



Empowering Lives through dance




## The Implementation of Dance Movement Therapy and Other Creative Therapies:

Guidelines and Strategies for Working  
with Government Shelter Homes in India

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“ It is possible to have management without therapy but not therapy without management. Management includes safety, boundary and all aspects of the organizational structure. Without these conditions traumatized children will not be able to make use of therapeutic work... in residential and institutional settings the management structure of the whole organization is relevant to the therapeutic task ”

- Menzies Lyth

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Kolkata Sanved would like to thank the people and organizations who have helped to make our work in government shelter homes possible; without the experience of working directly with government shelter homes and with the children living in them, we would not have accumulated or have been able to share the following important information. We would like to acknowledge the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the support they have given Kolkata Sanved for the government shelter home program. We would also like to acknowledge the Department of Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal for collaborating with Kolkata Sanved. We also extend our thanks to Ipsita Gauri and Sydney Skov for their help in revising and editing this guideline. Thank you to all the participants who have taken part in our program; we have learned much from you.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDELINE? DMT and Other Creative Art Therapies

The information in this guideline has been learned over several years of implementing the Kolkata Sanved Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) program in government shelter homes. We recognize that the approaches outlined below are based on our knowledge of movement-based interventions but want to make it clear that this document is also an effective manual for implementing programs based on other creative art therapies; we encourage you to use this document while implementing any therapy based on creative arts. While implementing your own program based on DMT or other creative art therapies, you may learn new information or find other best practices that work best in that particular context. For instance, when working with other populations or other creative therapies, the indicators you utilize to gauge change may be different. What we present in this document is a roadmap, something which will guide your own actions and activities. We present this guideline as something to build upon as we continue to bring transformative programs to youth residing in government-run shelter homes.

## Glossary

- CWC** Child Welfare Committee
- DMT** Dance Movement Therapy
- DSWO** District Social Welfare Officer
- PTSD** Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

# PREFACE

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## About Kolkata Sanved

Kolkata Sanved's vision is 'Saving Lives through Dance'. Kolkata Sanved believes that all individuals from marginalized and mainstream populations should live with dignity and self-respect. This basic sense of empowerment and integrity can be achieved through Dance Movement Therapy.

Kolkata Sanved has pioneered the use of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) as an alternate psycho-social rehabilitation process. DMT helps survivors of trafficking and violence, members of marginalised communities, mental health patients, people suffering from HIV/AIDS and mainstream school children release trauma, heal, and reach their full potential so that they are able to live lives on equal terms with mainstream society. Through the Training of Trainers program and capacity building initiatives, Kolkata Sanved provides opportunities for survivors to become economically independent DMT practitioners, artists, activists, and young leaders. Kolkata Sanved has gained extensive experience applying DMT as an innovative approach for social change. The organization has gained national and international recognition for its use of DMT as an alternative approach to rehabilitation and recovery for survivors of human trafficking, violence and abuse.

A therapeutic approach utilizing dance and movement goes beyond the limitations of verbal counseling or talk therapy and emphasizes a holistic approach which cultivates an individual's inner peace, self-confidence, physical freedom, freedom of thought and creative skill. DMT, as well as art therapy sessions, are a breath of fresh air, uplifting the spirit while helping to positively transform mundane spaces and self-absorbed individuals. While Kolkata Sanved has been working in government shelter homes since 2008, receiving support from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation in 2011 allowed the organisation to create a more structured intervention within four government shelter homes in three districts of West Bengal. Kolkata Sanved's approach to DMT has demonstrated the ability to reduce trauma, increase self-confidence and give participants a sense of empowerment.

Since its inception, Kolkata Sanved has successfully and effectively worked with children residing in shelter homes. These youth include individuals in need of care and protection as well as children in contact with law. This work has been a challenging yet rewarding experience; what has been created is an active multi-stakeholder mechanism based on a collaborative relationship with the government.

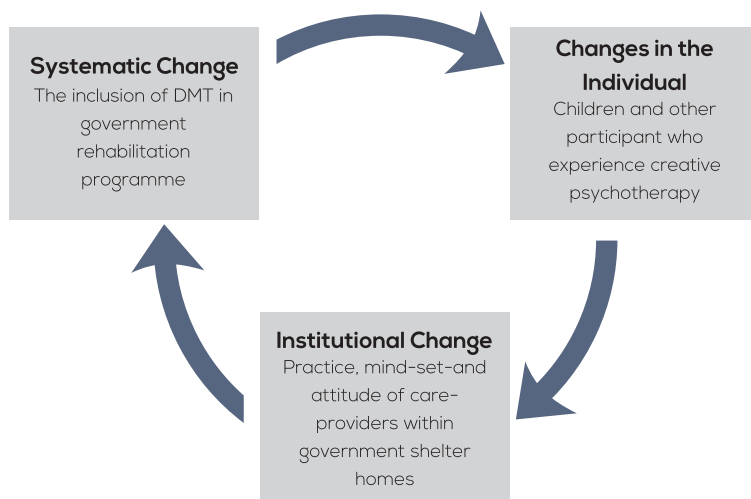
## The Purpose of the Guideline

Kolkata Sarved has been working with and implementing the DMT program in government shelter homes since 2008. Kolkata Sarved's motivation to work in government shelter homes comes from the understanding that children living in sheltered care become alienated from the family as well as society at large. They are deprived of love and affection due to circumstances over which they have no control. The situations faced and the way of life experienced within a shelter home can make children feel alienated, insecure, lonely and unworthy, leading to a lack of self motivation. The infrastructure, rules and regulations of such homes often make children feel like inmates in a prison. Children develop the feeling that they are being punished for some wrong-doing of their own, while in reality they are victims of unfortunate or coercive circumstances such as extreme poverty or human trafficking and violence. Many have endured physical, mental or sexual abuse; they need support to work against trauma and negative stigmas and to resolve their problems.

This guideline aims to standardise and institutionalise DMT, as well as other creative art therapies, as part of a holistic rehabilitation program for children living in institutional care. This document will also serve as a guideline for working with the government in order to implement such programmes. This guideline will delineate best practices which can be used and replicated in other shelter homes across different states of India.

## CYCLE OF CHANGE

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# IMPLEMENTATION OF CREATIVE PSYCHOTHERAPY PROGRAMME

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## Steps of the Kolkata Sanved Model



## Permission

While working with the government, permission to work within shelter homes should be sought and received. The steps for seeking permission for the implementation of any programme in a government shelter home are as follows:

- 1.1 Seek an appointment with the Commissioner, Directorate of Social Welfare
- 1.2 Meet the commissioner and discuss in detail what the organization proposes to do and achieve
- 1.3 Submit a proposal for the programme along with the required official documents of the organization to the concerned person and department
- 1.4 Follow up with the Office of the Directorate at regular intervals to gauge the progress of the proceedings

**Note:** It takes a minimum of 6 months to get an official order and government permission. For example, it took Kolkata Sanved almost 10 months (from September 2007 to June 2008) from the time of initiating the process until permission from the government was granted in order to begin the Kolkata Sanved programme within shelter homes.





## Shelter Home Visit

Upon receiving the official order and government permission, a visit should be made to the shelter home to meet the Superintendent, the staff members and the children. The purpose of this visit should be to gain knowledge about the infrastructure of the home, become better acquainted with the profile of the children living at that particular home and to discuss the concept, purpose and methodology of the programme with the staff and children.

It is strongly suggested that a participatory method be used when deciding on the timing, duration and frequency of the sessions. This process is very important as it fosters an actual sense of participation among all the stakeholders concerned.

In accordance with the government rules, it is advisable to submit copies of photo identifications to the Directorate as well as to the Superintendent of the concerned shelter homes for each staff member from the organization who will be working in the shelter home. The submission of such photo identifications will be very helpful when looking to work with new shelter homes.

Before DMT or any other creative therapy session begins, a needs assessment exercise should be conducted with the beneficiaries. Such an exercise allows the organization to tailor the DMT curriculum to the specific goals, wants and needs of the group. This assessment will help to determine the outcomes of the programme; goals and expected positive changes should be decided upon in collaboration with the shelter home administration and care-providers to protect against unrealistic expectations. The responsibilities of all stakeholders as well as the goals decided upon after conducting the needs assessment should be clearly discussed and recorded in a contract that all agree upon.

## Generating Awareness at the Local Administrative Level

Begin to build rapport simultaneously with several important individuals working at the local administrative level. Seek to meet with the District Magistrate, Additional District Magistrate (Development), and the District Social Welfare Officers of the districts in which the shelter home is located.

Visit and interact with the District Child Protection Officer, CWC Chairperson and other members of local administration at regular intervals. Be sure to share about the work to be implemented in the shelter homes.

Liaise with other local NGOs working in the shelter homes and within the surrounding locality.

It is important to hold a monthly DMT or creative therapy session for the care-givers of the government shelter homes in order to increase their acceptance of and participation in the programme.

## **Precautionary Measures: Do's and Don'ts**

All practitioners working within shelter homes are strongly advised to abide by the following:

- 2.1 Practitioners carry proof of identity and proof of any related official permission
- 2.2 Practitioners report to and register with the staff in-charge upon entering the shelter home, alerting the staff of their arrival and departure. Include date, time and signature.
- 2.3 Practitioners keep the contact number of the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent of the shelter home with them so that an authority figure can be reached in case of an emergency.
- 2.4 Regarding the dress code, female practitioners would preferably wear a high-neck salwar kurta and male practitioners would wear comfortable and decent clothing.
- 2.5 Practitioners hold official permission in writing from the Superintendent in order to conduct additional session hours. The organization should also be informed about additional hours of work.
- 2.6 No gifts (cash or in kind) can be given to or received from the children without prior permission of the shelter home authority and the organization.
- 2.7 Practitioners will not use their mobile phones or allow children to communicate with their family members through their mobile phones while at the shelter.
- 2.8 All major communication and permission should be obtained in writing.
- 2.9 Practitioners must not give or entertain false hopes concerning the children in the shelter home.
- 2.10 Absolute confidentiality must be maintained regarding information shared by participants during DMT sessions as per ethical standards. Only in cases of emergency will any information be shared with the shelter home authority.
- 2.11 Monthly progress reports are sent to the Superintendent of the shelter home regarding the children attending DMT sessions.
- 2.12 Without prior written approval, no photographs can be taken within the shelter home.
- 2.13 In case of a visit by an external agency, be it a donor or a resource person, prior permission must be obtained from the shelter home stating the purpose of the visit. The visiting agency or individual should be accompanied by a representative of the implementing organization. For observation homes and special homes, such a visit should receive approval seven days prior to the date of visit.

## Organizing Events and Performances with the Government Shelter Homes

Practitioners should seek and receive permission from the shelter home Superintendent, CWC and the Directorate of Social Welfare in order to organize such an event.

- 3.1 Planning of the performance should be participatory in nature with the children.
- 3.2 The script for the performance should be written by the children with the assistance of the DMT practitioners.
- 3.3 Practitioners should finalize the date of the event or performance in consultation with the children, Superintendent, DSWO and/or CWC.
- 3.4 Finalization of the performance venue for the event and permission for children to perform on stage should be approved by the appropriate authorities.
- 3.5 Practitioners should maintain regular communication with all stakeholders including government officials, the Directorate of Social Welfare, CWC and members of the shelter home authority about the event or performance.
- 3.6 Practitioners should draft an invitation letter and prepare the list of those invited.
- 3.7 Members of the media and the concerned local government authorities should be invited by phone, fax or e-mail. Personal invitations are favourable.
- 3.8 Local make-up artists, sound and light technicians and tailors for costumes may be found and communicated with through the help of local resources such as other organizations or the shelter home staff.
- 3.9 Individuals in the community and the parents of the children may be invited in consultation with the concerned CWC and Superintendent of the shelter home.
- 3.10 Information regarding the event should be sent to the local police station along with an invitation.
- 3.11 A thank you letter should be sent to the local government along with photographs of the event upon its completion.



## CASE STUDY

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### The Challenge of Implementing Sessions with Government Shelter Home Staff

In one of Kolkata Sanved's partner shelter homes, the staff did not come to the first class offered for the care-providers. *They made several excuses for their inability to attend; they were busy with office work that was overdue and that they felt was more important.* However, it was observed by the DMT practitioners that the same staff members were taking time off from their work to sit and socialize. The staff further rationalized their excuses by stating that the youth in the shelter home needed the classes more, defensively emphasizing the difference between the youth and their positions as government employees. It was also stated that the Superintendent of the shelter home had not given them permission. Unfortunately, this was not the truth. It is important to obtain permission of the Superintendent before conducting any session and in this case the Superintendent had given permission as well as the support needed for the session.

The DMT practitioners understood that the sessions were necessary for the health and well-being of the care-providers as well for their relationships with the children in the shelter home. The practitioners changed their approach; agreeing not to do movement, they focused only on discussion and added a healing touch exercise to close the process. The next month the practitioners again observed the hesitance of the care-providers to engage in a session as they complained of body aches and pains. The practitioners said they would do very slow movements and as soon as they started the music, the participants automatically started moving and became engaged in the discussion and feedback that followed. Despite this breakthrough, the relaxation at the end of the session was interrupted by a call for an emergency meeting.

Confirming dates and timings for a care-provider workshop also posed a problem; DMT practitioners should maintain constant communication with the shelter home Superintendent to choose a time that works for the staff so they will not be late or absent. The practitioners listen to their questions and concerns attentively, always taking any questions they cannot answer back to Kolkata Sanved for discussion before returning with an answer. *For example, some members of the shelter home staff did not like the session being called care-provider workshop* programmatic sessions that are held only for the administrative and other staff of the government shelter homes, can be a powerful way to help the adults better understand the youth in their charge, release their own stress and work related tension, and alter their perceptions about the youth, reducing stigma. As a practitioner, it is important to be flexible, altering the session course to engage as many care-providers possible, and to be patient and persistent.

# **DEVELOPING THE CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT**

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To facilitate the creative therapy process, the following areas should be considered when establishing an environment that will foster creativity.

## **Measures to Ensure a Safe and Effective Practice**

### **The shelter home provides:**

- 1.1 An appropriate space for movement and other creative art exercises
- 1.2 Support from in-house staff when children are exploring the movement experience
- 1.3 A balanced staff and participant ratio
- 1.4 A floor area which is clean and free from obstacles
- 1.5 Drinking water

### **The Facilitator**

- 2.1 Maintains professionalism
- 2.2 Promotes client - therapist relationship
- 2.3 Respects everyone, refrains from being judgmental
- 2.4 Maintains physical, emotional and anatomical awareness
- 2.5 Demonstrates empathy
- 2.6 Utilizes a unique facilitation or teaching style.
- 2.7 Plans activities according to the nature of the space available
- 2.8 Demonstrates movements appropriate for the age range of the group
- 2.9 Wears clothing suitable for movement
- 2.10 Uses appropriate tool kits, music or props for delivering an effective session
- 2.11 Adapts according to the need of the client

### **Beneficiaries**

- 3.1 Wear appropriate clothing for free movement
- 3.2 Ensure own physical flexibility before beginning a session

## COMPARTMENT

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### Appropriate Psychological Activities for Shelter Home Residents

- 1.1 Conducting confidence building exercises
- 1.2 Motivating participants to feel free in their mind and body
- 1.3 Developing creativity within the mind and body
- 1.4 Cultivating a sense of togetherness
- 1.5 Allowing space for individual thoughts and ideas through specially designed tasks

### Inappropriate Psychological Activities for Shelter Home Residents

- 2.1 Encouraging tasks based on constraint or “feeling boxed in”
- 2.2 Encouraging competitiveness or conflict through activities

### Other Issues to Consider

- 3.1 The complexity of each individual's needs as well as the well-being of the group as a whole
- 3.2 The possible inability of participants to work effectively as a team due to a prolonged period of controlled living and self-absorbed feelings
- 3.3 The inability of individuals to concentrate on tasks of longer duration
- 3.4 A lack of physical strength owing to limited access to exercise
- 3.5 The possibility of conflicts within the group
- 3.6 Sudden visits by Government officials which can disrupt the class for the day

### Risks and Possible Negative Traits Exhibited by the Participants

- 4.1 Extreme shyness and embarrassment, physically thwarting another participant's ability to join in on the task
- 4.2 Inability to cope in larger group settings
- 4.3 Emotional disturbances
- 4.3 Anger and resentment directed at others or the facilitator, possibly brought about by the fear of a challenge and new experiences

## Suggestions for Conflict Resolution

- 5.1 Remove the individual from the situation by giving him/her a “safe space”
- 5.2 Allow time for calming down and self reflection
- 5.3 Give encouragement, support and love
- 5.4 Attempt to resolve trouble through humor
- 5.5 Help make a situation lighter by reminding the participant that there is no need to be so hard on him/her

## Helpful Positive Phrases

- 6.1 Can I help you to overcome this?
- 6.2 Would you like to share your personal problem(s) with me/us?
- 6.3 How can we look at this differently / positively?
- 6.4 Overcoming emotional struggles and challenges allows us to be stronger.
- 6.5 What do you want to do?
- 6.6 How do you want to move in this DMT session?





## CASE STUDY

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### Working with Diverse Youth

In the boys' shelter home at Dhurbashram, all the youth are considered "children in contact with law" which means they are in legal custody for having broken a law. The youth are aged 3 to 28 years old and have diverse backgrounds; some unknowingly crossed a border, too young to know that their travel with an adult was illegal. Others have been arrested in crimes ranging from stealing to violence and abuse.

When Kolkata Sanved began implementing DMT sessions within this shelter home, two young female DMT practitioners were sent to lead the first session. During the session, adolescent boys stared at their chests and created inappropriate drawings during art-based exercises. Instead of becoming angry or admonishing this behavior, the practitioners asked why the boys had chosen to draw those images or why their feedback after the movement sessions was about the female appearance. Some of the boys said that when they moved, they thought of women and of having a girlfriend.

The DMT practitioners altered their approach. A workshop was held with the participants addressing the issue of respect for women as well as for instructors. Now both a male and a female DMT practitioner conduct the sessions and the young female practitioners are no longer worried about working in the shelter home as the attitude and outlook of the participants has changed dramatically. Although new participants are constantly joining the class, boys who have been in the class longer prove to be positive role models, discouraging bad behavior.

This particular case study highlights the diversity of situations in which creative arts therapy practitioners might find themselves when conducting classes. It is important to remember that anger on the part of the practitioner will not solve the issue; attempt to understand the behavior of the participants and find a direct way to address the problem based on respect.



## CLASS CONTENT

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DMT sessions are held on a weekly basis to ensure continuity. Depending on the agreement with the shelter home, sessions may be held either one or two times per week. Each class should be two (2) hours in duration.

### Objective

Dance Movement Therapy sessions work to transform members of traumatized populations into confident, self-assured and expressive individuals in their own right. DMT sessions allow participants to release trauma and inhibition while cultivating self-confidence and a positive self image.

### Activities

The structure of a DMT course should include the following in the given order:

- 1.1 Opening ritual and introduction
- 1.2 Warm-up
- 1.3 DMT activity with clarified objectives (this should take up about half of the class time)
- 1.4 Healing touch
- 1.5 Brief water break
- 1.6 Feedback, reflection and debriefing
- 1.7 Closing ritual

To discover more about the uniqueness of the Kolkata Sanved DMT curriculum, please visit the Kolkata Sanved website or consider applying for DMT training with the Kolkata Sanved Academy ([kolkatasanved.org](http://kolkatasanved.org)).

### Indicators

A set of indicators which can be utilized when assessing the impact of a DMT curriculum on the varied populations of individuals living together within a government shelter home can be divided into four overarching categories: physical, emotional, cognitive and social. Keep in mind that a different set of indicators will be used when assessing the impact of a DMT curriculum on a specific population such as survivors of sex trafficking. Owing to the difficulty of measuring quantitatively emotional and cognitive changes, the emotional, cognitive and social indicators are measured qualitatively. Facilitators monitor such qualitative changes within the participants through observation while participants share their perception of change through verbal debriefing sessions.

## Physical

- Eye contact
- Stamina (do participants tire easily?)
- Strength (how long are movements sustained?)
- Spontaneity and balance
- Straight or upright posture
- Ability to move freely (or to improvise movement)
- Care of one's body (including personal hygiene, clean clothes, tidy hair)
- Pride in and enjoyment of one's body

## Emotional

- Self confidence (reflecting a positive self image)
- Ability to overcome fear
- Self expression - expressing one's emotions and opinions
- Anger management
- Ability to comfort oneself and relax
- Ability to overcome self harm or self destructive behavior

## Social

- Understanding other people's issues and being non-judgmental (empathetic)
- Listening to others
- Responding appropriately
- Being assertive without being aggressive
- Peer bonding
- Negotiating skills
- Co-operation

- Being non-judgmental towards others
- Taking initiative or responsibility
- Motivating others
- Standing up for oneself and others

## Reporting and Documenting

It is important to conduct regular monitoring of all programmes within each shelter home. Such monitoring should be done at various levels: shelter home staff, DMT practitioners, and participants. External analysts should then be employed to analyze the qualitative data collected and to interpret the positive changes and impacts on participants. Continuous monitoring of various stakeholders ensures the success of the programme.

For example, Kolkata Sanved has improved the documentation process by taking regular video recordings of DMT practitioners' experiences and observations just facilitating DMT sessions within shelter homes. This enables the capture and improved organization of the qualitative impacts of the DMT process of the organization.

Timely reports which the process and progress of the program must be submitted to each shelter home and Directorate.





## Phasing Out; Effectively Ending the Facilitator/Participant Relationship

- 2.1 Give a confident affirmation to the participants of the skills they have learned, the things they have achieved and the strength they have found to continue self development
- 2.2 Encourage or facilitate a discussion to garner individual responses and experiences from the sessions. This helps the participants realize their own personal achievements.
- 2.3 Assist the shelter home in drawing up a plan to continue DMT sessions independently with a new group of participants. Past participants who have also taken part in the TOT programme will be ready to conduct DMT sessions on their own while earning a livelihood. The organization will oversee the implementation of the independent DMT class in the shelter home to ensure consistency and to provide mentorship.
- 2.4 An official certificate of participation should be created in collaboration with the Directorate. The certificate should be handed out at a ceremony that marks the successful completion of the program and serves to congratulate the participants for their efforts. Please see the 'organizing events section'.

## CONCLUSION - The Way Forward

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Kolkata Sanved has developed this manual based on years of experience working directly with the administration, staff and youth of government-run shelter homes in and around West Bengal. We are happy to be able to share these experiences with individuals, DMT and creative art therapy practitioners, and organizations that are addressing the mental, emotional, and physical health and healing of youth living in government homes. We welcome all of you to use these guidelines as a way to begin your work and build your own partnerships. Please know that at any point of time you are welcome to visit Kolkata Sanved or reach out to us with your comments, questions, or concerns. We would be happy to share more information and support you with further guidance. You can find us at [www.kolkatasanved.org](http://www.kolkatasanved.org) and [kolkatasanved@gmail.com](mailto:kolkatasanved@gmail.com).

Our aim is to ease the process for creative art therapists to bring their programs to government run shelter homes. We are grateful to all the shelter homes who have partnered with us as we have seen substantial positive change among the youth. We are also grateful for their increasing participation in our DMT sessions as these allow both the staff and the youth to change their perceptions and approach their day to day work with an open mind. Kolkata Sanved encourages you to move forward with your art therapy programs as we believe that they effectively empower individuals as well as young survivors of trafficking and violence.





# APPENDIX - 1

## Profile of Youth Living in Government Shelter Homes

Children and adolescents living in government-run shelter homes often fall into one of the following categories. Such situations should be taken into consideration by practitioners.

- Children in need of care and protection including those who are survivors of abuse, violence, or human trafficking. The children may have been lost or abandoned.
- Children and minors who are survivors of child marriage.
- Children who come from an impoverished household.
- Children in contact with law. This group mainly includes individuals who have committed serious offence and are under 18 years of age and individuals who have crossed country borders unwillingly or illegally.

## Suggestion for the Division of Participants into Appropriate Age Groups

1. Junior group (6 – 12 years)
2. Senior group (13 – 18 years)
3. Children in safe custody or in contact with law (6 – 18 years)

## Characteristics of each group

- Juniors**
- Enjoy fun activities and are eager to play and learn
  - Are often arguing and fighting amongst themselves
  - Fear the senior group

- Seniors**
- Feel in opposition to and want to be segregated from the safe custody group
  - Often exploit the junior group
  - Have a tendency to be commanding and try to dominate their juniors
  - Undergo emotional and physical changes as they are going through adolescence and puberty
  - Are attracted to the opposite sex
  - Are conscious about the latest fashion and style trends
  - Have a basic understanding of computers
  - May uphold rivalry among themselves which can lead to physical violence
  - Harbor negative thoughts



## Safe Custody

- Feel a close bond and group unity due to the segregation inflicted by the senior group and by the shelter home workers
- Suffer from mood and energy level fluctuations owing to past traumatic experiences
- Are prone to emotional outbursts
- May suffer from depression
- Show signs of self harm and acceptance of such actions
- Are afraid to express themselves in front of others as they may be subjected to taunting and teasing
- Experience emotional confinement and restriction owing to experiences of physical confinement
- Have a passion for learning
- May isolate themselves
- Exhibit a tendency to run away

## APPENDIX - 2

### Children in Contact with Law

#### Behavioral pattern as seen in children in contact with law

- Aggression
- Violence
- Self mutilation
- Sexual violence
- Using abusive languages
- Violent physical fights

#### Reasons

##### Mental Illness

- Depression
- Psychosis
- Anxiety
- Panic Disorder
- PTSD

##### Purely Behavioral Personality Disorder

##### Can be handled by:

- A psychiatrist or doctor must be consulted for these issues.

##### Can be handled by:

- Counseling support
- DMT practitioners
- Psychologists

## APPENDIX - 3

### Gender Awareness: A Reflection on Working with Boys and Girls in Government Shelter Homes

Kolkata Sarved works with many shelter homes for women and girls, however two partner shelter homes are for boys only. As Kolkata Sarved's DMT practitioners are almost all young women, they have made several interesting observations regarding the difference between implementing DMT with girls and with boys.

#### Implementation

As Kolkata Sarved DMT practitioners are mostly female, there is a higher degree of comfort when working with girls in shelter homes. There is a freedom felt among the participants and the practitioners: the dupatta can be disregarded, all can hold hands, and girls may hug the practitioners after a session. Sarved practitioners have faced many challenges building rapport with boys in government shelter homes, mainly with young men in the range of 17- 25 years of age. Although the practitioners are apprehensive, they do not let it show on their face or in their body language. Immediately they conduct a group discussion about the issue without blaming the boys. The group discusses how girls and women are viewed in society, their individual view points, and why violence happens to women and girls. After this initial conversation and discussion, negative behavior or attention exhibited by the boys stopped. Similar issues that require this kind of discussion have not occurred with girls in government shelter homes.

#### Dance and Movement

When it comes to the body, boys and girls are different. Girls tend to be softer and more graceful in their movements than boys. Often, boys face difficulty adapting to softer movements but excel in strong movements. It is important to think and work in different ways regarding these differences when implementing a movement-based session like DMT. Boys also tend to have higher energy levels so they should be kept moving for the majority of the session.

#### Similarities

Both girls and boys in government shelter homes have experienced trauma but each group express this trauma differently. Both groups have a tendency to run from the shelter homes and are prone to self mutilation by cutting their hands. Both groups become emotional and often cry when recounting stories of how they came to be in the shelter home. Both groups demand to hear pop music such as Bollywood songs but these songs are not allowed in the session. However they find a compromise in playing Hindi musical songs such as 'Jai Ho' from the movie Slumdog Millionaire.





empowering Lives through dance

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