

## *Session Two*

### **Group Functioning Case Studies** *Scenario A*

Barbara has organized a group of to meet about the condition of the school facilities in their county. Members of the group include parents, teachers, students, and other interested individuals. They come from across the county. Some of them know each other because they belong to the same local community. Others do not know any group members.

On the day of their first meeting, Barbara is very excited. She can't wait to get underway and tackle the big issues. Can the county find a way to build new schools? What are the options for renovating existing buildings, playgrounds, and athletic fields? What other facility issues are the schools in their county facing? Barbara is also very proud that her group is diverse in make-up and inclusive of all types of people who may have ownership in this project. She is sure that the group will be able to quickly devise some wonderful plans for addressing their concerns.

When the group comes together, Barbara is frustrated to find that they are not immediately engaging in discussions and making plans. She notices that people are sitting with those whom they know and are not really interacting with those whom they do not know. The students that are part of the group are keeping to themselves and not interacting with the adults.

Barbara wanted to empower the group and let them have ownership in defining the problems, developing plans, and implementing solutions—but instead they all seem to be waiting for her to tell them what to do. “If this is going to be the way it is,” she thinks, “I wonder why I even bothered. I should have just worked on this by myself!”

- Which stage(s) of group functioning can be identified in this situation?
- What is/are the challenge(s) being faced by the group in this situation?
- Are these challenges normal parts of group functioning? Explain.
- What are some strategies the group could use to address and overcome the challenges they are facing?

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### **Group Functioning Case Studies** *Scenario A*

Group responses to the questions in this case study may vary. Use this opportunity to discuss the different perspectives of the situation.

**Which stage(s) of group functioning can be identified in this situation?**

Forming

**What is/are the challenge(s) being faced by the group in this situation?**

The group is unfamiliar with one another and unsure of their individual roles.

The leader/facilitator is frustrated by the group's seeming sluggishness and inaction.

**Are these challenges normal parts of group functioning? Explain.**

Yes. When a group first comes together, time is needed to help them become comfortable with one another and develop an idea of their roles and responsibilities. They will not be able to function smoothly until/unless they accomplish the goals of the forming stage.

**What are some strategies the group could use to address and overcome the challenges they are facing?**

Although Barbara is frustrated, it is important to realize that the group needs time to get to know one another. She should be patient and provide opportunities for icebreakers, discussions, and teambuilders. An atmosphere where people can be relaxed and enjoy getting to know one another and talk about their shared interest in the work of the group is important.