

OPEN MEETING

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

- 6:10 p.m. Reading of Books - Phasers are informed of what they have earned through their efforts during the time since the last open meeting day.
- 6:30 p.m. Welcoming of Guests - Program Coordinator enters the room where the parents are gathered and welcomes the guests to the Opening Meeting. Begins with calling the guests to the front of the room. After all is quiet, the P.C. says a welcome to the guests, then proceeds to explain Open Meeting rules: no talking, pay strict, disciplined attention. The Principle of Confidentiality under state and federal law is explained (What you see here, hear here, and whom you see here, remains here when you leave). After that, the P.C. asks the parents what kind of Open Meeting we are going to have"Positive".... and the guests are allowed to enter the room. Guest parents and assigned in-take parents (one couple to each in-take couple) are led to the front row in the O.M. room. They are followed by the rest of the program parents with children on second phase or higher. If a parent has a child on first phase, that parent may only be seated in the fourth row or further from the front of the room. Parents of boys sit on one side of the room (across from the girls' side). Parents of girls sit on the other. This is to facilitate the Newcomer Introductions. While the guests are being seated, the group sings several positive songs, ending with their singing of "I AM STRAIGHT" as the last parent enters the room.
- 6:35 p.m. Official Opening of the Open Meeting - The Director of the Program or his designee walks to the front of the room after the group has sung "I Am Straight". He extends his welcome to the guests, identifying himself as the Director, and he explains what is happening at the Open Meeting. (Be sure to mention the Principle of Confidentiality.) Describe what the guests are about to experience. Tell them that this is a regular gathering of the Straight family: every Monday and Friday night we gather together to celebrate upward movement through the group by the young people who are turning themselves around and getting their lives back together. End on a positive note, stressing that there is hope and that these young people are living examples that there is hope. To emphasize this point, we move young people to 5th phase at this point in the Meeting to begin with an upward, resurrective motion.

6:40 p.m. Turn the mike over to a staff member, who explains who will "introduce" themselves and what to expect. Then the mike is turned over to new phasers who introduce themselves from the third through the fourteenth day on their program. The young men are followed by an Oldcomer Introduction -- again, to establish by contrast, that young people do get better. The same procedure is followed for the girls. After the Oldcomer Introduction, a parent (or a set of parents) introduces himself in front of the O.M. They should know clearly how to do an Introduction, talking only about themselves and their changes. The Program Coordinator will select an appropriate parent and explain how to do an Introduction before coming into Open Meeting.

After the young people and one set of parents have introduced themselves, the two young people leading the Open Meeting take the mike from the introducing parents and move their stools so that they now face the parents. They then ask the young people who have earned "Talk" and "T & R" to stand. Program parents will applaud the young people for having earned something. As the applause dies, the Director, the Associate Director and the Program Coordinator come to the front of the room for the next part of the O.M.

This is the part of the O.M. where "business" is taken care of. The Honey Pot and Pooh Bear are passed, the raps are announced and any business from the parent fund-raising organization takes place now. It is a good idea to have the parent organization ask for volunteers right in front of the O.M. so that the phasers can see whether or not their parents are participating in the program and they may apply a little pressure at home if they see their parents slacking off.

After the business is taken care of, we announce any persons who are Seven-Stepping the program that evening. The usual procedure for Seven-Stepping takes place. The microphone is passed to the parents who speak about their child's program and the changes they and their household have made. Then the Seven-Stepper is allowed to address the O.M., telling of his/her feelings. After the mike has been passed down the line from one Seven-Stepper to another and parents and former phasers have all introduced themselves, the Director takes the mike and says a few things to each family and each Seven-Stepper. The idea here is to emphasize the positive change and the rebuilding of the family. After that, the new Seven-Steppers

are asked to recite the seven steps and they then officially "graduate". The Director reminds all that they have to attend Seven-Step raps, that they must continue to write M.I.'s, and that there will be no dating for six months. Then all the families move to their places for the balance of the O.M.

The microphone is now passed to the parents' side of the room. Parents of children on their first phase who have not earned "Talk" or "T & R", as well as parents of children who are not living at home for one reason or another (Refresher, Away from Home, No Phase, etc.), the parents of the Oldcomers who have just introduced themselves and the parents of Oldcomers who just made phase changes -- all of these parents must stand while they address their children over the microphone. While the parents are standing, the young person also stands in his place within the group. All are expected to talk about how they feel and they will be "called down" if they lecture instead of talking about their feelings. When deciding on which side of the room (boys' parents or girls' parents) to pass the microphone to first, be sure that there is at least one young person to shout "Coming Home" and run to embrace his family while the guests are still present. It emphasizes that the program works and that we can and do rebuild families. The tearful emotions engendered by "Coming Home" is a powerful message to any guest parents who are trying to decide whether or not to put their child in the program.

The next movement of the O.M. occurs after one side of the parent group has passed the mike. The P.C. then comes to the front of the room and dismisses the guests. The P.C. does not make a long speech at this juncture. The message is to be clear and direct: "There is hope here. It has worked for some families; you have felt it in this room tonight. We would like to share our love and hope with you. Our hand is extended. When you decide you want it, all you have to do is to reach."

After the guests are excused, the meeting commences again with the passing of the mike on the other side of the room until all the parents have had a chance to say something to their child.

When that is completed the mike is brought to the front of the room and the Open Meeting leaders ask parents of children second phase or higher who have birthdays, anniversaries, or "Straight Birthdays" to celebrate to come to the front of the room. The mike is passed across the crowd and each person celebrating an anniversary or birthday mentions that fact to the group. Then parents of phasers are called upon to lead the singing of "Happy Birthday", "Happy Straight Birthday", or "Happy Anniversary."

While the applause for the above subsides, the Director comes to the front of the room to lead the recital of "The Lord's Prayer" and the singing of "Pass it On." The Meeting concludes with the singing of this song.

After "Pass it On" the parents whose children have earned "Talk" or "T & R" take chairs and form small groups where their children will come to speak with them and to make direct amends. These "talks" by young people are monitored by staff who circulate through the group to be available when a parent decides that the talk is inappropriate and who could then signal for a staff member to come over and end that talk.

After "Talk", the parents are excused from the O.M. room and there is a break for not more than one-half hour to purchase refreshments.

9:30/
9:40 p.m. The next event is the Open Meeting Review, conducted by staff members with the group. The focus here is on how to help earlier phasers to conduct themselves and to introduce themselves more appropriately. The group also reaches out to any misbehavers in an attempt to help them make the decision to change and gives feedback to phasers for phase changes and gives help to those with problems.

While the group is in Open Meeting Review, the parent group has their Large Group or Small Group Parent Raps. The small group raps are conducted by volunteer parents. The large group parent rap is conducted by an Executive Staff Member.

11:30 p.m. The evening ends with the dismissal of the group after the Open Meeting Review.