

DOSAGE PROBATION

Principles of Facilitation

Effective facilitation is critical to a successful meeting and much more. It is often the key to transforming a group into a team and guiding them to make well-informed, consensus-based decisions. Below are several principles to keep in mind when facilitating meetings for the Dosage Probation Policy Team or Dosage Probation Workgroup.

Recognize and Promote Others

The most important principle of facilitation is to ensure that every person in the meeting feels heard and recognized. There are several strategies for honoring this principle:

- Learn everyone's name as quickly as possible (name cards are helpful) and address people by name when you speak or ask questions.
- At the first meeting, ask participants how they prefer to be addressed: by titles or honorifics, or by first name? However they choose, it must apply to everyone. Calling on "Judge____" or "Chief____" when everyone else is addressed by their first name may establish an uncomfortable hierarchy.
- Throughout your discussions, call on those who tend to let others do the talking. For example, ask: "[Name], what do you think about this?" or "[Name], we haven't heard from you. Given your role as _____, what would you say?"
- For certain parts of a meeting, assign someone to capture salient points on a flip chart or whiteboard as each person speaks, summarizing the main idea as accurately as possible.
- Whenever possible, refer to previous remarks. For example, "As [Name] mentioned earlier, we really need to consider..." or "[Name] reminded us a few moments ago that we must remember..." This emphasizes that you are listening and that people have been heard.

Model Respect

Always speak and respond with the utmost respect for everyone in the room. You are modeling the kind of speech, tone of voice, brevity of remarks, and general approach that you want everyone to use.

Manage the Conversation

Make sure no one dominates the discussion. If necessary, you may have to forego one person's interjection to call on someone else. You may also need to shorten a lengthy comment by gently pointing out that there is limited time to hear from everyone.

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Monitor for Distractions

People sometimes handle their discomfort with a discussion by inserting an off-topic opinion or story that can redirect the conversation. If that happens, politely bring the attention of the group back to the central topic at hand: “Thanks for that thought, [Name], but we need to finish the discussion about...”

Mediate Difficult Conversations

Participants expect conversations to be civil. If they become heated, you are responsible for cooling them down. Call a time-out if needed. It can be a break for refreshments or a simple request for the parties to allow the conversation to move on. This does not mean ignoring the disagreement or leaving it to surface at another time. Acknowledge and affirm both the nature of the disagreement and people’s strong feelings about it. If possible, reframe the issue or ask others in the room to reframe it. Ask the disagreeing parties how they might move closer to agreement.

Ask Others to Respond

You are the moderator, so be mindful to insert yourself and your opinions as little as possible. You may strongly disagree or agree with someone’s point, but ask others to respond. If someone makes an unclear point, encourage them to use an example or story to add clarity or emphasis. This should not be an opportunity for you to interject your opinions or assumptions about what they mean.

Manage the Time

Part of being respectful toward your team or workgroup is being aware of their time. Do not stray far from the times on the agenda without checking in with them: “If we go much longer on this topic, the meeting will run late or we won’t get to everything. What’s your choice?”