

Frequently Asked Questions

A response for professionals interested in facilitating a group for parents.



This FAQ document has been developed:

- To assist any first-time parent group facilitator to feel confident to start their group
- As prerequisite reading for professionals wanting to attend a BUGK foundational training.

Bringing Up Great Kids Workshop Information:

If you are interested in attending a foundational workshop and becoming a BUGK facilitator you can find out more on our website [here](#).

Q. How do I find out what parents want to talk about in a parent group?

You would need to conduct a needs analysis. This could be a questionnaire sent out to parents to determine what they need or want. You could also do this verbally with a group of parents.

Q. I have determined the needs/wants (from analysing the questionnaires taken above) but now what do I do?

From your needs analysis, you have determined the needs/wants, and this also helps to determine your target group (which parents are now going to be targeted for the parent group).

Q. So what now?

You will now need to decide what your parent program will look like; will it be a one-off workshop, a number of sessions program or ongoing for an indefinite period of time.

Q. I've decided my audience and delivery format, how do I let parents in my target group know the details of my program?

You would need to develop a flyer or equivalent to promote your program, ensure it is available in both hard copy and electronically as a PDF. You could then provide both hard and electronic versions to local kindergartens and primary schools as this is where your target group of parents are. You could also advertise at maternal child health centres and child care centres.

Q. When and how should I run my program – day, evening, weekends, face-to-face or online?

This will depend on the parents you are targeting – do they work weekdays, have commitments on weekends, are they isolated? With your promotional material have available an expression of interest form – this allows parents to nominate their preferred time to attend the program and how they would like to attend. They can post or email this to you so you can determine when the most parents are available and the format they want to attend. Remember parents who really want to attend will work something out.

Q. How many parents should I have in my face-to-face group?

A group can consist of any number of parents; it depends on how comfortable you are with running a group. Ideally somewhere between 6 and 10 parents is good especially if you are facilitating on your own. It is preferable to have two facilitators particularly if you have a group of 8 to 12 parents.

Q. What about running a parent group online?

Running parent groups online can be very useful for parents who find it hard to attend in person or who are isolated. If you haven't run a group online before it would be best to have only 4 to 6 parents attend. Once you are more experienced you could have 6 to 8 parents keeping in mind all the complexities of running a parent group. Again, it is preferable to have two facilitators even with these smaller numbers.

Q. What is a facilitator?

A facilitator is a professional who is skilled at orchestrating discussions without the need to be the 'expert' or the holder of the knowledge. A facilitator is different to a teacher, lecturer, coach, presenter or trainer.

Q. Why is it more beneficial to have two facilitators?

When there are two facilitators, you can share the session, doing the things each of you is most comfortable or best at. You can also better monitor the group when one is facilitating, the other can be observing. This helps you to manage the whole group particularly if you have an extremely quiet parent or a particularly loud, overbearing parent. Two facilitators can also help to keep each other on time and on task.

Q. I have decided on 2 hours for my sessions – what do I do if I can't fit everything in or I don't have enough to fill the time?

This comes down to good planning – ensure you have plenty of content and plan out approximately how long each part of each session will go for. For example - the warm up may take between 5 and 10 minutes and the content may take an hour. Make sure you identify in your session plan what you can leave out if time is running short and what additional content you can use if you have time to spare. As each group runs differently depending on the amount of discussion, etc. being prepared for all outcomes is best.

Q. Great, I now have a group of parents who want to attend my program, but I am not sure where to start. How do I write a program?

You certainly don't need to write a program as there are plenty of parenting programs out there. However, if you wish to write a program you need to think about not just the content of the program (addressing the needs or wants of the parents) but also the format of each session.

Q. What is the difference between parenting programs?

Some programs are written for specific groups of parents (e.g. parents with children with disabilities, parents with a mental health issue, foster carers, kinship carers, dads only, etc.) while other programs can bring together a range of different families, who will all benefit from the group experience (e.g. Bringing Up Great Kids [BUGK]).

Different programs are based on different philosophies (e.g. focus on behaviour control, focus on emotion and relationship, focus on strategies and techniques, etc.). You need to be able to match the program you choose with your own philosophy.

The other consideration is to think about the delivery method of the program, is it prescriptive or reflective? Note: a prescriptive program such as Triple P needs to be taught whereas you can facilitate a reflective program such as BUGK.

Q. What should I include in the format?

You need to think about things like; greeting the parents, welcoming the group together, introductions, overview of the program, warm ups (ice breakers), the content and finally a homework task and a conclusion. Including these in each session will help parents to know what is coming next and keep you on time.

Q. What is a warm up?

A warm up or icebreaker activity helps to bring the group together and ready for the session. This could be just for fun, to introduce parents to each other and you or it could directly relate to the content of the session – this is up to you.

Q. Do I need to talk to the prospective participants before accepting them into a parent group?

It is a good idea to discuss with prospective participants why they want to attend the group and to ascertain what they are hoping to get out of it. This gives you the opportunity to determine whether the participant has unreasonable expectations about what they will gain from attending the group, if they are able to commit for the entire length and even if they are suitable for the type of group you are facilitating.

Q. What is the referral process?

1. You can choose to only accept referrals into your parent group and only you can decide where these referrals will come from and
2. You may find that participant are not suitable for the parent group you will be facilitating so you need to have a process to refer these parents to where they will receive the assistance they need. Also during the course of the group you might find participants need further support that you cannot provide so again need to have a process to refer them on. Bottom line is don't leave parent without somewhere to go for further support if you can't help.

Q. What types of parents attend parenting groups?

You will find a diverse range of adults parenting children; they may include:

- Biological parents
- Foster carers
- Adoptive parents
- Kinship carers
- Grandparent carers
- Couples
- Single parents
- Same sex parents
- Young/teenage parents

Q. I have never run a parent group before – is it different to any other sort of group?

Parent groups are very different from other groups, and also each parent group is different depending on the types of parents attending and why they are attending.

Q. What is different about running a parent group?

Firstly you will have people from different walks of life – different backgrounds with different parenting role models and approaches, different skills and knowledge, different family structures, different values and beliefs. All these differences can challenge facilitators in many ways. Also, you will have mums and/or dads in your group and sometimes carers. They may be parents who have chosen to come, been strongly urged to come or ordered to come (in the case of court ordered parents) so they have different reasons for being there.

Q. This sounds challenging – how can I manage the different parents in the group?

During session one, it is beneficial to write up a list of guidelines, so parents know what the rules are for their group. Get the parents to come up with the rules as this is their group, and these should be their rules. Keep this list handy at each session so that they are reminded of the rules they set – like respecting each other's opinions, allowing each parent to talk without interruption, giving everyone a chance to comment and participate, etc. Some rules that apply to all groups - respecting privacy and confidentiality putting phones on silent or turning them off, being punctual and letting you know if they are not attending might be included. Remember new guidelines can be added as the sessions go on if necessary.

Q. What are some guidelines for an online parent groups?

Most are the same as a face-to-face groups but may also include – where possible have your camera on throughout the session, having your microphone on mute and only unmuting when asked to, not recording the session, using headphones for better sound and for privacy, taking advantage of breaks and nurturing yourself, rules around the use of Chat, if you need to leave let the facilitator know, when sharing be aware of where your children are.

Q. How do I find a suitable venue?

If you do not have access to a suitable venue you will need to source this elsewhere. Think about your local community venues that you may be able to use or hire, for example, a community centre, school hall, neighbourhood house, library, different organisations spaces, childcare centre space, etc.

Keep in mind that you need to ensure WHS and emergency procedures are understood and followed if necessary.

Remember that you need access to:

- enough space for the number of participants in your group
- toilets
- tea and coffee making facilities
- table and chairs

Q. What if the parents want to bring their children to the group?

This complex question requires much consideration; these might include:

- WHS issues for the children in an adult space
- Parents may be distracted by the children and their needs
- Facilitators may find it difficult to keep the group focused and on task

Q. What if I provide childcare on site in a separate space away from the group?

This is also a complex question with many considerations; you may need to think about:

- Cost may be prohibitive to parents
- The issue of qualifications and appropriate security checks for the people caring for the children
- The appropriateness of the space being provided for child care

It is important for parents and children to feel safe and comfortable with the child care arrangements.

Q. How do I know what to charge for a program?

This varies between programs, some you can charge parents to attend at a set rate, some programs have a flexible rate and others do not charge parents other than to cover program costs (not for profit) at all to attend, such as BUGK.