

Tip Sheet for Planning Court-Based Domestic Violence Training

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Providing domestic violence training for court staff and justice-system practitioners is a critical component of an effective response to domestic violence, but it is not always obvious how to create local trainings that complement state and national efforts and lead to desired changes in system processes and outcomes. Training alone is not sufficient to enhance court and community responses to domestic violence, and is but one component of a broader plan of action. Nonetheless, training is an essential tool for improving practices, addressing emerging needs and challenges, and ensuring that agencies maintain high standards of service despite turnover in personnel. This tip sheet is designed for court administrators, managers, judges, advocates, and other stakeholders looking to implement effective training for judicial and non-judicial personnel. It is intended to promote consistency and best practices in training and guide jurisdictions in thinking about effective training strategies.

Know Your Audience

1. Envision your target audience:
 - Who are you looking to train? What are their professional roles?
 - What do you want them to know?
 - What do you want them to do differently?
 - How are you going to reach this audience?
2. Get buy-in by including potential training participants in your planning process

Assess Your Training Needs

1. Consider using multiple approaches to identify gaps in the systems' response and corresponding training needs:
 - Create a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency training planning committee
 - Create a survey and distribute it in various ways, such as online, through agency listservs, via domestic violence court resource coordinator contact lists, and at stakeholder and task force meetings (sample survey, attached Appendix A)
 - Convene focus groups of diverse stakeholders, including non-traditional stakeholders such as educators, mental health professionals, and clergy, to discuss training needs throughout the community, identify emerging topics and themes, and learn about preferred training formats and scheduling
 - Assess survivor experiences with the system, including survivors who did not use the court process, through focus groups, interviews, and/or litigant surveys
 - Review court data, i.e. how often protection orders are granted and dismissed, ancillary relief issued, rates of service, and criminal case outcomes, to identify strengths and gaps in the current system's response
 - Review pleadings to reveal possible gaps in litigants' understanding of forms and processes and to identify training topics to address any gaps in training of court staff and those assisting litigants
 - Conduct a court walk-through and court observation to assess the process from the litigant's perspective
2. Consider whether identified system gaps are systemic issues or personnel issues, and whether each gap would be addressed most effectively through training, other strategies (e.g., roundtable discussions, peer-to-peer mentoring, individual coaching/guidance, etc.), or a combination of approaches
3. Conduct training needs assessment on an annual or semi-annual basis

Plan Your Training

1. Develop your curriculum:
 - Identify learning objectives and teaching points
 - Incorporate multiple, effective adult learning strategies
 - Ensure that teaching methods are interactive and use varied approaches to engage all participants (types of learning activities, attached Appendix D)
 - Consider a "backward design" process in which you clarify what you hope to achieve with the training, including specific changes in practice, before creating the curriculum

2. Identify and secure faculty:
 - Use local domestic violence experts as training faculty whenever possible, either on their own or paired with a national expert
 - Consider using faculty from different disciplines (i.e. educators, mental health professionals, clergy), and pairing faculty into interdisciplinary training teams
 - Consider that participants may prefer to learn from their peers (i.e. use judges to train judges)
 - Use technical assistance providers to help identify faculty
3. Consider your budget:
 - Create a budget for your training (sample budget breakdown, attached Appendix B)
 - Identify sources of funding in your training needs focus groups
 - Identify potential in-kind donations to reduce costs (e.g., training space, copying)
 - Explore options for grant funding to cover training costs
 - Consult with a technical assistance provider to brainstorm additional funding sources
4. Develop a workplan (sample workplan, attached Appendix C):
 - Send out a “save the date” notice at least two months in advance, with consideration given to how much lead time is needed given the court’s calendar
 - Develop registration materials that ask for information about participant needs (including accessibility and language access) and gather training sub-topics based on the knowledge, experience, and interests of participants
 - Create a detailed/annotated training agenda for faculty and a participant sign-in sheet
 - Submit required documents for continuing education credit, as needed
 - Ask faculty to submit all materials at least two weeks in advance
 - Assist with faculty travel and accommodations
 - Require that participants register at least two weeks in advance
 - Plan for distribution of handout materials online and/or in hard copy
5. Select the location of the training
 - Secure a training space that accommodates the expected number of participants, has a layout that’s conducive to the format(s) of the training (ie. lecture, small group work, breakout sessions), and offers the requisite technology
 - Ensure accessibility for participants with special needs. For more information, see resource from Vera Institute of Justice at:
<http://archive.vera.org/pubs/accessible-events-people-with-disabilities-deaf-individuals>.
6. Prepare and practice for the training
 - Schedule planning calls with the faculty to plan the content and discuss logistics, and convene an in-person faculty meeting immediately prior to the training event
 - Gather flip charts, markers, and any other needed supplies
 - Designate time to set up the training space and test electronic equipment
 - Do a practice run to ensure that all equipment works properly

Evaluate Training Outcomes

1. Use post-training surveys to assess whether participants' needs were met and to identify topics and formats for future training programs
2. Incorporate action planning into your training and follow up with participants to assess changes in participants' practice and their implementation of what they learned
3. Convene follow-up focus groups to assess the impact and effectiveness of the training in terms of systems' response and survivors' experiences
4. Use interviews and focus groups with survivors to assess changes in perceptions/outcomes
5. Continue to review court data and conduct court walk-throughs and court observation to identify system improvements and gaps

Technical Assistance

The Center for Court Innovation has developed this tip sheet to assist communities in developing effective domestic violence training programs. This tip sheet is not intended to be comprehensive, but rather to outline important considerations in your planning process.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

For further information and resources, and for technical assistance regarding domestic violence training and other system responses to domestic violence, please contact Tamara Chin Loy at dvinfos@courtinnovation.org.

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