



embracing our indigenous strength and beauty

A Guide for
Developing
Tribal Shelter and
Transitional Housing
Programs

CREATING SISTER SPACE



Creating Sister Space

A Guide for Developing Tribal Shelter and Transitional Housing

Developed by Red Wind Consulting, Inc. in
partnership with the Office on Violence Against
Women, U.S. Department of Justice

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Note about the gendered nature of domestic violence

Domestic violence is a gender-based crime with women being more likely to experience domestic violence than men (VAWOR, 2010). The National Violence Against Women Survey states that 85% of domestic violence victims are female. Women also report suffering more severe physical violence than men (2010). As a result of the gendered nature of domestic violence and sexual assault, for the purposes of this document, victims and survivors will be referred to as women and female. While male victims do exist, responses to their needs may be somewhat different. Programs are also encouraged to develop responses for male victims within their work. See section on Special Populations.

Overarching Philosophy Guiding Our Work

As you walk on the shore, you look down and see rocks. Small ones, large ones, tiny, tiny ones. They are there but you never see them arrive. Rocks move, it might not be noticeable but they arrived on that shore just as surely as you move. Their journey is long and steady and eventually, they arrive. While your journey may not seem to be going anywhere, you need to stop and think about the journey of the rocks and consider how your movement might be as sure as the rocks. Slow and steady. Arriving where you are supposed to be.

Victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence are on a long journey as they navigate the web of safety needs, trauma, life changing events, resources and system responders. This story reminds us of the importance to recognize the long journeys women are traveling.

The problem of violence against Native women that leads to the need for emergency shelter and transitional housing options comes from a history of oppression that is playing out today. Violence against Native American women is at significantly higher rates than that of other populations of women. According to the United States Department of Justice, Native American and Alaska Native women are more than 2.5 times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than other women in general (Perry, 2004). From 1988-1991, homicide was the third leading cause of death for Native women. Of Native women murdered, 75 percent were killed by a family member, an acquaintance, or someone they knew (Wallace, Calhoun, Powell, O'Neil, & James, 1996)

The problem of domestic violence and sexual assault is seen as a fairly new phenomenon occurring within Tribal communities, coming about after the onset of colonization (Ybanez, Domestic Violence: An Introduction to Social and Legal Issues for Native Women, 2008). Traditionally, women played central roles in sustaining Native American communities. Indeed, indigenous women often carried major responsibility for transmitting their cultures and assuring the well

being of their communities (Weaver, 2009). Women were the caretakers and the hearts of their families; their voices were pivotal to the survival and success of their families and their communities (Ybanez, *Indigenous Women and the Legacy of Oppression*, 2008).

Examining Creation stories from many tribes reveal the status women once held. Prior to colonization, most tribes saw the strongest most active and articulate tribal women as closely paralleling traditional female deities (Tsosie, 1994) and the Creation stories of many tribes encompass beliefs surrounding the power of women. The word mother is equated with the major elements of subsistence to the Navajo and consequently their survival (Mihesuah, 2003). The Iroquois arrived on the back of Grandmother Turtle (p. 43). And consider Spider Woman as told in Paula Gunn Allen's book *Spider Woman's Granddaughter*, "she thinks creation and sings it into life" (Turner, 1997). Many tribes have similar kinds of examples of how women were held in high regard, honored and well respected indicating the significant positions women played within pre-contact indigenous societies.

Women are sacred is a common concept across many tribes and Native villages. It guides people in understanding the immense value women have in tribal society as well as provides guidance on how to treat Native women. We can see how women are supposed to be treated with respect, honored for who they are, and valued within the community as mothers, grandmothers, sisters and relatives.

In developing shelter and transitional housing programs, *women are sacred* provides an understanding about how advocates should work in the field. *Women are sacred* has become a guiding programmatic value that is being incorporated into program design, policy and practices.

- *How are we honoring women?*
- *How are our actions respecting women?*
- *How are program practices honoring the sacredness of women?*

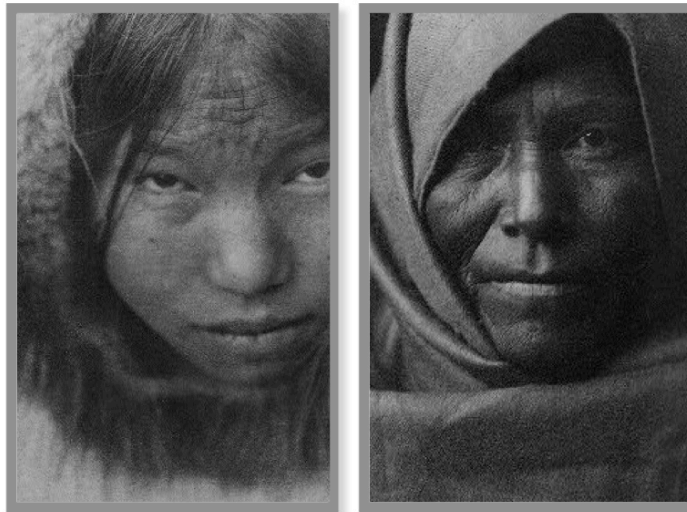
Our Sisters

“There’s a recognition that power comes from within. It comes from having knowledge and vision. The sun has power. The wind has power. We have the power to bring forth and nurture new life. That’s the power Mother Earth has. There’s the power of love.”
(Washinawatok, 1995)

An open environment is one that takes into consideration the needs and desires of those being served.

Importantly, as we develop our shelter and transitional housing programs, we want to ensure we are creating an environment that serves to offer a place for a person who has experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence that recognizes the survivor’s sister status.

When a woman comes in, we take her to a comfortable place; we offer her a cup of tea and ask her if she’d like to rest. ~ Anonymous Advocate



Women seeking refuge as a result of fleeing domestic violence or sexual assault are making a very difficult decision. It is not a decision made lightly. They are experiencing a crisis that is impacting not only their immediate safety but also their personal sense of security. The decision to leave their home can also impact their long-term personal economic security.

As advocates working with a woman coming in to the program, we want to think about her as our relative. We want to offer safety, make her comfortable, make sure she has breathing room to think about what is happening, to think about her next steps and to think about her life.

Survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence often are seeking their very basic needs. Many advocates talk about women coming into shelter in the middle of the night with their children, sometimes carrying a bag with a few clothes and sometimes with nothing at all. Advocates have the opportunity to embrace her with support and comfort. This can include making sure she has the dignity to receive food without having to feel shamed because she has needs, offering her immediate shelter and making sure she has a change of clothes while she catches her breath. This very basic support from an advocate will go a long distance to building the relationship that it will take to support them as they seek to take care of their basic needs and begin to think about their future.

We must listen to women who experienced domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence as "normal," healthy women and challenge the stereotypes that prevent us from doing this. We must understand that [her] issues may not be the same as ours, and begin to ask [her] what she wants and needs, and what questions we're not asking." (Tautfest) (Pope)

Justice

As indigenous women try to move forward, move away from the violence they experienced, letting go of the past stays connected to them, their histories are etched in the ancestral and living memory each person carries. It explains the deep levels of multigenerational trauma and complexity of barriers each person faces every day (Ybanez, *Indigenous Women and the Legacy of Oppression*, 2008).

Definition of JUSTICE

1. The quality of being just, impartial, or fair
2. *Ethics.*
 - a. The principle of fairness that like cases should be treated alike
 - b. Particular distribution of benefits and burdens fairly in accordance with a particular conception of what are to count as like cases
 - c. The principle that punishment should be proportionate to the offense
3. The administration of law according to prescribed and accepted principles conformity to the law; legal validity

Merriam Webster Dictionary,
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/justice>

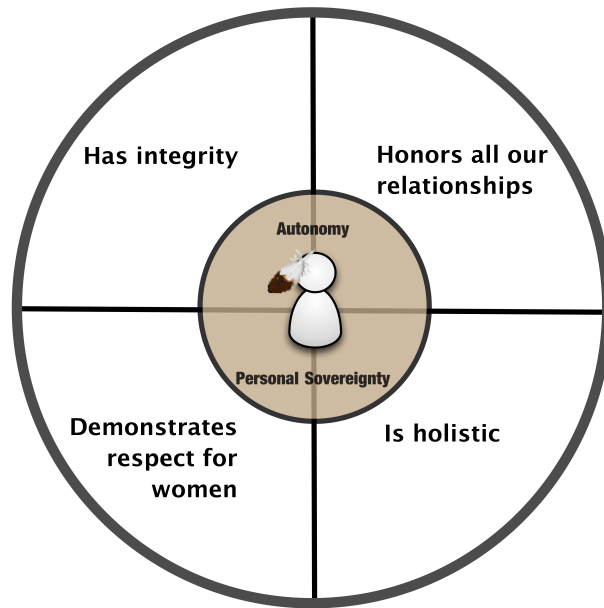
We all want to have justice for those who have been abused, however, one person's desire for justice might have a very different meaning to another person.

A person experiencing violence should always have the ability to make their own decisions about what they want to have happen. It is an empowering practice; and most of all it is they who will live with the outcome. While there are criminal justice avenues that may be available to them, their decision to seek that assistance or remedy, their ability to follow through, the outcomes of those decisions that may bring different outcomes will impact each woman based on their own realities. Each victim will need to have information that fully informs them of their options within the criminal justice system combined with realistic information about what is known about the legal response to inform her of her options and the possible consequences that may accompany those decisions.

Each community can have a different level of effectiveness in their criminal justice resources available to victims and that difference is important information a victim will want to know when making decisions. It is not the advocate's decision, but the survivor's decision.

As indigenous peoples, each of us experiences a life that is intertwined with intergenerational trauma. Each survivor coming to our program brings with them the history of their ancestors, their relatives, those who suffered hardship and those who endured. Our program's opportunity now, is to heal for the future. Women often talk about how the abuse they experienced is rooted in who they are as Native women, the abuse not only is centered in an individual experience of power and control but an historical experience that layers upon them a challenge to not only heal and recover from the violence of this immediate situation but a deeper effort to heal and return to balance for themselves but also for our daughters and our granddaughters. *The healing and balance we offer this one woman, we offer to our future.*

Shelter and transitional housing programs will offer Native survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence a response that *honors all our relationships, is holistic, demonstrates respect for women, and has integrity* (Mending the Sacred Hoop, 2002).

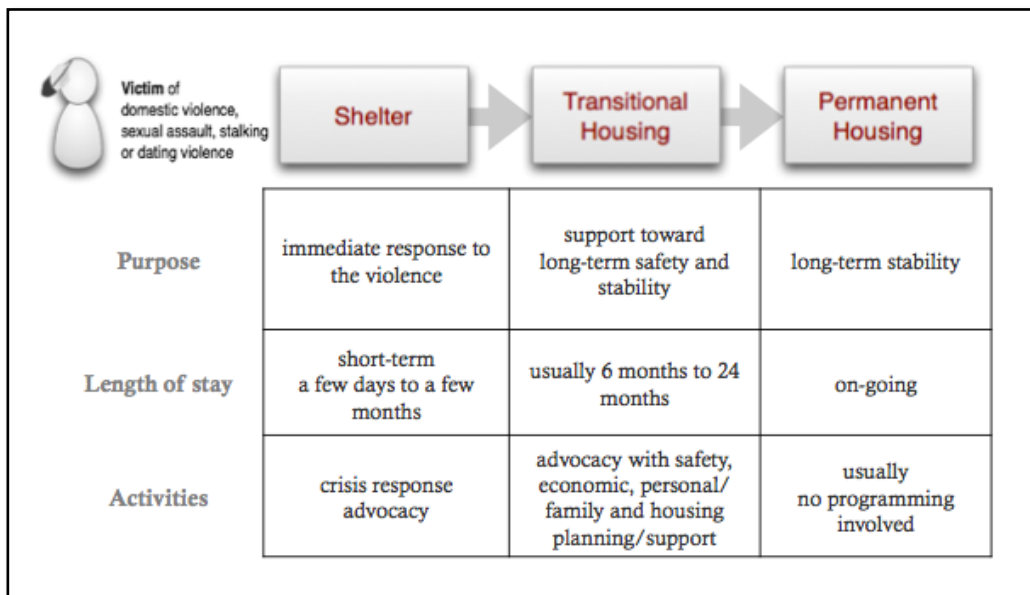


Values	Actions
Honors all our relationships	<i>Will recognize the interconnected relationships victims/survivors have. Will make sure families as identified by the victim/survivor will be recognized and supported</i>
Is holistic	<i>Will work to address the complex needs a victim/survivor has. This will include the journey of personal healing toward reaching living their lives as they desire</i>
Demonstrates respect for women	<i>Every level of the program will demonstrate respect by the rules, policies and practices that are put in place, the actions of staff, and the environment created that respects a woman's ability to make decisions and guide the direction of their own lives</i>
Has integrity	<i>Rules, expectations, program supports that are offered will be clearly communicated and will be demonstrated in the actions of program delivery provided by staff</i>

Shelter and Transitional Housing

The first shelter developed in Indian Country was opened in 1976, *White Buffalo Calf Woman Society* located on the Rosebud Reservation. In 1996, American Indian Community Housing Organization opened an urban Indian Transitional Housing Program, *Oshki Odaadiziwini Waaka'lgan* the first Native specific transitional program developed.

Shelter and Transitional Housing is an important response to safety and provides options for women who are seeking safety following domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking or dating violence. No one size fits any community. There are some basic ideas about the intent of shelter and transitional housing responses, yet our indigenous identity will go a long way to shaping what a shelter or transitional housing program looks like in the community.



Its intent and spirit

Shelter is intended to provide the emergency response to domestic violence and/or sexual assault. It provides that immediate need for safety. This can be a very short period of time or last several days or weeks, sometimes spanning a few months. Transitional housing is intended to provide longer-term support to assisting the victim after the immediate incident.

According to Lucille Pope in an article from the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, she states, "We build services from what we have read or from what other programs have done historically. We cut back services that were developed and provided by early activists and formerly battered women because, supposedly, we're more cost effective and professional now. We build services if they are convenient, if someone will pay us for them, and if "good" battered woman will use them. We build programs based not on what battered women identify as need, but rather on what we determine is needed by battered women." Pope reminds us that we will want to take our direction from battered women to guide us in what we create.

"I love to go home. Our home may be modest, we may not have the best designer furniture, but when you come into our home you feel like [you are] a part of the family, you feel alive, you feel the people's strength." (Looking Horse, 1995)

The shelter or transitional housing program has a small window of opportunity to build a space to support women on their journeys. The operating structures created within shelter and transitional housing programs will go far to determine the tone of our work.

- *Are we creating an environment that helps to embrace a woman?*
- *Or are we creating a place where we work to manage a woman?*

These are a couple of the questions we want to ask ourselves. The rules and policies put in place are guided by what we are trying to accomplish, by the funding sources we use, and tribal and/or local laws. Most importantly, our

programs should be guided by the values and beliefs central to our cultural ways. They have sustained us and carried our people to where we are today and they will carry survivors to a future in which they can be free from violence.

“...the main thing [is] to look at everything we do, and everything we expect of our clients, and see how that measures up.” (Tautfest)

Each advocate should have an ability to recognize how what they are doing will have an impact on women’s lives. The advocate will want to be able to put themselves into the lives of the women with whom they are working. By being able to relate to the survivor, they will be able to offer a supportive, compassionate and patient process as they assist a survivor to explore their options while balancing their survival skills.

What are the values and beliefs that will guide you?

What is your guiding vision?

How will it guide your work:

- *with women?*
- *with the community of women?*
- *with each other?*
- *with the community?*

Everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the power of the world always works in circles, and everything tries to be found. In the old days, when we were strong happy people, all our power came to us from the scared hoop of the nation, and so long as the hoop was unbroken the people flourished. (Black Elk & Niehardt, 1961)

Worksheet

Having a guiding vision or mission statement is helpful in forming and conveying the identity of your program.

Complete the worksheet to help you develop your guiding vision.

Worksheet: Guiding Vision - p1

Identify the intent of your shelter and/or transitional housing program.

Identify the values and beliefs that will guide your program.

Include thoughts about what you believe about why violence against Native women exists. Include your tribe's indigenous identity in how you will shape and define your program.

Write a statement that describes your guiding vision.

Worksheet: Guiding Vision - p2

Using the statement you wrote, answer the following questions.

How will it guide your work with Survivors?

How will it guide your work with the community within in the program?

How will it guide your work with each other (staff)?

How will it guide your work with your tribal community?

How does what you are doing affirm the sacredness of women?

(Consider how it recognizes and supports victim/survivor sovereignty, adheres to absolute confidentiality, centralizes victim/survivor safety, and is guided by voices of survivors.)



Housing “style”

Each shelter and transitional housing program will have different housing stock available for use. One tribe might readily have a house or building that can be used while another tribe may struggle to find a building and the program will rely on “renting” a place to offer the program. Each housing “style” has its own unique benefits and challenges.

Housing Style			
	COMMUNITY OR SHARED LIVING	CLUSTERED LOCATIONS	SCATTERED LOCATIONS
DESCRIPTION	A large house or building that has a few sleeping rooms with a common kitchen and living space	Individual houses or apartments clustered together for each participant and their family that includes sleeping space, kitchen, bath and living room	Houses or apartments located in different areas. Sometimes owned by the tribe, or owned by a private landlord or both.
BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety • Community living, mutual support • Ease for staff/program involvement with everyone • Shared resources for food, utilities, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families settle into a "home" • Still have a sense of community because they are living nearby other program participants • Mutual support for safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can become permanent housing • Settled into neighborhood • Does not feel like living in a program
CHALLENGES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited privacy • Different parenting styles may conflict • Interpersonal conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation challenges for the participants and staff • Challenges providing safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation challenges for the participants and staff • Isolation • Challenges providing safety

Address disclosure

Mainstream shelter programs decided years ago to not disclose the address of a shelter to protect the safety of victims. While that is a good idea in theory, it is not often practical in Indian Country, particularly in our smaller tribal communities. Most importantly, the shelter or transitional housing program must have a plan for security. The location will become known, either intentionally by design of the program or by the passage of time and sharing of experiences within the community. Planning for security that assumes the abuser knows the location of the program services is an important step to ensuring safety is being addressed.

Policy development

Policies are a tool for ensuring the shelter/transitional housing program is providing the desired and needed services within the program. Consider policies to be our guide in everything we do. Policies frame the organizational response and help to ensure the program's guiding values are incorporated into the identity of the program.

In each policy, the program will want to consider its program intent, and guiding values and beliefs to ensure policies are not in conflict.

A shelter program can be very clear they want to provide an environment that helps those they are serving to be more empowered by having participated in their program, however, the very same program may have rigid policies that require someone coming into shelter be in their room by 9:00 p.m. to create quiet time within the shelter. The policy might have a positive intention but is in direct conflict with creating an empowering environment. A transitional housing program may desire to provide an environment that reflects their tribal value of respect yet may have a policy that requires program participants have a background check as a means for determining their ability to enter the program. Again, the intent may be to provide what is believed to be helpful information to the program staff yet it does not respect their relationship with the person seeking services. The program will want to return to its guiding values and intent of the program. If the program's intent is to provide a time and space for victims of domestic violence to stabilize their family, using a background check may screen out the very people the program is intending to serve.

The policies will take up a range of different areas, those that define the program purpose and who can be served, how to provide protections for program participants, how to respond to difficult situations, ensuring consistency so program participants have a reasonable expectation of what to expect, while having flexibility to be able to respond to the unique needs of individuals.

Worksheet

Having a policy list will help guide programs in developing their policies. The Policy List worksheet will be used as a foundation for upcoming worksheets.

Complete the worksheet to help you develop your policy list.

Worksheet: Policy List – p1

List the policy areas the shelter and transitional program will want to address.

Eligibility

- *Who is eligible for services?*
- *Screening process*
- *Requests for assistance*
- _____
- _____
- _____

Scope of services

- *Length of stay*
- *Shelter and/or transitional housing capacity*
- *Activity:* _____
- *Activity:* _____
- *Activity:* _____
- *Activity:* _____

Victim confidentiality

- *Access to confidential information*
- *Accounting practices*
- *Document retention*
- _____
- _____
- _____

Safety

- *Safety planning:* _____
- *Facility/program:* _____
- _____
- _____

Worksheet: Policy List - p2

List the policy areas needing to be addressed, continued.

Challenging issues to address

Identify challenging issues that are currently known by those developing the program.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Special populations to address

Special populations are those populations that will likely be a small group that might be served by the program infrequently.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

List any other policy areas relevant to the tribe or program that were not previously listed.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Eligibility and program capacity

The shelter and transitional housing program will have limits within the program for the people it can serve. Often the mission and function of the program guides who is eligible. Sometimes a funding source will also place requirements on who can be served with the funding sources being used to provide the services.

It is important to get clear about the program's priorities and limitations. Each shelter and transitional housing program will have capacity determined by the program's purpose, and its ability to serve those in their program. This capacity is determined by the number of staff working with program participants; their skill, and expertise; the size of the housing available; and its ability to house the participants appropriately and safely..

- *What is the shelter or transitional housing's purpose?*
- *Who is the program intended to serve?*
- *What are the program limitations for serving the population that it is intended?*

Each program will need to make decisions about the length of stay for their shelter or transitional housing program. While some programs may think this decision has to do with making sure participants do not become dependent on the program, it is actually not for that reason. The program will want to decide how it will manage its resources in order to be available to serve those in need of shelter and/or transitional housing.

Worksheet

Developing your Eligibility Policies will guide your program to ensure you are serving those you intend to serve with your limited resources.

Complete the worksheet to help you develop your eligibility policy.

Worksheet: Eligibility Policy - p1

Who is eligible for services?

What is your screening process?

How will requests for assistance be made?

Worksheet: Eligibility Policy - p2

What documentation will you request to determine eligibility?

What additional areas need to be addressed related to eligibility?

How does what you are doing carry your vision and values? Affirm the sacredness of women? Recognize and support victim/survivor sovereignty? Adhere to absolute confidentiality? Centralize survivor safety? Guided by voices of victims/survivors?

Critical Components

Advocacy

We are the epitome of our ancestors. They are always right here; I sit at the table with them regularly. Whatever I do, I have to do it the right way because they're watching me, guiding me, reminding me that I am a ... woman of my people. (Espinosa, 1995)

Advocates are the biased supporter of women with whom they work. It is not the advocate's role to decide whether they believe the story the woman tells them about their abuse, it is the advocate's role to believe it and assist her with what she needs. Language such as being "victim centered", "centralizing the safety of women", and "trauma informed care" is commonly used by those practitioners responding to domestic violence. The bottom line for an advocate is to put the needs of the woman they are working with first. That means the advocate helps to ensure the survivor's voice is being heard, makes sure she has enough information and understanding to help her be as safe as possible, and helping to support the decisions and choices she makes.

Postmus in Women's Experiences of Violence and Help Seeking Skills (2009) identified that, as providers, we tend to prioritize what we believe women need and that women had a different priority than the practitioners. Advocates then must consider how they are listening to what women express as their needs and use that as the advocates' guide in how they work with women.

Advocate	Case Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individuals are their own experts• Works to give voice to the victim/survivor experience• Focuses on personal sovereignty• Addresses power/control issues of systems and society• Engages in critical thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individuals may lack personal control over information• Practitioners review "cases"• Medical model/psychological model approach• Fragmented, single issue• Focuses on the bureaucracy

Worksheets (2)

Developing your Scope of Services will ensure you have in place relationships and resources to deliver your program. Building the capacity of advocates will ensure your program can respond to the changing needs of those being served.

- 1. Complete the worksheet to help you develop your Scope of Services.*
- 2. Complete the worksheet to develop Advocacy Capacity.*

Worksheet – Scope of Services, p1

Describe your scope of services.

What will survivors be offered in your program for immediate needs?

What will survivors be offered in your program for safety needs?

What will survivors be offered in your program for personal and family needs?

What will survivors be offered in your program for economic needs?

What else?

Worksheet – Scope of Services, p2

What resources can be offered to survivors that are outside your program? What do you need to know to access those resources?

Under what conditions will services end?

How does what you are doing carry your vision and values? Affirm the sacredness of women? Recognize and support survivor sovereignty? Adhere to absolute confidentiality? Centralize survivor safety? Guided by voices of survivors?

Advocacy and case management

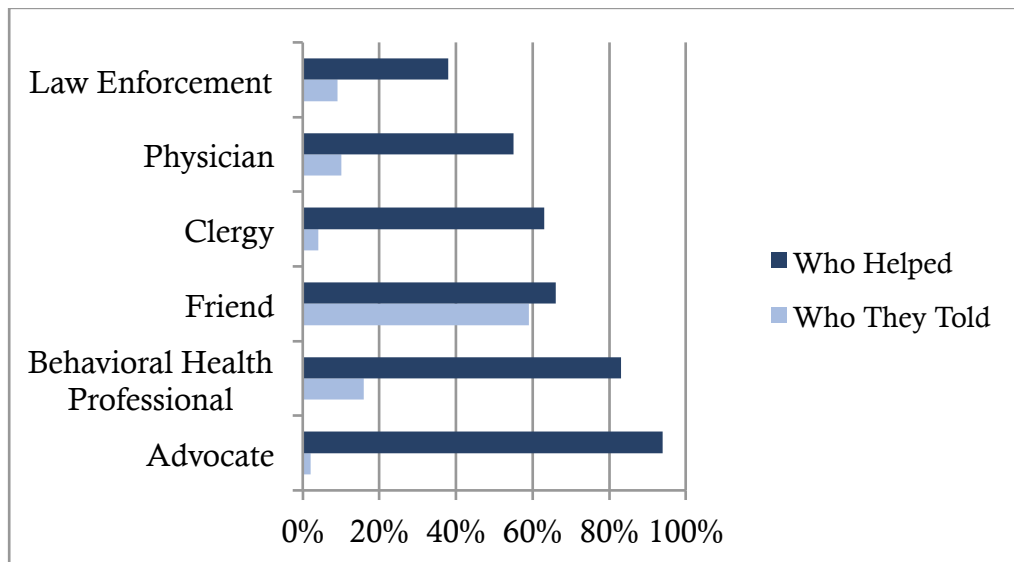
Every day, women survive physical or sexual violence. Some survive as a result of services they receive in the aftermath of the abuse.

(Postmus, Severson, Berry, & Yoo, 2009)

Advocates play a very important part in the lives of those with whom they work. It is important to build a relationship with each survivor to have in place the trust and communication necessary for helping a woman seeking assistance following domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence.

Instead of fitting women into our truth, we must build our truth around a larger collection of voices. We must ... listen to battered women as "normal," healthy women and challenge the stereotypes that prevent us from doing this. We must ... begin to ask battered women what they want and need. ~ Lucille Pope, NCADV

Studies examining sexual assault disclosure demonstrate that the role of the advocate is significant in being helpful to survivors seeking help. See chart below.



SOURCE: Goldstein, Siegel, Sorrenson, Burnam and Stein. 1997.

The advocate gets involved in the real experiences of women and has to balance that with the policies and rules of their programs. The unique structures of working within a person's living environment while they are in crisis develops a kind of relationship that requires the utmost of care and intentionality to honor the lives of those with whom they work. There is but a small window of opportunity to make a difference in a person's life. This limited time is precious and each moment should be treated with compassion and respect. The advocate will be providing information and resources. Offering reflective criticism about how coping mechanisms are either helping or hindering a person's desire to create the life they want for themselves and their children. Creating an environment that builds a woman's belief in her ability to make decisions for herself and move toward her future. Balancing the programmatic requirements necessary to deliver the program.

Response to physical and emotional needs

Women coming into both shelter and transitional housing have either physical or emotional needs or both that need to be met. Consider a person who has lived under power and control for a period of time, they may have difficulty moving through the trauma they have experienced and finding their own voice. Women come in many states of mind.

One woman may come with lots of energy, eager to jump in and take action, building a new life, being completely involved with everything offered to her. Another woman may come in completely immobilized. She may have difficulty making decisions, may be almost frozen in her space. Still another might be full of rage, angry about what has happened to her, releasing pent up frustration in all directions around her. The point to realize is that each person comes with a history that brought them to where they are, coping skills may be working well or may be locked in a survival mode.

Advocates will need to be aware of the many ways women show the trauma of their experiences with domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence as well as how they carry the multi-generational trauma of Native

women. Once an advocate understands how each person is managing their experiences, the advocate can figure out how to offer a helping hand.

Sometimes I walk with a woman and hold her hand, helping make phone calls, scheduling appointments and spending lots of time helping her sort out what she needs to do. Sometimes I walk beside her, offering resources, being a sounding board as she figures it out. And sometimes I need to get out of her way, because she is clear about what she needs and is busy with it.
~ Anonymous advocate

Shelter and transitional housing advocates acknowledge that when women and their children enter their programs, many of them collapse, and end up with different health issues emerging. They often say this is the result of being able to just stop. Women have current and past injuries that might need attention, and other medical needs that were not attended to because they were focused on surviving the violence. The women also begin to examine what was happening in their lives. This can be the first time they start to recognize that violence is a societal problem and not something that makes them a dysfunctional person.

Holistic approach

While full exercise of sovereignty and self-determination for Tribes is a continued effort, Native women are embracing their tribal identities and status as Native women. (Metoyer, 2010)

The advocate will help to provide a holistic approach that is guided by what each person they are working with wants. This may include offering immediate rest and access to medical care. The advocate may offer legal and civil options for protection such as helping them file a police report, navigate the criminal justice system if the abuser or perpetrator was arrested, seeking a protection order, providing basic information about seeking a divorce or addressing child custody matters. The advocate may also offer assistance with seeking a forensic examination or accessing medical care for injuries, The tribe may have assistive

resources and the advocate can help her navigate, manage and be heard within those resources. Other needs may include settling children in to school if relocation outside of the school area took place, helping her address the needs of her children and how the violence has impacted their behavior and school participation.

The healing process that women will follow will be varied. The advocate will help each survivor identify and seek what will be most helpful to her. This might include access to traditional activities and ceremonies, seeking consultation with a spiritual person, medicine person, and/or traditional practitioner.

In our transitional housing program we discovered women were at different ranges of assimilation. Simple acts of asking women to take part in collecting sage and sweet grass created an environment where we started to talk about how they can take care of themselves with traditional medicines. ~ Anonymous advocate

Women may also seek religious support, wanting to connect with the faith of their beliefs. They may also want to seek forms of healing through professional counseling. The advocate's role will be to help each woman identify her path to long-term healing and assist and support her with her choices.

Economic supports

Our intervention strategies must go beyond offering emotional support; we must offer survivors help locating and securing the types of tangible services (financial assistance, child care, transportation, housing, and educational assistance) that will support their survival and the termination of abuse. Perhaps, as some advocates are doing, it is time to bring greater emphasis and awareness to economic justice and the self-sufficiency of survivors (Postmus, Severson, Berry, & Yoo, 2009). The shelter and transitional housing program will not need to recreate any existing programs in the community, instead it will want to develop close working relationships that help ensure the survivors of domestic violence,

sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking are able to receive the resources they need and that it is done in a way that can still account for their safety needs.

Focusing on assisting survivors with accessing housing, employment, retraining, education and vocational training resources, and child care helps to enhance a survivor's empowerment and ability to make it on their own.

Advocate capacity

Women survive abuse, but they are more likely to do so when [advocates] are equipped with the knowledge of what is helpful to them—personally and organizationally—in the aftermath of the violence (Postmus, Severson, Berry, & Yoo, 2009).

Advocates should have a range of skills and operational supports that will help them be effective and compassionate in responding to those seeking assistance from their shelter or transitional housing program.

The advocate's environment will need to build in time and space to reflect and take action. In the business of providing advocacy, limited time creates a means for losing sight of the program's intent and purpose. Active and intentional reflection and action allows for critically examining how advocacy is moving toward the vision of the program and ensuring women's sovereignty and safety is being upheld.

Shelter and transitional housing can bring with it a mix of interpersonal relationships that can create conflict. Women arrive with different levels of personal patience, communication styles, beliefs about how to parent their children, how to clean a kitchen and more. Good communication styles and behavior modeling by advocates that reflect traditional values of respect, cooperation and community responsibility will go far to educate program participants on how to interact with each other. In those cases where conflict is building, advocates may need to involve themselves in helping to resolve conflict and find mutually acceptable solutions for all involved.

Worksheets (2)

Developing your Scope of Services will ensure you have in place relationships and resources to deliver your program. Building the capacity of advocates will ensure your program can respond to the changing needs of those being served.

- 3. Complete the worksheet to help you develop your Scope of Services.*
- 4. Complete the worksheet to develop Advocacy Capacity.*

Worksheet – Scope of Services, p1

Describe your scope of services.

What will survivors be offered in your program for immediate needs?

What will survivors be offered in your program for safety needs?

What will survivors be offered in your program for personal and family needs?

What will survivors be offered in your program for economic needs?

What else?

Worksheet – Scope of Services, p2

What resources can be offered to survivors that are outside your program? What do you need to know to access those resources?

Under what conditions will services end?

How does what you are doing carry your vision and values? Affirm the sacredness of women? Recognize and support survivor sovereignty? Adhere to absolute confidentiality? Centralize survivor safety? Guided by voices of survivors?

Worksheet – Advocacy development, p1

What skills do you want to develop within the advocate staffs as a whole? (e.g. ability to work with victims of sexual assault, conflict resolution skills, critical thinking skills, etc.)

Resources available: _____

Develop a training plan for each advocate.

Name: _____

Skills needed: _____

Resources available: _____

Name: _____

Skills needed: _____

Resources available: _____

**repeat as needed for each advocate*

Confidentiality

Confidentiality and privilege is the cornerstone of keeping women safe and is central to shelter and transitional housing programs. (Battered Women's Justice Project, 2007)

<p>Domestic Violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Victims of domestic violence are at greatest risk of homicide at the point of separation/leaving their violent partner- Essential that victims can flee violence and access services without being vulnerable to being tracked by an abusive partner- Information that can be shared with outside parties must be carefully scrutinized and limited	<p>Sexual Assault</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Public disclosure occurring out of their control - media- Privacy concerns related to their fear of possible retaliation by the alleged or convicted offender- Societal stigma associated with such crimes that can result in victim blaming- SA services, policies, and practices are a core support for maintaining victim privacy
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Many [tribes] are located in small, rural communities where everyone knows everyone else. Community members recognize the cars that belong to certain tribal programs and each other's cars (Wasserman, 2000). Information travels quickly, some communities are closely tied to police scanners and listen to the different calls taking place. Essentially, subtle activities can be indicators of someone seeking shelter or seeking transitional housing. A survivor seeking shelter or transitional housing is doing so as a result of violence that has occurred from acts of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence or a combination of these. Safety is intertwined with confidentiality and the shelter and transitional housing program will have to take clear and deliberate measures to limit who has access to information and how information gets shared.

- *Is communication between advocates and victims confidential? Are there any applicable tribal codes or laws that address confidential victim-advocate communications?*

- *Do policies of the advocacy program speak to survivor confidentiality?*
- *Do advocates operate independent of government requirements to share victim information?*
- *Are there impediments to maintaining confidentiality of survivor-advocate communications in your community?*

The walls of confidentiality need to be rigid to protect the safety and autonomy of victims. Within those walls the shelter and transitional housing program will have in place a method for protecting victim confidentiality in its administrative practices that reach outside of the program, client documentation, and sharing information both internal and external of the program.

Office on Violence against Women (OVW) grantees are subject to a statutory requirement to keep confidential information about victims served with grant funds, unless they get a signed, informed, time-limited release or in the case of a statutory or court mandate. If release is compelled by statutory or court mandate, they need to make reasonable attempts to notify the victim and take steps to protect the privacy and safety of the persons affected.

Women may want advocates to share and exchange information for different reasons. Each woman should be informed of benefits, consequences and unintended consequences of that information sharing so she can make informed decisions to protect her. If she then decides she want to have information shared, a release can be provided that details the specific kind of information to be shared and a length of time that allows only enough time for the exchange to occur. In some cases, a program will put in place a release of information for the duration of time a person is in a program. This is a release that has a focus on convenience and fails the test of prioritizing safety.

Program staff often assumes they can freely communicate between each other about the detailed information they know about a person's life. However, that is not a safe practice. It might be helpful for all staff to have some basic information about a situation, however, it is more important for staff to have information on a *need to know basis*. Need to know eliminates opportunity for staff accidentally sharing information that is identifiable. Staff working in shelter or transitional

housing need only to know that women have met the eligibility requirements of the program, the details of how that woman met those may not be necessary to do their job.

The tribal shelter or transitional housing program is often seated within a larger department of tribal government such as Behavioral Health or Human Services. Departments can have a mistaken understanding that information can be freely shared between programs within that department. While the intent is to offer a comprehensive program for the survivor, the practice of freely sharing information poses a threat to victim safety by allowing information to be shared freely among a larger number of people. The rule should be to keep the flow of information to the lowest number of people possible. Cross program information sharing should always be accomplished when a survivor is fully informed about her options and provides an executed release of information.

Subpoenas and warrants

Working in a shelter or transitional housing program, subpoenas and warrants will come up. The question is not if it will happen but when. The program needs to have a predetermined operating practice in place to appropriately respond at the time it occurs. If program staff cannot release information about who is in the program, it then stands to reason they should not be opening their doors to allow for service of documents. There will be a time when someone seems to have a valid reason to open the door and let someone in or to release information based on the authority that is sending them the service or legal order. Regardless of those reasons, the program should follow their policies that guide them in every day actions.

One program created a script on what the advocate should say to the police when faced with an arrest warrant or search warrant explaining why they are doing what they are doing. They then would advise the woman of the attempt to serve the warrant and give them the opportunity to contact law enforcement.

In the instance of a staff subpoena, they can be served and then passed on to legal counsel to assist the advocate with preparing for court.

The shelter and transitional housing program will need to put in place regular training to ensure all staff are well trained and informed on laws and rules pertaining to protecting victim confidentiality.



Mandatory reporting

As advocates work in shelter and transitional housing programs, there are mandated reporting laws that pertain to information the advocate acquires. Depending on the laws, this could be an instance of child abuse, or risk for suicide or homicide. There is an ethical and legal obligation to respond. The shelter and transitional program will want to have in place a policy guiding practice in the event mandated reporting is necessary. When the program is considering its policy, it will want to consider each staff and how equipped each staff is to respond to such a legal requirement. Some programs require staff seek counsel with their supervisor to assist them in determining if an action rises to the level of mandated reporting. The program will want to consider how it responds to the requirements of the law, protecting their relationship of trust with the

survivor and protect the woman's need for safety and confidentiality. Informing program participants at multiple points of contact is helpful to ensure women are aware the advocate is a mandated reporter and what that may mean to the woman. Additionally, once a mandated report occurs, an advocate is encouraged to still act as an advocate.

A thorough discussion about mandated reporting is beyond the scope of this document, programs are strongly encouraged to seek additional information and training about mandated reporting laws applicable to their program practice and develop an informed policy that centralizes the safety of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence.

Worksheet

Developing your Confidentiality Policies will protect safety and develop your program's community credibility.

Complete the worksheet to develop Confidentiality Policies.

Worksheet – Victim Confidentiality, p1

Describe how your program will address victim confidentiality.

How will access to confidential information be addressed or accessed?

How will confidentiality be addressed among staff?

How will confidentiality be addressed among programs in the same department?

How will warrants and subpoenas be responded to?

Identify additional resources to help in developing policies.

Worksheet – Victim Confidentiality, p1

Describe how your program will address mandated reporting requirements.

What mandated reporting laws apply to the staff?

What steps will each staff take to determine if a mandated report is needed? And to complete the report if necessary?

How does what you are doing carry your vision and values? Affirm the sacredness of women? Recognize and support survivor sovereignty? Adhere to absolute confidentiality? Centralize survivor safety? Guided by voices of survivors?

Safety Planning

Safety planning makes a difference in the lives of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence. It helps them prepare for the likelihood of future violence and enables survivors to have options and protect themselves when emergency responders might be too far away.

A safety plan will examine the current risk, providing an exploration of options for improving safety and identifying possible resources that can help (Davies, Lyon, & Monti-Catania, 1988). Safety planning will consider both the safety of the survivor and the children and will help her identify when they may be in physical danger. Each person's situation is unique. As an advocate, do not assume anything. The survivor will be the expert in their own life and can tell you what they know about their own personal safety. Help the survivor use her skills to create her safety plan (1988).

Safety planning is a dynamic process, it should be ongoing and done in a way that develops the survivor's skills to continue doing their own safety planning.

- *Safety in their home*
- *Safety on the way to work and at work*
- *Safety at public locations*
- *Safety with their children*
- *Safety at places their children go (school, childcare, grandma's, etc.)*

The advocate will want to ask questions to help the victim/survivor develop clarity about her own situation.

When do you think you are in danger? Where is that?

What would help you feel safer both physically and emotionally?

What have you done in the past to stay safe?

Safety plans for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking are similar in many regards. They focus on looking at options, developing strategies and accessing formal and informal resources. However, there are differences that should be taken into account depending on the kind of violence the victim/survivor experienced.

Safety Planning Differences

Domestic Violence

Focus safety planning on anticipating the actions of the abuser, looking at dangers, recognizing that abusers shift their tactics, adaptable, exploring options, considerations for children, putting in place strategies to protect, to inform support, and to escape.

Dating Violence

Many people minimize the seriousness of the abuse, safety planning will need to make sure supports will believe the victim. Social media and social community can be used to vilify the victim and further isolate, with possible retaliation.

Sexual Assault

Focus safety planning on knowing community resources, normalizing potential responses and triggers, creating a sense of safety within themselves and within their personal space as well as anticipating dangers that may result from the perpetrator.

Stalking

Stalking may not be the result of an intimate relationship. The abuser may not have had a relationship but is infatuated/obsessed with the person being stalked. Documentation is critical to demonstrate the existence and extent of the stalking.



Facility safety

Safety planning will need to be considered for the facility, e.g. shelter or transitional housing program property, or individual apartment or house each person is living in. Advocates assisting survivors with acquiring housing in any form will want to be looking at and exploring possible risks and protections each property provides.

Safety can be improved by taking some basic actions such as increasing the light bulb wattage at the front entrance, or removing places to hide near all entrances and exits to the property. Consider whether the property is located in an isolated location or if there is adequate access to cell phone or telephone from the location inside and outside of the property. Are there multiple ways a person can exit or enter the property? What might those risks or advantages be from those access points? Can a car be identified when parked at the property?

Not only will advocates want to be able to assess the safety of a location but they will also want to work with survivors in building their ability to assess safety conditions within and around their own living locations.

Technology safety

Advocates sometimes say, "I don't like computers and don't want to learn about them." Or they say, "I don't use Facebook, I don't even know what it is about and I don't care to learn."

Technology is here to stay, therefore, shelter and transitional housing staff will need to have a basic understanding of how it is possible to use technology to further abuse a person. Resources to support those who have limited technology capacity are important tools for advocates to have.

Advocates will need to know enough about technology to be able to help women to use it safely. There are many ways technology can be used to abuse.

Spyware can allow abusers to get knowledge about everything a woman does on their computers and laptops. Tracking devices such as GPS are easily available and can be used to monitor the locations of victims. Some of the phone apps, software and web-based services have location services that can identify where a person is at the time they are using it. Social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, and Friendster are just a few of the social sites available and the numbers are growing rapidly. Communication within social media should always be considered a public space. There are limitations to the kinds of privacy protections each have. The more tracking and stalking an abuser does with their partner, the more risk the survivor has to their safety.

Tribal Information Technology staff or your local geek can help advocates learn more about technology. Other resources are available as well. SafetyNet located at <http://nnedv.org/projects/safetynet/111.html> offers assistance with program learning about how to address technology safety.

Advocate safety

Batterers are generally targeting their violence at the victim, however, there may be a time an offender may target an advocate because they have been working with their former partner.

Building in regular practices to create a safe office space such as locking the door at 5:00 p.m. when office hours end if someone works late, and letting other staff know where an advocate is going and when they are expected to return is a helpful way to be sure someone is paying attention to the safe movement of advocates. This can help other staff to know when an advocate has not returned and something might be amiss. Other safe practices can include parking in lighted areas, making sure car doors are locked as soon as getting into the car when alone and with someone, having code words among staff for when to call the police.

Program staff will want to take time to consider developing their practices for enhancing the safety of advocates while making sure they are able to effectively respond to the needs of survivors.

Worksheets

Developing your Safety Planning practices will help to ensure comprehensive, diligent safety planning takes place.

Complete the worksheet to help you develop your Safety Planning practices.

Worksheet – Safety Planning, p1

Describe how safety planning for survivors takes place (include technology safety).

What tools will the program use?

How will the program help safety planning become incorporated into the day-to-day thinking of the victim/survivor?

Worksheet – Safety Planning, p2

How will safety be addressed for the facility?

How will safety be addressed for the advocates?

How does what you are doing carry your vision and values? Affirm the sacredness of women? Recognize and support survivor sovereignty? Adhere to absolute confidentiality? Centralize survivor safety? Guided by voices of victims/survivors?

Challenging Issues

Every shelter and transitional housing program will end up working with real people experiencing real life difficulties. Depending on the program, staff will have a small window of opportunity to make a difference in their lives. Helping them address some of the very barriers to accessing what they need to help them stay safe and escape the violence that is occurring. The window of opportunity can be as small as a few days or could last for multiple months.

The deeper the understanding an advocate has about challenging issues can help equip them to be able to work more effectively with each person who comes before them, seeing each woman as a unique human being and engaging with her in the place that she is at. This section describes a few of the common challenging issues advocates work through in their own Tribal community; however, this section does not include all that the tribal advocate may encounter. In each new instance, the advocate will want to examine their understanding of the situation by considering the woman's individual autonomy and how safety can be enhanced by what is being offered to her.

Multiple/repeat incidents of violence

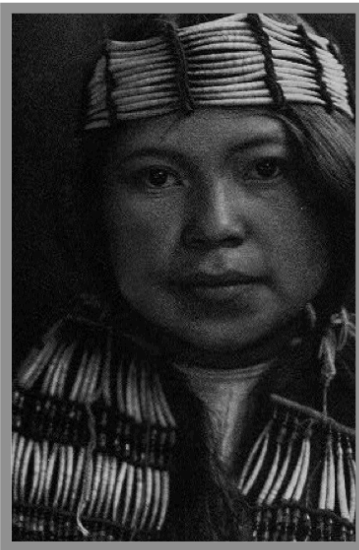
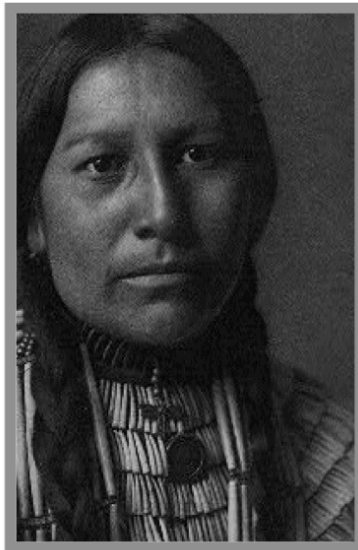
Victims of domestic violence often experience repeat incidents of violence. They do not cause the violence they experience and unfortunately often live with the violence over a lengthy period of time. One woman may find she is able to get out of the situation quickly while the next person will find herself caught in a web of violence that makes it difficult to get out. Studies show that potential lethality significantly rises when victims of domestic violence make a decision to leave the relationship or actually leave the relationship. (Roehl, O'Sullivan, Webster, & Campbell, 2005)

Within our tribal communities we often have little to no housing available for rent, limited community resources, few opportunities for employment, and an inability to make changes that go unnoticed by the community which poses its

own challenges. While a staff person working within a shelter may want to see the violence end and would like the survivor to make swift decisions ending an abusive relationship, it is not in the staff person's control. The survivor of domestic violence has the clearest understanding of their risks to safety.

Some programs have attempted to limit the numbers of time a person can receive services, while this might be an attempt at managing limited resources it is also a dangerous practice. *What we know about domestic violence is that the violence escalates over time. As practitioners reach a level of frustration from working with the same victim/survivor over time, the dangerousness of the situation is also increasing.*

Most importantly programs will want to examine their practices in working with survivors who are repeat service recipients and explore how they can enhance their advocacy response to counter the increased risks that are mounting.



Addressing alcohol/drug abuse

Alcohol and drug use poses complex challenges for shelters and transitional housing programs. The survivor may be using alcohol as a coping mechanism or might be alcohol or drug dependent. On dry reservations or in dry communities, being intoxicated can become a barrier to seeking legal resources when being abused by their spouse or having been sexually assaulted.

The shelter or transitional housing program may want to create rules to regulate and closely monitor alcohol and drug use. The intent would be to help program participants with getting sober, creating a sober environment for program participants and their children, and helping to manage challenges advocate staff are dealing with. While the intent is for positive reasons, over regulating or creating rigid rules around alcohol and drug use can create barriers to serving the very people who are most vulnerable and have high safety risks from their abuser. Rules that monitor a person's alcohol and drug use and mandate participation in chemical dependency programs will force the issues underground. Women will end up hiding their use from program staff instead of reaching out to staff seeking assistance with their alcohol and drug use.

One woman I worked with was a chronic alcoholic. She had a long history of having been abused and raped. She challenged me on just about every level in my ability to work with her but I stayed consistent and unwavering in offering my support while helping her to see the challenges her alcoholism was causing for her. Then one day, she told me, "You are the only person in my life who hasn't thrown me away." ~ Anonymous Advocate

The program will want to ensure they are continuing to support a woman's sovereignty and individual autonomy. This creates a delicate balance for the program, learning how to be compassionate and help to mirror a woman's reality to her.

The program will want to create a relationship with each survivor that will create opportunity to work with them and help them understand how alcohol and drug

use is problematic and creates risk and problems for her. Building relationships with the local alcohol and drug program staff will be helpful for shelter and transitional housing staff. This relationship can help advocates learn about how to raise issues they see related to alcohol and drug use and how to make appropriate referrals to programs when a woman is ready to take that important step. The advocate will then be ready to assist with accessing the resources that are most helpful to the survivor wanting to address their alcohol or drug use.

Additionally, shelter and transitional housing staff will need to educate themselves about the local laws and rules related to alcohol and drug use to be able to help remove barriers to accessing criminal justice resources in developing safety for survivors.

Relationships and personal connections

Conversations with tribal programs across the United States make it clear that interpersonal relationships pose a significant challenge to the provision of shelter and transitional housing services in our close-knit tribal communities. This can be relationships ranging from the victim seeking assistance is the advocate's sister to the abuser of a survivor in the program may be related to a person with significant authority within the tribe (tribal council member, tribal court judge, tribal chief of police, etc.). These different relationships can present a perception of favoritism from providing financial resources to a family member or create fear of interference from persons of authority.

In these instances, having clearly developed policies to protect the ability of the shelter and transitional housing to respond to survivors in need is critical. As most tribes require policies be approved by their tribal leadership, the policies themselves offer the protection to the staff to act in a manner in the best of interest of the survivor and not at the will of an individual in authority.

The policies will also help to provide the guidance needed to ensure how the shelter and transitional housing will respond to relatives seeking services. In these cases, it is important policies are questioning how it will impact the

survivor seeking assistance to ensure they are receiving effective services that are consistent with services and resources being provided to non-relatives.

Worksheet

Having policies to guide shelter/transitional housing staff will ensure the program provides responses that are effective and addressing challenging issues.

Complete the worksheet to help you develop policies for challenging issues.

Worksheet: Challenging issue policy - p1

Describe the challenging policy area(s) you need/want to address.

Challenging issue: _____

What makes this a challenging issue for the shelter/transitional housing program?

What is the intent behind this policy? What do you want the policy to achieve?

Worksheet: Challenging issue policy - p2

Describe other policy areas you need/want to address.

Challenging issue: _____

What will you do to address this challenging issue?

What resources will help you address the challenging issue?

How does what you are doing carry your vision and values? Affirm the sacredness of women? Recognize and support survivor sovereignty? Adhere to absolute confidentiality? Centralize survivor safety? Guided by voices of victims/survivors?

* Repeat for additional challenging issues

Special populations

As a program gets developed, it is difficult to accommodate the needs of every person who might walk through the doors, however, it is important to develop a response to ensure the program can appropriately provide services and options to everyone seeking assistance. Some populations that frequently are not addressed within our tribal communities may include working with male victims; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT) victims; and persons with disabilities. This list is not all inclusive but begins the discussion about special populations in your community.

In each case, while the program may have a very small number of victims in their community seeking services from one of these populations, it is still important to have a plan in place to enable the shelter and transitional housing program to provide an effective response.

Male victims

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, females are more likely than males to experience intimate partner violence. (Catalano, 1993-2004)

There are two main areas of importance when providing a response to male victims of domestic violence. First, it is important to ensure staff has a solid understanding of what domestic violence is and how abusers may use the services and resources available for victims of domestic violence to manipulate the practitioner's ability to respond to the victim of domestic violence. In such cases, an unaware shelter or transitional program may become an unwilling participant with the abuser. *Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behavior.* In cases where a woman has been arrested for assault, it is important to recognize whether we are talking about a one-time incident of assaultive behavior or a pattern of coercive behavior. Knowing the difference can distinguish how to identify a victim of domestic violence.

In our tribal communities where those seeking services or being accused of being an abuser may be someone known to the staff, it may be difficult to see them as an abuser. The program will want to ensure it has in place adequate checks and balances to ensure victims are being served.

Secondly, while females tend to be more often the victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence, there are male victims who will be seeking assistance from the program. Depending on the program design, the shelter or transitional housing program will need to have in place a plan to provide a comparable response for the male victim that is similar to that being offered female victims. A program that has community living might not want to include a male victim within that living environment but would possibly have an alternative housing resource that can be offered. As with female victims, the program will want to offer assistance with safety planning, access to legal remedies and other resources available.

In the U.S., about 10 percent of all victims are male in crimes of sexual assault, sexual abuse, and rape (Lisak, 2012). Although there are some different issues for male survivors, on an individual emotional level they are as profoundly affected by assaults as women. Male survivors frequently experience emotions including: pain, anger, loneliness, shame, anxiety, and confusion over sexual intimacy. A sexual assault may leave a male survivor questioning his masculinity. This along with the fact that men are more frequently assaulted by other men may cause a male survivor to question his sexual orientation. (Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, 2003)

It can be difficult for male survivors to seek help for fear of how others will react and in our tribal communities, information travels quickly. Privacy is extremely important so a male victim can seek assistance. Compassionate and informed advocates are critical.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT) victims

People who are LGBT are also called *two-spirited* within Native communities. The term *two-spirit* is drawn from the traditional belief that sexuality is inseparable from other aspects of life. Historically, gay traditions were prevalent in pre-contact Native life; there are reports of both women and men living in same sex marriages (Mending the Sacred Hoop, 2003).

Staff should be trained in LGBT cultural competency so they are equipped to work effectively and sensitively with LGBT victims. Advocates should be aware of how local systems respond to LGBT victims so they can make appropriate referrals and help inform LGBT victims of what they can expect.

Establish a means for providing your response to LGBT victims and consider making accommodations within the program. If there are limitations to the ability to do that, explore the use of providing hotel vouchers or other accommodations for very short periods of time to men and to women the program does not have room for (FORGE Forward, 2009). Educate yourself about the shelter and transitional housing programs in your area that are responsive to LGBT victims in the event you will need to assist an LGBT victim to relocate to a different facility.

Advocates should be educated on how to provide LGBT specific safety planning. While there are some similarities, there are some significant differences and advocates will want to work with LGBT experts in the area training staff to be prepared to conduct LGBT specific safety planning (FORGE, 2011)

Persons with disabilities

Women with disabilities have a 40 percent greater risk of violence than women without disabilities. The most common perpetrators of violence against women with disabilities are their male partners. In addition, women with disabilities are three times more likely to be sexually assaulted than women without disabilities. (Brownridge, 2006)

Disabilities include physical, developmentally delayed, and mental health. Staff should be trained to understand how to work with a range of disabilities that victims might come with. This may include physical disabilities that are not as visible to the layperson as someone who is mobile only with a wheel chair.

Staff will want to understand how accessible their facility is. Tribal or local disability expertise can assist with assessing the accessibility of the property or facility. As with any community, there is an underlying culture and advocates should prepare to work effectively and sensitively with survivors that have disabilities. Advocates should be aware of how local systems are equipped to work with survivors who have disabilities so they can make appropriate referrals and help inform disabled survivors of what to expect.

The tribe will most likely have some resources already in place and the shelter or transitional program can benefit from developing a relationship with these resources, learning about what is available and possibly arranging for training to enhance the capacity of staff to understand the different ability challenges and how to more effectively work to provide safety under these circumstances.

Worksheet

Having policies to guide shelter or transitional housing staff will ensure the program provides responses that are effective for populations that are not often served.

Complete the worksheet to help you develop policies for special populations.

Worksheet: Special population policy - p1

Describe your policy for working with _____.

How will you respond to survivors from within this population that is not already being provided services within your shelter/ or transitional program?

How will you provide services to this population to meet their needs within your program's capacity?

Worksheet: Special population policy - p2

Policy for working with _____, continued.

What additional resources can you access to educate staff?

To assess your response to this population?

To expand options for this population?

How does what you are doing carry your vision and values? Recognize and support survivor sovereignty? Adhere to absolute confidentiality? Centralize victim/survivor safety? Guided by voices of survivors?

** Repeat for additional populations*

Ensuring your program lives on

Everything on the earth has a purpose, every disease an herb to cure it, and every person a mission. This is the Indian theory of existence. ~ Mourning Dove, Salish

The act of developing a shelter or transitional housing program is but one commitment to address violence against Native women. Being able to help it continue doing its work is another significant commitment to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

A spirit of respectful and inclusive dialogue is a large part of deliberative decision-making (Metoyer, 2010). At the core of shelter and transitional housing development work is a journey that starts with envisioning the program, its purpose and steps taken to help build it into a solid response to violence against Native women. This includes the following actions:

- *Developing a clear vision and working to make that happen*
- *Putting in place the necessary structure to ensure it continues with the focus intended*
- *Institutionalizing policy and practice to uphold the vision of the practice long after those who envisioned the program leave*

Periodically, it is necessary to build into the journey a means to reflect on what is created, how it is fulfilling the vision and whether the shelter or transitional housing program is maintaining its spirit and intent of the program. After thoughtful reflection, a program will want to make adjustments to continue its forward movement.

Some programs have developed a *women's advisory committee* or *women's circle of advisors*. The committee or circle of women has been one way to ensure that women from the community shape and influence the shelter and transitional housing program for the tribe.

Thoroughly trained staff is one of the important resources the shelter and transitional housing program will have. Training should include the understanding of why violence against Native women exists and how it is occurring within their tribal communities today; understanding the complex dynamics of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and dating violence; and how it looks within your local tribal community, understanding and recognizing Native women's sovereignty and autonomy in their own lives, how to enhance safety, and how to incorporate tribal cultural identity and beliefs.

Training for staff is not a one-time exercise that can be crossed off a list but an ongoing process that changes with the changing conditions of violence. The program will want to create forums for practice and exploration:

- *Working through issues*
- *Conflict*
- *Attitudes*
- *Working through complex situations*
- *Ability to think on your feet*

Developing an advocate training plan will build the shelter and transitional housing staff's capacity to work effectively across the complex lives of victims and survivors and enhance staff ability to truly create a sister space that not only enhances women's safety but honors them as our sisters.

Closing

A community that cannot create its own definition of right and wrong cannot be said in any meaningful sense to have achieved true self-determination. (Deer, 2009)

Creating “sister space” is one of many efforts to address violence against Native women. We are challenged to create a space for women leaving abusive relationships and seeking refuge for multiple forms of violence and then we begin to recognize there are many more ways the tribe will need to engage in addressing domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and dating violence.

Theoretical explanations for battering are not mere exercises; by pinpointing the conditions that create violence against women, they suggest the direction in which a movement should proceed to stop it (Schechter, 2007). We are challenged to work at creating the time and space for women who have experienced violence in our communities to examine their options, make decisions and begin moving toward the futures they envision and then we must look forward to changing the conditions in our community and our society that allows violence against our Native women to exist. It is then, when all violence against Native women ends, when our women are being treated as sacred, being honored as our relatives and we have protected the future for our children, that we rest.

Remember that you are all people and that all people are you.

Remember that you are this universe and that this universe is you.

Remember that all is in motion, is growing, is you.

Remember that language comes from this.

Remember the dance that language is, that life is.

Remember.

~ Joy Harjo (Dehle, 2009)

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