



Reach out and
Support Each Other!

**Canadian Families and Corrections Network
A Guide to Setting up a Family Support Group**

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1.0 Introduction

Canadian Families and Corrections Network's (CFCN) mission is *"to build stronger and safer communities by assisting families affected by criminal behavior, incarceration and community reintegration"*. We are a Canadian charity organization, overseen by a volunteer Board of Directors from across Canada and are a member of the National Associations Active in Criminal Justice, Public Safety Roundtable and the Correctional Service of Canada's Community Corrections Working Group. CFCN, in over 20 years of operation, has contributed significantly to Canadian research, resources, policy development and service delivery to offenders and their families.

CFCN works to assist families of those affected by criminal behaviour and defines families as *"a group of individuals who are related by affection, kinship, dependency or trust"*. These direct family members, spouses, partners, children and friends are often overlooked when someone commits a crime; they receive little assistance; and seem to be the *'forgotten society'*. The place and contribution of a family to society is unparalleled and very different from that of community partners, churches or groups. Families have no defined mission; they do not have an agenda or an outward focus. They live and look after the individuals in their family to the best of their ability, supporting each other and holding each other accountable for their actions. The Correctional Service of Canada states that *"positive contact with family and friends is a very important factor in the successful reintegration of offenders"* but the criminal justice system is very complex and families of offenders need our assistance.

Canadian Families and Corrections Network is very grateful to the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada (WICC) who have allowed us to put this Support Group Guide together. It is through their funding that we have gathered formal information across Canada on support groups for families and friends who have a loved one in the criminal justice system. We have gone to these groups and asked for their best tips and advice to assist us with this guide and appreciate their contributions.

2.0 Why do we need a Guide?

Many people have called Canadian Families and Corrections Network looking for a support group. They feel isolated and stigmatized by incarceration and need to understand and educate themselves about corrections, visiting security procedures, community resources and ways to cope. Unfortunately there are not many groups across Canada to which we can refer them. Many of these people feel capable of starting their own group but would like more information and guidance on how to do this. We thought it best to develop a guide to answer basic questions, to help people reach out and join together to support one another.

By offering a guide to assist and encourage the start up of support groups, we will be inviting families and friends to give support and information to their peers in a cooperative, inclusive setting. A support group will allow them to discuss their mental wellbeing, the stress of a loved one's incarceration and foray into the criminal justice system, as well as coping mechanisms and solutions for adults and children in their families. Support groups will encourage the sharing of peer information about the criminal justice system, child protection services, financial solutions, community resources, self-care, etc. CFCN wants to empower people to assist themselves and encourage them to work together to gain a sense of internal peace in a safe place, where others understand the unique challenges of having a loved one that is involved in the criminal justice system.

3.0 Support Group Setup

3.1 Do we need a Support Group in our Area?

It's a valid question. In order to answer this question, it would be good to research your area. Do you already have a support system for families of offenders? What does the community offer in terms of free or economical counselling, drop-in centres, educational courses, places to meet and chat with a social group that will help satisfy this need?

And who you would ask to join? Do you know of others who need, or would join, a group if you started one? Are there places where you could easily advertise or existing groups you know you could draw from?

3.2 What will a Support Group Offer?

Support groups offer many advantages to their participants. The first is that everyone in the group shares a similar experience. Everyone you speak to will have a family or friend inside the criminal justice system and this knowledge puts people at ease, knowing they won't be judged as they might in a setting where everyone does not have the same familiarity with their situation. People understand what you are talking about, why you might feel a certain way, or why you might choose a certain action. This shared experience makes you feel normal, and reduces the isolation and loneliness that you might be feeling.

People like the idea of having a designated place where they can go to, in which they feel safe. As trust gets built up in a group by sharing experiences and things held private, people begin to feel comfortable in discussing their story and vulnerabilities, knowing they won't be judged.

People need others to get through challenging times. In a support group you may have a participant whose family is pressuring them to end the relationship with the family member involved in crime, leaving them with no one to discuss their feelings and emotions. They may feel alone and need to work this out. Or there may be a participant who has a very supportive social network of family and friends but they may feel that they have talked with them enough, feel they would burden their family by more conversation, but they still feel the need to talk or find coping solutions. Situations like this can be stressful and the support of a designated group where you know you will be accepted and your feelings understood can be a great advantage. Some people would rather talk to someone with actual experience than a doctor or counsellor. Over time, ongoing relationships in a support group can lead to solid friendships, which may continue even after participants choose to leave the group. The trust built together may help people move forward in other areas of their life.

There is also education and awareness. In Canada, our criminal justice system is complex. Different crimes, different types of courts, family and child custody issues, etc. are challenging for people to understand. Our provincial and federal institutions are run differently and there are many rules and regulations to understand. People need to 'learn the ropes' from someone who may have already walked that path and can explain what to do next or what worked for them. Having this education and awareness allows people to feel more in control, less anxious knowing what to expect, and how to cope.

Ultimately, a support group offers hope. Bringing together people with a common interest, in a group to assist one another, offers hope that they will be able to understand what they are experiencing. Hope that they will learn any necessary information, make friends, and support their inside loved one, will assist them in coping with the hardship of having a family member incarcerated.

3.3 Who should be in the Support Group?

This is something to consider. Canadian Families and Corrections Network has found several groups across the country over time. Some are for all family members and friends – an open group for anyone who has a loved one involved in the criminal justice system. Other group options we have heard of are just for family members of those in the criminal justice system (no friends), some groups are just for mothers, some just for wives and partners, some just for men, etc. Should it be adults only or will you allow small children and infants to attend with their parents? It has been suggested that a separate group for teenagers is a good idea. It is really up to you and the members who you would like to include as to what kind of support group you want to have.

3.4 What will we do in the Support Group?

Support groups can be of several types and can offer many services and kinds of assistance. Consider if your group will provide the following to its members:

- Peer Support - emotional and practical information from those with similar experiences
- Education - information, conversations about the criminal justice system, resources, referrals, etc.
- Telephone Helpline - support and referrals to sources of local assistance
- Email Help - support and referrals to sources of local assistance
- Website - online information, a blog, participant postings, chats / contact information
- Resources – valuable information purchased to share with group members
- Awareness – knowledge and understanding of families with a loved one involved in crime
- Advocacy - for group members to raise awareness about the group and make concerns known
- Services - to families at court, accompaniment on institutional visits
- Childcare - services for those attending the support group
- Clothing – children’s clothing swap, business attire for interviews, etc.

It is unrealistic to consider offering all these services as you setup your support group. A better approach would be to offer one service and do it well, adding on other services over time as confidence, resources and assistance grows.

3.5 What does it take to be a Support Group Leader / Facilitator?

Some support groups are started by family members or friends of someone in the criminal justice system and some are started by professional community organizations. The leader (facilitator) of the group can be someone with the actual experience of having a loved one involved in criminal behaviour or a professional who offers strong knowledge of our legal system to the group.

Leading a support group takes dedication and commitment. Ask yourself if you can give the group the time and work it will take to get established. There will be decisions to be made, a venue to be found, processes to determine and ongoing work to seek out new participants, keep a membership list, etc. Are you in a vulnerable place in your journey or feeling like this is something that is good for you? If you have a loved one incarcerated, are you interested in doing this job only for the time of their sentence or indefinitely?

Consider your own personal care. As a leader, others will look to you for support, time and energy. Will you have this on a day when your personal resources are low, as well as on days when they are high? Do you have a strong support system for yourself or can you take a leadership course to help you understand what might lie ahead?

Do you have support from other family members or friends you can draw on to assist with the group? It might be better to share the leadership role, so there is someone to take over when you want holidays or need time off to recharge your batteries. Others may be willing to take pieces of the leadership role such as welcoming new members, creating posters, sending out meeting reminders, keeping the finances straight, etc.

3.5.1 Facilitation Tips

If you are new to leading and facilitating a group, here are some simple suggestions:

- Ask people to introduce themselves the first time they attend, if they are comfortable. If not, they could just say their first name.
- Try to ensure that everyone gets a chance to talk without interruption and ask open ended questions (questions without a 'yes' or 'no' answer) to allow people to speak a little more about themselves.
- Remember to show understanding of people's situations by offering comments like, "that must be challenging for you" or "that sounds like a hard thing to have to do" to foster a sense of caring and support in the group.
- Remember that you are there to assist others but, if you are a family member of a loved one, you are also there to receive support yourself. Include yourself in any round-table questions or discussions.
- Join members together – by highlighting when you see a similarity, people will be drawn to each other in support. If Cindy has indicated she is agreeable to sharing her story, stating, "Your comments remind me of Cindy's, she had to deal with that" may encourage the participant to chat with Cindy during a break for support and friendship, knowing they have something in common.
- One of the most important things a facilitator can do is to keep people focused. If a participant's conversation gets too long, you can help by summarizing their points so they will move along in the story. Stating, "So your son is in the assessment unit now, is there something in particular you are worried about?" will help a person focus on the next part of the story.
- Another important tip is to model positive behaviour. If you are seen gossiping or are not respectful, others will start this too.

3.6 Do we Need Money?

Money will help the support group but having it depends upon your goals. If you choose to run a support group where you meet in a space that does not charge rent, and everyone is willing to share the cost of coffee and occasionally cookies, you will not need money.

If you choose to take on other services such as accompaniment to court, buying group resources, etc. having funding would be an advantage. You can ask the members to contribute to coffee and resources or you can approach others for funding. Some ideas for possible donations include a local church, a Rotary Club or other community group, a local business or even a trust fund. Some may give you an in-kind donation rather than money – perhaps free meeting space, a used computer, posters printed, or food for a Christmas social. Write a letter introducing your group and be specific about what you will use the money for within the group. Remind funders that this group of people are often forgotten by society and are often excluded from government funding because they are related to the offender.

3.7 Ground Rules

Your support group will have many different people over time, with many different personalities, characteristics, backgrounds, personal beliefs and values. It is important to be inclusive and respectful to everyone. Ground rules allow us to do this. They allow us to create a set of expectations for the group as a whole to respect and listen to each other.

People have more respect for rules when they are allowed to offer their opinion on them. Having the initial group members brainstorm ideas at the first few sessions and asking newcomers to agree will give the entire group shared responsibility to encourage that they be maintained. You can post the rules during the meeting to remind people of what they have agreed to or use them to bring the group back to focus when needed.

Some common ground rules are shown in Appendix A.

3.8 Advertising

How will you let others know that you have started a group and they can join? Some ideas include:

- Talking to managers about putting up posters with rip-off information tabs around the city at grocery stores, convenience stores, drug stores, restaurants, churches, laundromats, libraries, bargain shops, shopping centers, post offices, and wherever you think families may go. (This may work better in a smaller or rural area.)
- Talking to managers at homeless shelters, half-way houses, missions and other organizations that serve those affected by crime (for example: Elizabeth Fry Society, John Howard Society, Salvation Army, St. Leonard's Society) about putting up posters with rip-off information tabs. They may have family members as clients with whom they will share the support group information. Are they getting calls for support that they could pass onto you?
- Talking to your local police station or correctional staff and chaplains in nearby detention centers, provincial jails and federal institutions about your support group idea. They may let you put up posters with rip-off information tabs at the entrance and in any visiting areas. They may help you get the word to those men and women in jail who might encourage their families and friends to attend your group.
- Talking to managers in any institutional guest houses in your area (e.g. Spring House in NS) about putting up posters with rip-off information tabs.
- Radio stations may air a Public Service Announcement (PSA) free of charge.
- Put notices in local papers, organizational newsletters, on restaurant placemat advertising, etc.
- Word of mouth is a great way to get started as people tend to respond to personal invitations. If you are a family member or know of family members, speak to them about the support group and ask them to spread the word at institution socials or other events.
- Social media is a good tool to get new members. Start a Facebook group or a Twitter account so you can advertise your group and have people follow you.
- If you have some funding, you might want to have some business cards made that you can hand out to people, leave with organizations, etc. These cards can be produced professionally or blank cards can be purchased and made with a computer. The cards can simply state *'Family Support Group – for friends and families who have a loved one in the justice system'* and a phone number or email address.

It is realistic to consider privacy and safety as you advertise. It is not a good idea to give out your full name, address or phone number. Some groups across Canada have their own phone number or just an email address they create specifically for support group communication to keep their family information private.

A sample poster with rip-off information tabs appears in Appendix C to help you get started. Remember to restock your posters every few months!

3.9 Meeting Arrangements and Food

Where will you meet? Some people feel a facilitator needs to open their home to others to run a group, but this is not necessary. Some groups rotate hosting at participant's homes after they are comfortable with each other but check out your area and see what else might be available. Groups across the country run in local church basements or common areas; through space donated by a local John Howard or Elizabeth Fry or other community organization who helps families in the criminal justice system; local libraries, etc. Some groups have started with community organizations who serve families coming together in a Support Coalition and rotating space on a monthly basis between the organizations. Unfortunately, some places may not welcome a corrections-based group and may be reluctant to host you.

We discovered a few additional thoughts about choosing a location from our existing support groups across Canada. First, everyone needs to feel safe and comfortable. Is the location welcoming and non-threatening? Will you have members who might need wheel-chair accessibility? Will a person feel stigmatized walking in (i.e. will people know that they have a loved one in the justice system or could there be many reasons to come to this place)?

How often should you meet? How long? Most groups across Canada meet once or twice a month for an hour or two. You may decide to meet more frequently, but remember that people have busy lives and some will travel an hour or more to be a part of the group.

When will you meet? Will it be during the day, in the evenings or on the weekend? Consider your members – will they be at work during the day, will they be travelling a long distance or will they have children who need to get to bed on a school night?

Decide on a start and end time for your sessions so people know what to expect and you can advertise clearly. As the facilitator, it will be your job to watch the time and let people know when the end time is approaching, so everyone can be respectful of those that still need a chance to speak in the group or those that will have to leave immediately at the end.

What about food? If possible, through funding or donations, it is a good idea to have coffee/tea as this normal routine makes the space feel more like home and relaxes people as they come in or speak. Some groups have money to buy donuts or someone bakes cookies. Some have a potluck meal with their group meetings. Ask your group what they would like to do. You can start the sessions with your food, offer it during a break in the middle and/or end with food and mingling.

4.0 Running a Support Group

So you've decided what kind of support group you want to run, the services you want to offer and how you will attract new people. As you consider how to actually run the group, we have a few more suggestions before you start your first session.

4.1 Facilitating

Remember that being a facilitator does not mean you are the expert, a counselor or the boss. Your job is to keep the group organized, help maintain the mutually agreed upon rules, and allow everyone to feel included and welcomed.

Remember to always make connections with members ahead of time, so they feel welcomed, and greet them with a warm smile. An opening statement such as "This group is an opportunity for everyone to share what they are comfortable with from their own unique experience, and learn from each other" can be used. Most support groups start with an introduction of new members and then a check-in for all participants, going around the room, giving everyone the opportunity to speak or pass. After that, additional support may be offered to some, a topic or guest speaker might be introduced, or general questions may be asked. Suggestions to close the meeting include a summary of the topic; a thank you to a speaker and participants for coming; or a poem or uplifting thought. Always remind people of your next meeting date.

You may be asked a question you don't know. Canada's laws, institutional procedures and our court systems are complex and it is challenging to understand it all. Don't feel bad if you can't help someone with a question right away. Remember there are other participants in the group who may have experience or a comment to assist with the question. You may have to get back to them later with an answer. Local community groups, the Canadian Families and Corrections Network's toll-free help line for families, calling an institution or internet searching may give you the results you need. It would be worthwhile to create a list of helpful services and experts that you can call or offer to members.

Remember that a support group is not a one-size fits all solution. Some members will only come once; some will stay for a long time, depending on their need. Some might come right after their family member has been picked up by the police and others may find they need some time on their own first, before talking to a new group. When people leave the group, do not take it personally, as it likely is more about what they are going through, what they can fit into their schedule, and what they need right now.

Each person will be at a different place in their life and their family member may be at a different place on the criminal justice path. Some will be newly charged, some awaiting sentencing, some in the assessment units or serving time and some ready to reintegrate or already back with their families. It is easy to forget this in a group and sometimes hard to help members. Have patience for those who may ask a lot of questions. You need to ensure everyone feels included.

4.2 Ground Rules – Revisited

As a facilitator, it is your job to help maintain the ground rules established by the group. It is not solely your job, as other members will assist you with this, but you must model positive behaviour and remind people of the rules to which they have agreed, if necessary. Let's look at a few situations where this might be necessary.

Typically, in a group, you might find that some participants are reluctant to share, especially new members. This kind of reaction is normal, but they should be offered the choice to share and not just skipped over. In a general discussion, if you have not heard from someone for some time, you might want to check in with a simple, “Sally, did you want to comment?” to which they can reply or just say, “No thanks”. Engaging in a group does not always mean being talkative or that you want the opportunity to talk. Quiet people may be taking in more that you realize and value the sharing of others.

Also, if you are going around the room to discuss something, remind everyone that they will be asked to join in, but if they choose not to engage in this topic, it is their choice and they merely need to say, “Pass”. This will allow everyone to feel included and responsible for their own comments.

What about the person who might say too much and seems to take over the group? This can be gently handled with, “We want to hear the rest of your comments, but I am worried about our time and everyone having a chance to speak” or stopped with, “Thanks John, we appreciate your comments” and turning to someone else for their thoughts, or moving to another topic.

Sometimes if a person knows too much or too little and wants to share it, this can be challenging. If the information they share does not seem correct, ask the group if they agree or have had the same experience. Or tell them you are not sure about what they are saying and will check out the facts and it can be discussed again next time. Also, they may have a background that allows them in-depth knowledge of a certain topic, for example health care, which can be a wonderful contribution to group knowledge, but they might need to be reminded that testing and procedures may be done differently by the Correctional Service of Canada.

Remember that the group exists to assist each other. It will not move people forward in helping them cope with their situations if we do not speak positively. Although negative comments might come up about what people have experienced, continual negative talk about correctional procedures or unconstructive comments about the correctional system really don’t move people ahead.

Sometimes, group members, who have been around for some time, may exhibit behaviour or make comments that seem protective of the group or designed to instill fear of the correctional system in new members. They may do this to show their own authority or credibility in the support group. Watch for this as it is not a good habit to get into and needs some facilitation to bring the group back to factual information, or the reality that the group is for everyone, at whatever stage they are today. A quiet word with a group member, who has been there for some time, about how some are new to the group and the criminal justice system, and are there to learn, and how older group members can show great leadership and mentor in this area, goes a long way.

What if people just don’t click and you have a conflict between members? This is where the ground rules really are valuable. A quiet word reinforcing, “We might not all like each other, but we want to coexist in the group and support one another” to each member might be enough, but if not, it is best to tackle the problem directly in the group. Choose a session around the topic of mutual respect and allow people to express their dissatisfactions and reasons why they might be upset. Give everyone the chance to speak and try to keep people focused on facts. Then ask the group how they might collectively handle some of the issues and brainstorm toward solutions.

4.3 Group Topics

It is a good idea as a facilitator to have a topic ready for each group session. It may not be used during the session if a new member arrives and needs a great deal of time or a member needs additional support, but it is a good idea to be ready in case the conversation starts to drag. Some ideas include:

<u>Criminal Justice System</u>	<u>Institutional Policies</u>	<u>Mental Health/Wellness</u>
Child Protection Services	Assessment Phase	Addictions
Court	Drug Dogs / Ion Scanner	Dementia
Parole	Institutional Finances	Eating Habits
Probation	Institutional Healthcare	Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD)
Restorative Justice	Managing Institutional Costs	Hepatitis (HEP)
Searches	Phone System	Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)
Sentencing	Private Family Visits	Mental Health
	Visiting Procedures	Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD)
<u>Finances</u>	<u>Emotions</u>	<u>Reintegration</u>
Building Trust	Anger	Debt Reduction
Employment	Forgiveness	Housing
Family and Friends	Grief / Loss	Legal Fees
Keeping Secrets	Healthy Relationships	Retirement
Old relationships	Resentment	Single Incomes
Parenting	Sadness / Depression	
<u>Other</u>		
Canadian Families and Corrections Network		
Local Community Assistance		
Coping Strategies		

4.3.1 Self-care

This is a vital topic, as having a loved one involved in crime is not easy. Often times those who are supporting someone else forget about their own care. The needs of the loved one inside, their families and children, their job and financial responsibilities all weigh heavily on them and they neglect their own lives. Sometimes people have been focused on others for so long they may need assistance in identifying what their needs are, what might make them happy. A group exercise run every few weeks might help with this - checking in with people, observing their stress levels, and talking to them about what they think might help them cope with their situation.

Many people feel lonely and depressed about their situation and need to be reminded that others care for them and are there to help them cope. They need to be reminded that just because someone in their life is involved in crime, and perhaps in jail, it does not mean that they are. They have to live their life outside the institution and manage as best they can.

Social events can help with this. Going places with friends will reduce isolation and give people a chance to relax and enjoy their lives. It will also allow trust to be built, which can lead to friendships and the sharing of burdens we may carry. Encourage your participants to engage in social activities or plan a night out as a group.

Some self-care topics for discussion might be:

<u>On your own</u>	<u>With the support group</u>	<u>Join</u>
Bubble bath	Bingo	Church social
Crafts	Bowling	Cooking classes
Massage	Cooking	Gym
Reading	Craft group	Walking group
	Picnics	Yoga classes
	Social outings / Friends	
	Volunteer opportunities	

4.3.2 Guest Speakers

Once the group starts to solidify into a routine, participants might like to have a guest speaker to change the routine, or educate themselves in a certain area. Places to ask for guest speakers include:

Elizabeth Fry Society	Child Care Worker	Chaplain
John Howard Society	Health Care	Guard
Salvation Army	Justice Network	Lawyer
St. Leonard's Society	Law society	Police Officer

4.3.3 In the Community

It is always good to remember that the group is not on its own – there are community members and organizations that want to help.

Some of the people coming to your support group may need community assistance, but not know where to turn. Talk and share ideas in the group about where there are low cost school supplies for children, who has the best deal on winter coats, organizations that have subsidized counseling services, etc.

A volunteer opportunity or group outing is a good way to expose someone to what your community has to offer without making anyone feel ashamed in any way. If you can volunteer together making sandwiches at your local food bank or all go on a social outing to a good bargain store, group participants will learn what helpful places are around them and can go back later, if they need to.

5.0 Other Considerations

5.1 How will we make Changes in the Group?

Many support groups start with discussion on a topic and then allow each leader and participant a vote and the majority makes the decision. This is a positive approach. When the group has input into decisions, it fosters their sense of belonging.

5.2 Do we need a Bank Account?

If your group has decided that it does not require a great deal of funding and you will collect money from the members when you need it (for example, to pay for a social outing), you don't need a bank account. Ask one person to be accountable for the finances and be ready to explain the group process to others.

5.3 Protection of Information

What will be your approach to keep member's information private? Aside from the confidentiality ground rules, the members need to know that whoever keeps a master list of names, phone numbers and emails will not share it, unless they have permission. Always ask the group before sharing any information.

5.4 Media

What will you do if a radio station or newspaper wants to know about your group? If you have someone who is comfortable with this role, and will distribute accurate information about the group while keeping confidentiality, that would be best. If you are nervous, ask for questions ahead of time, so you can prepare, or offer a written statement about the group and decline an interview.

5.5 Close the group?

An open group is one where anyone can join at any time. A closed group is limited. Sometimes, when the group is solidified, they may feel that they have achieved a certain harmony among their members or the size of their group is working for them. They may no longer want to add any participants and chose to close the group to new members. This can be a decision the group makes as time goes on.

6.0 Final Words

Canadian Families and Corrections Network continually strives to assist families whose loved ones are involved in criminal justice system. We hope this resource helps to gather people together in a supportive, non-threatening environment that will empower them to cope and solve problems together. We want it to encourage people to start support groups across the country and inspire hope in their lives.

As time goes on, we will continually update this resource. If you have any ideas or suggestions for improvement, please contact us at (888) 371-2326 or through email at national@cfcn-rcafd.org.

Appendix A: Sample Ground Rules

1. Confidentiality – Out of respect for other’s privacy, we will use first names only in the support group and no one will be asked to outline their situation, or the criminal charges or issues of their loved one involved in crime. Any notes or minutes kept will only be of issues of concern, not of individual’s circumstances. All leaders and all group participants will sign a confidentiality agreement at their first meeting.

A sample Confidentiality Agreement can be found in Appendix B.

2. Mutual respect – We want each individual in the group to treat others in the same socially appropriate way that they would like to be treated. This means we acknowledge each other’s personal space and boundaries, listen politely to each other’s comments, do not speak in a rude manner to each other, switch cell phones to vibrate, etc. Remember that the same word or phrase can mean different things to different people. Mutual respect is also about being open and listening to others when they comment on your situation or offer suggestions - whether you choose to take action, or not, is your choice.
3. Contributions - Everyone is invited to contribute to the group and ask questions of the group. All our stories are different and listening to someone else may offer valuable growth and knowledge. Stories are how we share our knowledge, pain and personal insights. We can learn from other people’s stories, from other’s problems and how they’ve solved them. Each contribution is important.

Support Group Meeting Confidentiality Agreement

For the purposes of supporting other family members of offenders - allowing for a safe sharing environment for all and protecting the privacy of families and offenders:

I, _____ (print full name) agree not to disclose or use in any manner personal or identifying information that is discussed by any participant or group leader at any of our support group meetings.

This includes, but is not limited to, names of family members and offenders as well as legal and personal circumstances of family members and offenders.

In addition, I agree to only use referrals or resources provided to the group for my own purposes and in such a manner that will not disclose personal or identifying information disclosed by any other family participant or group leader.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Witness: _____

Name of Witness (please print): _____

Date: _____

