Planning the Meeting
Actually, the meeting format will vary little from session to session. Most meetings will consist of a topic of discussion (which may include a speaker) and story telling.

Topics
It's a good idea to have a topic of discussion and allow for story telling before or after the discussion. Topics give the group a chance to interact with each other and often form the basis of intra-group networking.

Some topics include:

- Rights and services for children and adults with disabilities
- Parent/Professional relationships
- Upcoming events, conferences, trainings or workshops
- How to adapt to meet a child’s needs
- Resources for information and products
- Approaches to behavior issues
- How a child's disability affects marital relationships, family and friends
- Disability specific issues
- Stress Management
- Book and Movies Reviews

Speakers
Good speakers not only inform, but also encourage the opening up and exchange of ideas between participants. Consequently, the Question & Answer period is often more important than the topic.

The following are a few suggestions regarding speaker:

- Speakers can be drawn from many areas, including universities, local hospitals, city or government agencies, etc.
- Decide, based on your group dynamics and the topic, whether to have a speaker before or after the sharing stories period.
• Ask the speaker to talk on a topic you have chosen, rather than leaving a subject open to a speaker’s discretion.
• Make sure the speaker is aware of "Group Issues" so the talk is relevant and appropriate to the group's needs and expectations.
• It's a good idea to personally visit with the speaker and get a preview of the talk prior to the meeting.

Sharing Stories

• Sharing stories is an important part of any support group.
• When possible, start with a regular member to break the ice.
• Go around the circle and give every person the opportunity to speak or pass.
• For new groups or new members telling stories can be the most important part of the meeting.
• As members tell and retell their stories you should notice a different emphasis. Members who get stuck at the same place meeting after meeting may need a referral.

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