

# Developing Student Interprofessional Competence Through a Support Group Assignment

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## BACKGROUND

Support groups provide individuals the opportunity to interact and build a network for the betterment of health. A support group assignment was developed and integrated into an interprofessional education elective course that exposed students to community resources focused on improving health. The framework of this learning activity was designed to provide guidance, as well as the option for independent personalized choice in addition to engaging in a novel experience outside of the traditional academic setting. Observation of a local or web-based support group session provided students with an impactful lived experience and gave meaning to the “doing” (Chesser-Smyth, 2005).

## METHODS

After attending a support group session, students representing 14 health professional programs were asked to answer guided reflection questions. A total of 214 reflection assignments were analyzed to determine if student learning objectives based on Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC) sub-competencies were met. Targeted IPEC sub-competencies included Values and Ethics 2 and 5, and Roles and Responsibilities 3 and 4. Assessment of assignments also reflected student learning of Values and Ethics 4 and 6.

## Sample of Students Support Group Reflections

- “An impactful lived experience that gave meaning to the “doing””
- “Extended an individuals’ health network”
- “Helpful to know local resources”
- “Eye opening view of the client and their families view of the healthcare experience as well as the struggles they address when at home”
- “It was helpful to attend a support group that addressed issues that the clients I am interested in working with are addressing”

## DISCUSSION

Self-selecting support groups provided students the opportunity to learn more about a population or condition of interest. This increased the potential to sincerely engage in the reflection of the experience. Students were given the opportunity to reflect on their image of an ideal health team and the roles and responsibilities of all possible team members, including members outside of the traditional health care team. Exposure to the support group experience offered students a platform to help shape a broader understanding of individuals and families’ needs, and potential resources available to maximize health. Healthcare providers need a better understating of available community resources to support overall health and improve QOL.

## CONCLUSIONS

Student attendance of a local or web-based support group session is a valuable interprofessional educational learning experience that can broaden students’ perception of a health team and expose students to community resources that support health.

## REFERENCES

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