Comfort Rooms

DMHAS Trauma Informed Systems

Other Names …

- Tranquility room
- Calming Room
- Peace Room
- Palm Tree Room
- Rain Forest Room
- Getaway Room
- Relaxation Room
- Zen Room

Choose what fits your needs…

The development of a comfort room requires both leadership and agency wide commitment and an agency specific plan, based on the needs of individuals you serve and the resources that are available.

What is a Comfort Room?

- A designated space that is designed to be calming to the senses.

- Furnished to provide a sanctuary from stress.

- A tool to teach calming techniques.

- The Comfort Room is a participatory project that involves the people we serve.

- Ultimately, it should produce a culture of empowerment and comfort – rather than coercion.

What are the goals of Comfort rooms?

- To empower individuals to practice self-directed behavior.

- To reduce tension and develop skills for maintaining self control.

- To provide a safe place for people to use self help techniques to manage behavior and emotions.

- To develop practical skills that can be used to self soothe any time, any place.

What Impact Might We See?

- State mental health systems across the United States report reduction and actual elimination of the use of seclusion and restraint (National Executive Training Institute [NETI], 2003)

- Therapeutic exchanges occurring in these rooms were effective in reducing maladaptive behaviors (Hutchinson & Haggar, 1991).

- Consumers rated distress before and after using a 10-point rating scale. 89% of sensory room sessions had a positive effect, 10% had no effect, and 1% had a negative effect.

What Impact Might We See?

- Individuals with the highest levels of distress reported the most substantive positive changes distress after use of the room.

- Seclusion and Restraint (episodes per 1,000 patient days) decreased by 54% during the course of 2003.

- Multisensory room and sensory-based approaches demonstrated clear benefit to the majority of consumers in reducing self-reported levels of distress.

- (Champagne & Sayer, 2003).

USE

- Use of a comfort room is always voluntary.

- Not used as containment, or as an alternative to restraint and seclusion.

- Neither a reward or punishment.

- Staff are trained in oversight and use of Comfort spaces.

A Comfort Room is a supportive intervention

- When someone wants time alone (personal time/space), away from noise or other environmental distractions.

- When agitation is safely within self-control (early de-escalation.)

It is vital that individuals who will be using the comfort space participate in planning the room and selecting the items that will be placed in the room!

Developing a mission and vision for your room:

What do you hope to accomplish through use of the room?

- Improved relationships?
- Less punitive environment?
- Teaching self regulating behaviors?

Who will be allowed to use the room?

- Should staff be allowed to visit the room when they have free time?

- When will the room be available?
  - 24/7?
  - During group sessions?
  - Meal time?
  - Non-program hours?

Who will supervise the use of the room?

- How will safety be maintained?

- Who will inspect items before they are placed in the room?

- How will supervision of users of the room occur?
  - Will users of the room be allowed in alone?
  - How often will staff check in?
  - How will time in/use of the comfort room be managed/prioritized?

- How will equipment be cleaned and stored?

- Will you include items that can only be used under supervision?

- The frequency and type of supervision required depends on what the equipment and items in the room, and what type of agency you have.

What space is available and how can it be adapted?

- Is permanent, dedicated space available?

- Are resources available?
  - Consumer involvement
  - Monetary, donations
  - Staff leadership and buy-in
  - Administrative support
  - Supervision

- It is important that the room is located in an area of the facility that is easily accessible to those who will be using it.

If you don't have a spare room…

- Comfort kits, comfort carts, comfort boxes can include similar items, they serve the same purpose, but are mobile.
  - Meditation tapes, aromatherapies, soft floor pillows, markers, paper, beads, stuffed animals, etc.

# Policy and Procedures Should Be Individual to Your Agency

- Description of the purpose of your room

- Time frames, how items are to be used, supervision, assessment)

- Who the policy applies to

- Outline of process for use of the room

- General precautions

- Reviewed and approved by…

Is it the items you choose that determine your policy or the policy that determines the type of items you choose?

- The type of room that is created, items in the room, and the development of policy for its use should be made with the best interest of the user in mind.

- Brainstorm together!

What should we put in the room?
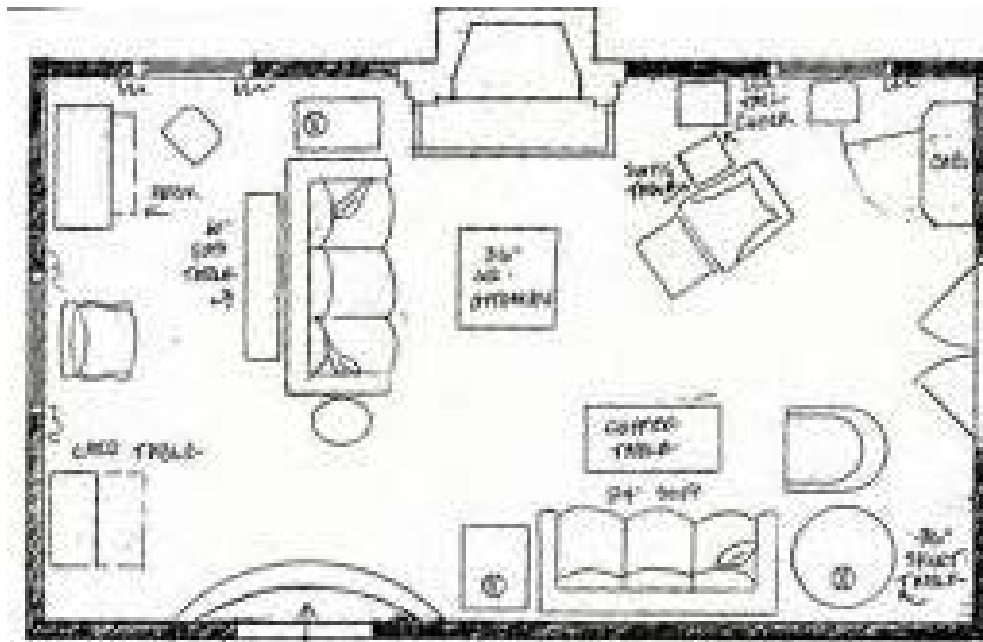
Things to consider

- Invite consumers to educate new peers on use of the room

- Maintain a bulletin board for displaying artwork, poetry, etc.

- Book for people to write comments

- Include consumers in developing guidelines for room usage

- Affirmations

Visual

- Fish tanks (find someone who will volunteer to maintain.)

- Sleeping masks can be used to block out visual stimulation.

- Soft, alternative lighting.

- Bubble lamps.

- Plants.

The Walls

- Life size posters or murals (especially those painted by staff and consumers.)

- Chalkboard paint applied to the walls can provide creative outlet.

- White Boards/brown paper for writing

Texture

You can create a variety of textures when choosing:

- **Blankets**
- **Pillows**
- **Wall art and wall papers**
- **Rugs**
- **Furniture**

Sound

- CD players with nature sounds and white noise.

- Soft music with beats of 60 per minute or less.

- Meditation, guided imagery.

- Fountains.

- Books on tape.

Person First language

- Focus on strengths

- Avoid clinical words like: milieu, psycho-education, manipulative

- Maintain eye contact as appropriate.

- Use calm tone of voice

- Encourage, reassure, be compassionate

- Be honest!

Scent

- Essential oils can be used in an oil diffuser.

  (Note: check the scent first for adverse reaction, and/or physical or emotional reaction: scent is a powerful memory trace.)

- Scented lotion can be used for a soothing hand or foot self-massage.

Touch

- Drumming or other musical instruments.

- Clay.

- Stress balls in a variety of shapes, sizes, and textures.

- Puzzles.

- Exercise bands.

Touch

- Weighted blankets and lap pads have proven to be an effective tool for people with mood disorders, autism, trauma histories, substance abuse histories, and individuals who engage in self-injurious behaviors.

- A weighted neck wrap can also include aroma-therapy features and options for heat or cold.

- The Comfort Room furniture should be free from sharp corners and cannot be easily picked up or thrown.

- The room should be free of dangerous objects, long cords, hooks, and non-breakaway window coverings, and any other item that might be used to cause damage, injury, or self-harm.

- All objects should meet infection control requirements.

It is important to be able to talk after…

Telling the Tale

- We all have histories to explore

- Institute "story-telling" workshops

- Listen with compassion

- Provide opportunities for creative expression

- Enhance Comfort Room libraries with consumer-written books and writings

- What other factors can be changed to create a more calming environment throughout your agency?

How Can We Measure Success?

First outline your goals…

- What kind of changes do you want to see after you implement a comfort room?

- What impact do you hope to gain in staff/consumer relationships after implementing a comfort room?

- How might use of a comfort room in your facility help to improve staff stress and staff moral?

- How do you believe that use of a comfort room will help to decrease stress levels for individuals who receive of care in your facility?

- What effective tools and necessary skills will your comfort room teach for control aggressive behavior?

- What effective stress management tools and skills for self-soothing will your comfort room teach?

- Use pre/post assessment
  - 10 point scale with emoticons

- Collect feedback from residents and staff
  - Items to add to the room, what they found most useful

- Sign-in/Sign-out book to see times when room used the most, and determine if there is impact on overall environment.

- Survey to determine what new skills have developed, what techniques are now being newly used for stress management.