in identifying a replacement, as these are BIAC sponsored support groups. It is important that BIAC knows who is facilitating groups on a regular basis.

- Any complaints or concerns relating to a Support Group or Support Group attendee should be directed to the Senior Brain Injury Specialist or to the Director of Programs & Services.

- Facilitators are to read and sign the **Facilitator Support Group Commitment** and **Facilitator Contract** (see pages 19 - 20) and follow the requirements listed therein. These forms need to be signed **before** the facilitator commences their role at their first support group meeting.

- As representatives and advocates of BIAC, BIAC Support Group facilitators must be well informed of BIAC's programs and activities.

- Facilitators are to treat the Support Group participants with dignity, honesty and respect their values, feelings, beliefs and right to privacy.

- Facilitators must ensure that confidentiality is maintained within the group and that any concerns relating to the group or group members is reported to BIAC staff. The BIAC Support Group protocol is to blind copy/bcc all group members when email communications are used as some members may not choose to share personal contact information. If members do wish to exchange personal contact information, they may do so individually.

- Facilitators must provide BIAC with the names and email addresses of all group members and provide updates to BIAC every month with the names and emails of new members. If the Support Group member does not want to share their email with the facilitator, they are not required to. However, any email a Support Group facilitator has must be shared with BIAC staff. As per protocol, BIAC staff will not share email addresses with other members, unless asked to do so. Having Support Group members' emails is important so that BIAC can share information with support group members on things like social events, sharing resources, updates on what is happening at BIAC. BIAC does not use support group member lists to ask for money.

- BIAC's New Member Packet is to be made available at meetings and the facilitator should contact BIAC if additional packets are needed. Each facilitator will also have this packet electronically, via email.

- Support Group participants may decide to become BIAC members. BIAC Membership fees will be waived for anyone, upon request, due to financial hardship.

- Notification of upcoming BIAC and relevant brain injury events are to be shared with Support Group participants at meetings.

- Phone calls and email communications to facilitators seeking information about the Support Group are to be returned as promptly as possible.

- Facilitators should provide meeting reminders of upcoming meetings and events to attendees via email or phone. The facilitator may delegate this responsibility to a Support Group attendee who is willing to assist with such notifications.

- Solicitation of Support Group members is not permitted at any time and meetings are not to be a vehicle for marketing services. ***Support Group Facilitators may not market their own products or services at any support group meeting***.

- ***Thank you for all you do to support survivors!*** *Pl*ease remember to remind members of BIAC supports and services. When sending any email to members, include a link to the BIAC website. (https://biact.org/)

Support Group Etiquette

While a support group must be flexible to respond to the needs of individuals, it is wise to have some guidelines in place. For the group to function productively, participants will need to observe some basic rules of good group behavior. As group facilitators, we encourage you to reach out to BIAC should you need help or have questions on what to do in a particular situation.

Support group participants should decide these rules for themselves, as they will be more committed to abiding by them. Together, you should develop rules for your group regarding such things as a smoking policy, limitations on food and drinks,

It can be helpful to revisit group rules throughout the year, or when new members join:

- Respect everyone's privacy; what is said in the group stays in the group.
- Avoid interrupting someone who is speaking.
- Refrain from having side conversations during the meeting.
- Talk about ourselves or our own situations, not others.
- Suggest and support, not judge, criticize, or ridicule.
- Listen to others and not dominate the conversation.
- Arrive on time. When we cannot help being late, we will not disrupt the meeting.
- Begin and end our meetings on time.
- Respect everyone's personal space.
- Encourage participants to keep their cameras "on" during group as a means of building inclusivity and trust. Of course, there are times when it may not be possible, or participants who have a good reason for keeping their camera off.
- Encourage people to speak up and express their feelings.
- Share in the responsibility for making the group work and for supporting one another.
- Encourage independence not dependence.
- Promote an atmosphere of trust and support.
- Strive to make new members feel welcome.

Support Group Membership

It is important for facilitators to understand that they represent BIAC and that they are a facilitator for BIAC. It is critical to foster a community where it isn't an "us" and "them". Facilitators should help all participants understand why this is important. Often a brain injury specialist can assist a support group member with an issue outside of what the group can handle. We can let individuals know when there are events or new resources for individuals. The monthly BIAC e-newsletter is a great way for group members to stay connected to BIAC and to keep abreast of important news and updates. Please remind members about our newsletter and provide the following link: https://biact.org/news/enewsletter/

It is important for members to feel they are contributing to the group and that they are a vital part of it. Facilitators can help by delegating duties and responsibilities. For example, a member can help with meeting notices; others can bring refreshments, schedule a speaker or plan a social. All members need to be aware they are an integral part of the decision-making process of the group.

Maintaining a Membership List

Members should carefully consider how the **Support Group Member List** (see page 22) will be used. While it may be beneficial to give everyone a list of fellow members so they can easily contact one another, this may lead to some problems the group needs to address beforehand. Handling confidentiality should be discussed as a group. ***Names and addresses***

on the list should not be shared outside the group and BIAC staff and without permission of the individual.

Recognize that circulating the membership list among support group participants can open the door to unwanted or inappropriate calls from inside the group. This could be particularly troublesome when a new member of the group begins to get calls from someone, he/she does not know or when a group participant receives calls at all hours of the day and night.

A good plan is for the group to circulate a membership sign-up sheet at the meeting, allowing for voluntary participation. If the list is to be distributed among the members, this should be made clear before anyone signs up. This allows those who wish to sign up to include the times during which they are available to take phone calls from other members.

Working Together

Now that the group has had its first meeting, the work of keeping a support group going can be divided or shared, especially if it is a larger group. Listed below are examples of short job descriptions which can help the group identify, define, and assign responsibilities:

- Group Coordinator - coordinates group functions/logistics, assigns tasks, and assures periodic review of group effectiveness
- Meeting Facilitator - ensures group meeting runs smoothly, promotes participation of members, and increases effectiveness of the group process
- Contact Person - publicizes name and phone number and accepts calls from people interested in the group
- Welcome Person - greets new members individually before the meeting begins, introduces new members to the group, and follows up with new members after their first meeting.
- Publicity Director - continuously publicizes the meetings to the community through news sources, posters/flyers, public events, etc.
- Membership Coordinator - maintains membership roster, contacts all members by phone or mail for notification of meetings and other news

Avoid assigning responsibilities to first time attendees (unless they specifically request particular tasks for which they may be well suited). It is usually better to enlist the help of those who have attended several meetings and are comfortable in the group.

Newcomers

It is important to treat newcomers with special consideration; this may be the first time they have reached out for support, and you want to make them feel welcome and encourage them to return. Keep the following tips in mind for welcoming new people to the group.

- Have a 'welcome person' greet the newcomer, introduce him/herself, give the newcomer a brief introduction to the group, and discuss the voluntary nature of participation.
- The first-time attendee should be introduced to the group and given a brief period of talk about him or herself, if he or she desires.
- An invitation to the next meeting is a simple follow-up method that encourages the person to return.
- If a newcomer wishes to receive email communication from the facilitator regarding future meetings, they must be notified that as this is a BIAC group, the email is also shared with BIAC staff for use in communicating with individuals. It is not shared beyond the staff of BIAC. If a newcomer does not wish for BIAC to have their information, then the facilitator should indicate that they will be unable to communicate with them via email.

Group Size

The group size may vary drastically over time. Be it small or large, the group size does not necessarily affect the success of the group. Small groups of 5-1O people can be an excellent forum for honest expression, camaraderie, and deep learning.

A skilled leader and facilitator can effectively manage large groups of 10-15 people; however, a large group of 20 or more may be too diverse or simply too big to allow for truly supportive, inclusive discussion. The facilitator must be ready to handle a large group if necessary or make the decision to split the support group into smaller, more intimate units. Before splitting the support group, the facilitator should consider the following:

1) How will the group be split? It depends upon the group make-up, but generally a large group which includes at least two people from each "subgroup" can break up for the meeting. For example, family members and individuals with brain injury can meet separately, spouses can meet separately from parents, or people with brain injuries can meet apart from those who have sustained strokes.

2) Which facilitator works best with parents? Which facilitator works best with individuals with brain injury? Can one group self-direct? Is there a survivor available to take on this role?

3) Are there two rooms available at the meeting location? Meeting in separate rooms will minimize distractions and noise levels and facilitate more open discussion in the two groups. If only one subgroup must move to another room, then it should be the people with fewer mobility impairments.

4) When will the separate sessions begin and end? Determine this ahead of time. For example, the entire group could go over "new business," separate for supportive discussions, and reconvene at the end of the meeting for a social period.

Building and Expanding the Group - Continuing Publicity
When a new Support Group is formed, BIAC will publicize the new group at upcoming events, in Buzz, Facebook, Instagram. The Support Group information will be added to the on-line Support Group listing as well. This is perhaps the most overlooked step in keeping a support group going, however, attracting new members is crucial to the group's survival. Also, educating the community about the support group can spark awareness of brain injury. Publicizing the group is an ongoing task for which at least one or two group members should formally take responsibility. Support groups should continue to reach out in as many ways as possible. Everything the group does to announce its existence to the community will help make the group more successful. Examples could include the following:

- Send emails to your social/professional networks to help spread the word,
- Post a flyer at the local library and local community establishments like the supermarket, etc.
- One of the most powerful forms of generating publicity is word of mouth.
- The facilitator could also post on their personal/professional social media accounts.

Transitions Among Membership
Group members will come and go as their needs are met or as their life circumstances change. Transition is normal and healthy for a group. One thing that should remain consistent is the meeting format. Although attendance, speakers, or special events may alter the format occasionally, a 'typical' format will maintain the supportive nature of the group. No matter how good the support group may be or how well it meets the needs of the members, it is inevitable that people will leave the group. In many cases, this is a very positive step, and it means the individual has moved forward in his/her life and recovery process. While there will be a sense of loss within the group, the members should be positive about someone's ability to take this step.

When someone does leave, it may be important to learn why he/she left. Knowing the reasons will help the group determine how it can improve for the future. While there is usually some sense of failure when someone leaves due to a problem, he/she has with the group or because of unmet needs, those individuals remaining in the support group need to recognize that they may not be able to provide what everyone needs or wants.
Group transitions are a topic for the members to discuss with the help of the facilitator. A good facilitator can help the group discuss someone's leaving, as well as everyone's feelings about it - good, bad, sad, or otherwise - while maintaining a productive focus. Sometimes, the reasons for leaving the group are not positive. This is not always the fault of the group; it may be simply that the group process was not the right thing for a particular person or family.

Meeting Individual Needs and Avoiding Stagnancy
Over time, the needs of the longest-standing group members can change. With thoughtful planning and careful execution, the same group can meet the changing needs of a variety of people. First and foremost, the group needs to be aware of the changing needs of the members to be able to successfully address them. The best support groups maintain consistency through the transition of the members as well as flexibility that helps people move forward.

When a group is not flexible, staleness may set in. If this occurs, occasional diversions can help members stay motivated, develop stronger interpersonal relationships, and attract new people.

Ideas for Alternative Gatherings

1. Guest speakers from the community can talk about current programs or issues. A motivational speaker or a panel presentation would be good alternatives. Schedule speakers who invite audience interaction.

2. Creative exercises can stimulate the group. For example, the group could read an especially good book outside of the meeting and come prepared to discuss it.

3. Recreation can be refreshing and foster team spirit. A pool party, bowling, a picnic, a spaghetti dinner, or holiday celebration work well for brain injury support groups. An open house or similar event is a great way to attract new members, provided it is well publicized. Plan events that are inexpensive, simple, easy to put together, and easy to clean up after!

4. Relaxation exercise and activities like guided imagery or Tai Chi are popular.

5. Changes of scenery or orientation can dramatically change a group meeting. For example, sitting in a circle can enhance interaction. In good weather, holding the meeting outside may pep up everyone's mood.

6. Group members could spend a session sharing personal photographs to learn more about each other; this visual exercise is especially helpful for individuals with limited communication skills.

Whatever creative twist the group takes, the desired effect is inclusion of all group members in the group process. Everyone has his/her own communication style and own place of importance in the group. Be sure to plan ahead with the agreement of members and communicate changes in meeting format so group members know to expect something different.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Practices

At BIAC, diversity, equity and inclusion are important values to us, as we know and understand that brain injury survivors are so often left on the outside with a myriad of obstacles standing in their way. We appreciate that by embracing diversity, equity and inclusion we help to remove those obstacles and bit by bit we can start to level the playing field.

The following article. *"Let's Get Practical: 3 Key Inclusive Facilitation Strategies" by Caroline Belden* was taken from the blog "The Inclusion Solution" and can be found at this link: http://www.theinclusionsolution.me/lets-get-practical-3-key-inclusive-facilitation-practices-workplace-training-power-partiality-polarization-inclusive-listening-multipartiality-shared-meaning/ It discusses three key strategies for inclusive facilitation, which we believe are useful ways for facilitators to endorse diversity, equity and inclusion. These key strategies are: **Listening Inclusively, Practicing Multi-Partiality, and Fostering Shared Meaning.**

1.) Listening Inclusively

All facilitators have some kind of positional power when leading training. Participants and learners see facilitators as the subject matter expert, an authoritative voice on whatever content or subject is being covered. As such, it is important to recognize that power and create space for knowledge and perspective-sharing amongst participants. At The Winters Group, we like to start sessions by letting participants know that we expect to learn as much from them as they will from us. It's a way of balancing out the power dynamic so that folks in the room feel empowered to share, participate, and engage authentically in the session.

To remain true to that expression of shared power, facilitators must also practice inclusive listening. Here are some key behaviors: **Ask** "What does this mean for you?" instead of asking "What does this mean for me?"

- **Honor** the person's experiences, supporting them to have conversations in an authentic way
- **Acknowledge** the person's feelings, highlight their values, and identify topics in a neutral way to prepare for collaborative problem solving.
- **Break down** someone's point of view or position into three parts as you listen:
  - Feelings – What are the feelings that someone is expressing, *not* your opinion of what their feelings must be, or your analysis of what's going on inside of them
  - Topics – what is the specific or concrete thing that the person is wanting to make plans about, or problem solve around? Listening for topics does not mean listening to place judgment or value on a person's specific problem or situation.
  - What's Important (or Values) – What are one or two key positive words that reflect the needs, goals and values a person expresses, *not* what they dislike about others
- **Prioritize** the learning of the group over your desire to "make a point." As facilitators, we bring our whole selves to this work—our biases, our passion, our identities and perspectives

on different topics. We can hold ourselves accountable to centering the group's learning by continuously going back to this question: *"How will this [what I am about to say or share] move the group forward?*

2.) Practicing Multi-Partiality

Multi-partiality is a practice that supports facilitators in giving equal attention to multiple identities and experiences. Most importantly, it supports facilitators in giving attention to those identities and experiences that might be absent or unheard. As facilitators, we are all partial to our points of views or perhaps to advocating for those points of views that we consider either the most needed, unheard, undervalued, etc. Practicing multi-partiality allows us not to force or fake neutrality, but to remain authentic while allowing for multiple points of view to be heard. Here are some key strategies for practicing multi-partiality:

- **Identify the goal**: "The goal of this conversation is to…"
- **Combat binaries** using "both and…" instead of narratives or arguments that suggest "either/or"
- **Call out the gaps** by asking, "Who is *not* a part of this conversation (or community)? Why?"
- **Redirect from dominant narratives** by asking, "Does anyone have a different experience from those shared?"
- **Be prepared to share unrepresented experiences** using narrative, video, guest speakers, etc.
- **Clarify what is at stake**: "If we do not consider the experiences of [underrepresented group], then…"

3.) Fostering Shared Meaning

When facilitating sessions, particularly around DEI topics, polarization may arise. Particularly in this sociopolitical climate, it can become difficult to find any common ground in a room full of people with distinct experiences and worldviews… especially when people begin conflating *truth* with *fact*. Oftentimes in polarized environments or discussions, people will attempt to defend their point of view or their "side" by conveying their truth, their interpretation or experience of the world, as an objective fact. This can muddle the conversation and make it difficult to find shared meaning. Here are some strategies for navigating "truth" versus "fact" and finding common ground:

- **Acknowledge the 'elephant' in the room. Polarization exists and acknowledging that is part of the dialogue**. "Our experiences are different around this topic, and therefore, we have different points of view. We each probably think our experience is the 'right' one, and this is keeping us from finding common ground."
- **Honor people's truths while continuing to share facts/data when appropriate**. Restate when you hear someone stating their truth as fact: "What I am hearing is that in *your* experience…"

- **Distinguish interpretations and clarify definitions.** What do terms like fairness, safety, and trust mean to those involved in the dialogue? Discuss those differences. Write them down. "When you refer to this value, what does this mean to you?"
- **Know when to 'press pause.' Set aside time to reflect. Be okay with non-closure.** "Let's pause the conversation for the moment. What are some steps we can each take to learn more and reflect before we engage again?"

Orientation & Training

Prior to becoming a BIAC Support Group facilitator, interested individuals will be asked to complete a volunteer application and meet with the Director of Programs and Services and/ or the Senior Brain Injury Specialist for orientation & training, at a mutually agreed upon time and place.

BIAC also recommends, prior to beginning your group, that you visit other BIAC support groups to see how they are run and begin to develop relationships with other leaders. Fellow brain injury support group leaders can be an invaluable resource to one another – providing support, offering suggestions for topics, meeting format, guest speakers, etc.

Attendance & Responsiveness

Facilitators are expected to be timely and responsive. Facilitators should notify BIAC's Senior Brain Injury Specialist in advance if they are unable to be present when a meeting is scheduled. Facilitators are also expected to respond to contacts, via email or phone, regarding the support group in a timely manner. For those who are taking that first step to consider attending a support group it can be an important step in their path to accepting their injury or their path to accepting support from others.

Drug-Free Environment

BIAC provides a drug-free, healthy and safe environment. While conducting BIAC-related activities, a facilitator may not use, possess, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

Confidentiality

All facilitators are required to sign a Support Group Waiver / Confidentiality Form (see page 18) prior to beginning his or her support group. It is imperative that you respect the privacy of group members – what is discussed in the group stays within the group. It is important to remind group members of this and ensure that they know that what they share and what

others share is kept confidential. It is also important to adhere to confidentiality BIAC protocols. As an example, when sending email messages to participants, please put their email addresses in the "Bcc" window, so as to protect their contact information.

Background Checks

BIAC reserves the right to do a background check on facilitators.

Conduct

Facilitators are expected to follow rules of conduct that will protect the interests and safety of all Support Group attendees, facilitators and staff of BIAC.

We are here for you!

The Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut is here for you to provide guidance, information, and contacts that will help you start and maintain a successful brain injury support group in your area. We wish you well and hope this handbook serves to assist you and your group as you begin this journey of mutual support. We welcome your comments and any additional information you think might be valuable additions to this handbook.

Thank you!

As a BIAC support group facilitator, you are a volunteer for this organization. We value your partnership greatly. We encourage you to include a link to our website on your own professional website page and/or social media accounts.

Support Group Facilitator Waiver

Waiver/Confidentiality

FACILITATOR WAIVER

As a facilitator of the ***Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut*** I have received, reviewed and agree to abide by the policies and procedures as stated in this facilitator handbook. I understand that I will be facilitating at my own risk and that the organization, its employees and affiliates, cannot assume any responsibility or liability for any accident, injury or health problem, which may arise from any volunteer work I perform for the organization.

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

As a facilitator of BIAC, I understand that I may have access to confidential information, both verbal and written, relating to attendees, volunteers or staff and the organization. I also understand that I must provide email addresses of participants **who share them with me** to BIAC.

I understand, and agree, that all information should be treated confidentially and discussed only within the boundaries of my facilitator position.

I also agree not to discuss these same matters after I have left my facilitator position at this organization. I further understand that breach of this agreement shall constitute grounds for legal action and may result in termination of my facilitator status with BIAC.

Please sign below to indicate your acceptance and agreement with these terms outlined above.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Support Group Location: _____

Facilitator Commitment

Our Mission: ***Raising voices and visibility of people with brain injury and improving lives through support, education, and advocacy.***

I am fully committed to the mission of BIAC and will serve as ambassador for the mission.

I will use my association with BIAC only to advance BIAC's mission. I will not use my affiliation with BIAC in connection with the promotion of any other organization, cause, or position on any issues that conflict with the position of BIAC.

I will comply with established reporting requirements for BIAC. I will provide BIAC staff with support group reports after each meeting, including email addresses of new participants, as well as any additional requested information regarding my support group.

I will act in ways that contribute to effective group process, demonstrating respect and care for the opinions of my fellow support group members by conducting myself in a manner that supports effective communication.

The goal of BIAC is for every support group to be co-facilitated by a person with a brain injury or family member and a person with professional expertise in brain injury science and/or group dynamics. I will work with BIAC to assure that my group strives for that goal.

I will not share the names and addresses of support group members with anyone outside of BIAC without the permission of the Executive Director or Director of Programs & Services.

I will not speak for BIAC, its programs or services, its Board or committees unless authorized to do so by the Executive Director or the Director of Programs & Services.

I will make every effort to attend, be on time, and remain until the end of all scheduled support group meetings. I will provide support group members with reasonable notice in case of unavoidable absences.

You may share my name, telephone number, email address and meeting dates/times with individuals or groups that contact the Alliance. This information will also be included in newsletters, on the BIAC web site, and in other publications of the Alliance.

Signed: _____ **Dated:** _____

Please Email or mail your application to:
Email: vdarr@biact.org Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut
200 Day Hill Road, Suite 250, Windsor, CT 06095

Facilitator Contract

I agree to facilitate a **Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut** (BIAC) Support Group in my area.

I have read, understand and agree to the obligations and expectations outlined in the *Brain Injury Alliance of Connecticut Support Group Facilitator Commitment* and any other relevant policies provided to me. All support group facilitators must review and commit to the *Support Group Facilitator Commitment* in order to facilitate a BIAC group.

Facilitator Information

Name: First	Middle	Last	
Address: ☐ H ☐ W Street	City	State	Zip
Phone: home work cell **Phone number(s) to be listed on BIAC's Support Group listing:**			
Email:	Support Group Meeting Schedule: Day: Start and End Times:		

This Support Group meets (please check one):	**This Support Group's focus is:**	**This Support Group format is:** (please check one):
☐ Monthly ☐ Bi-monthly ☐ Weekly ☐ Other	☐ Open ☐ Caregivers ☐ Veterans ☐ Stroke ☐ Other (please specify)	☐ In-Person ☐ Hybrid ☐ Virtual ☐ Other

Please indicate the day of the week that this group will meet:

Monday:	Tuesday:	Wednesday:	Thursday:	Time of Meeting: Start: End:

Please indicate the location of the group meetings:

Street:	City:	Building: Room location/special instructions (i.e. - parking):

I agree that if I am unable to fulfill the expectations for support group facilitation as listed above and on the *Support Group Facilitator Commitment*, I may be removed from this position.

Signed: _____ **Dated:** _____

Support Group Attendance Report

Date: _____ **Location:** _____

Please email to:	
Facilitator(s)	
Number Attending	
Topics	
Speakers	
Comments/Suggestions	
Next Meeting Date(s)	
Name and Email Address of New attendees	

BIAC is required to provide de-identified information quantifying people served in the community, and we utilize your Support Group Report information when writing grant proposals.

and a BIG "Thank you" for taking time out of your busy day to complete and return this form.

Support Group Member List

INITIAL NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESSES OF ALL CURRENT SUPPORT GROUPS MEMBERS

(Must be submitted along with newly signed contract, commitment)

NAME	EMAIL ADDRESS

List of Appendices

Appendix	Subject / Content
A	**Meetings** Meeting formats; theme and topic suggestions; icebreakers
B	**Group Facilitation** General techniques; keeping the group moving; handling conflicts
C	**Guest Speakers** How to find them; topic ideas; prep and hosting
D	**Group Evaluation** Signs of a strong group; measurement & assessment strategies; assessment checklist
1	The Value of Setting Goals
2	Lost and Found – What brain injury survivors want you to know
3	From There to Here
4	My TBI Journey – From Denial to Acceptance
5	Social and Recreational Opportunities
6	Learning to Remember
7	Memory and Brain Injury
8	Memory Compensations
9	Initiation, Planning, Organization and Brain Injury
10	When Get Up and Go is Gone
11	Cognitive Problems after TBI
12	Fatigue and TBI
13	Dept. of Rehab Services Brochure
14	JAN Accommodation and Compliance
15	Students With Brain Injury – Achieving Goals for Higher Education
16	Finding Happiness After Brain Injury
17	Can You Find Happiness with a Brain Injury
18	When It's Hard to Feel Thankful
19	Tips for Surviving and Enjoying Holidays After TBI
20	TBI Loneliness
21	The Loneliest Season (Caregiver's Perspective)
22	Enjoying the Holidays After Brain Injury
23	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Training
24	Chapman Ladder of Inference and Tips and Action Plan