



# Re-Centering:

Strategies for domestic violence programs to support survivor engagement and leadership to reduce loneliness



Indiana Coalition  
Against  
Domestic Violence

Prevention • Awareness • Advocacy  
Until the Violence Ends.

# Loneliness hurts

The public health field tells us that loneliness is a prevalent problem across the US that is bad for our physical and emotional health. Though loneliness is a problem for many of us, it is a particular problem for survivors of domestic violence where experiences of abuse often include isolation from friends, family, colleagues and other supportive social connections. Isolation makes it difficult for survivors to reach out for emotional support and difficult to seek assistance with basic needs. Accordingly, social isolation compounds the barriers that make it hard for a survivor to separate from an abusive relationship, and increases the likelihood that they will return to one.

With recognition of the burden of loneliness experienced by domestic violence survivors, ICADV convened a cohort of member domestic violence programs in the spring of 2022 to explore, develop, implement and evaluate a range of new strategies for promoting social support. With these strategies, we hope to increase opportunities for connectedness among survivors beyond the period of services traditionally provided by domestic violence programs (which have historically focused on the provision of intensive services around the period of separation from an abusive relationship), and also to honor survivors' calls for more peer-lead support options.

To help ensure that the programs that we proposed centered survivors' leadership and needs, the Center for Women and Families and St. Jude House invited survivors from their communities to participate in listening sessions (the questions that we posed are included at the end of this report). Sixteen participants provided us with recommendations about additional ways that programs could engage survivors, time frames for these activities, and the types of support and training they would want to help lead such efforts. The participants were diverse in age, racial and ethnic identities, and also in the period of time since they had separated/begun the process of recovering from their experiences of abuse. This report provides a summary overview of the advice that survivors shared to guide our next steps.

“*When can we start?*”



# Why survivor leadership?

The survivors we heard from were eager to be involved in the movement to help smooth the path for other survivors. They believed that their personal experiences gave them deep empathy that enabled them to encourage other survivors, as well as knowledge of the systems and supports that are often involved throughout the experience of separating from an abusive relationship. More broadly, survivors wanted to use their understanding to educate community members about domestic violence to help prevent future violence and to increase the compassion and assistance that survivors receive from their social networks.

“With us that have been through it, we know how to get to those avenues. My friend calls me her plethora. And it’s funny. She’ll ask me a question, and she’s like, how do you know this? This is because I went through it. I had to learn and it’s all, you’re in survival mode. I’m just lucky enough now that I can help. So if I can help, you know, that’s what you do.”

**In participating in, and leading engagements strategies, survivors’ goals included:**

## **GOAL: Supporting other survivors**

In reflecting on their own experiences of isolation, loneliness and confusion, the survivors in our group were generous in their enthusiasm to assist others with their stories, resources, information and support. They hoped that with their participation, there would be more safe spaces, and more safe people, that would make it easier for other survivors to reach out for support. They described a variety of ways that they could be helpful from providing emotional support, to assistance with childcare and errands, to advice about navigating community systems and services. In reflecting on their experiences, they said:

“ I didn’t know where to go or what to do. Because everything is so obscure, and you’re not sure who to go to, who you can trust. ”

“ I want to help somebody else. If there’s somebody I can reach out there, even just to watch your kids so you can take a nap, you know, or just go grocery shopping by yourself. Or come and help you clean your house or organize or clean your car, whatever. I want to support people because I didn’t have that. ”

“ I have seen the depths of loneliness. It is horrific. ”

The survivors we spoke with observed that public narratives about domestic violence (awareness materials and messaging, media accounts, etc.), and agency services are primarily centered around the period of separation. They emphasized the longer arc of recovery. Group participants wanted to share their stories to help fill in gaps that are often missing in conversations about the process of recovering from an abusive relationship. They wanted to offer authenticity and transparency about the longer process, not to discourage other survivors from making the decision to separate, but to better prepare them to anticipate, understand, and be supported in navigating the challenges that would continue over time.

“ Survivors teach us how to survive. ”

## **GOAL: Contributing to changes in community conditions and norms to better prevent violence and restore survivors**

The survivors we spoke with described their eagerness to use their stories to normalize the issue and to make it easier for other survivors to come forward. They wanted to share their experiences to correct common misperceptions that fuel stigma and judgment. They wanted to make it easier for those who had been isolated by feelings of shame and secrecy to connect with other survivors for validation, emotional support and mutual aid.

*“ I told a friend that I was coming in to do this, and she told me that she’d been in two abusive relationships. And she said that all of her friends that she knows, all of them, had been in an abusive relationship...but none of us are talking. So having this to where people begin to feel comfortable and to come together to say that we went through this, we survived through this, let’s help so that it doesn’t continue. ”*

*“ What they don’t know is that the justice system doesn’t always protect us. Law enforcement does not always protect us sometimes they can’t, and sometimes they don’t... The custody situation with children. It’s not cut and dried. People think oh, well, there’s children, the judge will always rule in the best interest of a child. No, they do not because with hard solid evidence, my children were not protected. And I was extremely proactive, very respectful in courts. And so I think it’s important that people hear stories to hear the sad truth, because we all try to make the right steps. Unfortunately, it does not mean that our children are going to be protected and it’s going to be a happily ever after story. It may be a very long story, or a very sad story. And the world needs to hear that because now telling the truth allows society leaders to take action to change that narrative. To protect our children, protect the victims, the change that everyone deserves, which is to live in a safe home. ”*

## **GOAL: Supporting their own, ongoing healing**

The survivors we spoke with believed that the benefits of their involvement in supporting other survivors flowed in both directions – they had the experience and credibility to be helpful to other survivors, and providing support made them feel empowered and helped them to continue healing.

*“ A neuroscientist who talks about it, she says the greatest thing to do in a situation when you’re coming out of trauma, or you’ve been in trauma, is to help others because it helps you to heal those open spaces while you’re helping other people. And for myself, you know just being able to help somebody else has really helped to keep me up here and not down there in the depression or whatever. So, if you could have those options for people even during the program. ”*



*“ The first thing we did was the video. It was so empowering for me. I can’t even describe it. It was very empowering for me, and I was very happy to have that. ”*

# Peer support versus advocates’ support

We asked survivors to help us distinguish the types of services and supports that they would like to receive from peers and those that they needed from professional advocates. In responding to this question, survivors told us that they thought that peers were well-equipped to provide things like emotional support, information about the dynamics of domestic violence, assistance with basic needs, and service referrals. They would rely on advocates for complex needs, in response to high danger situations, and for assistance with legal matters.

*“ A range of choices, that way people can kind of say like, oh, I want to get involved in this or like maybe I’m not ready for that yet. Maybe I’ll come back to that...it all kind of depends on where you are. ”*

## Strategy: Engagement

Participants were provided with a list of survivor engagement and leadership strategies under consideration by each agency (a full list of engagement strategies generated by the cohort and survivors is included at the end of the report). Group participants affirmed all of the engagement options that were offered, and recommended additional strategies that they thought would be helpful for reaching and supporting other survivors.

They encouraged us to offer a range of engagement options so that survivors could choose to participate in ways that aligned with their skills, interests, availability and recovery stages. They encouraged us to include helping activities like assisting with chores, childcare and shopping in addition to supportive activities like mentoring, facilitating support groups, conducting trainings and activities. They said:

*“ Options tailored to the individual with their comfortability. ”*

*“ A range of choices, that way people can kind of say like, oh, I want to get involved in this or like maybe I’m not ready for that yet. Maybe I’ll come back to that...it all kind of depends on where you are. ”*



## Strategy: Awareness raising

Participants wanted to contribute to awareness raising activities to help survivors who had not connected with services to understand that their experiences were normal. They also wanted to provide personal testimonials regarding services to help other survivors believe that they were welcoming, helpful and trustworthy. Strategies that they recommended included:

- Storytelling mechanisms to normalize the problem and survivors' experiences.

*“ Stories, give it a face. Even at work like when I share a little bit of my story. They think her, really? Yeah, her right here; you're looking at her. I think that it kind of gives it a face and it normalizes it in a way that allows other people just say, that's what I'm going through. Can you please help me or can you please direct me to the right people? So I think stories are very, very good as long as it's done safely. ”*

*“ You can have like a newsletter, or have someone share their story in there, if they're ready, or like coping skills, and just different things where they can read that. And it just, you know, it puts you back into I'm not crazy, this is what others are going through. ”*

- Validating domestic violence program services

*“ There's such a darkness around going to a shelter. I mean, I myself, before I called, I was like, scared, like, what's gonna be in there? What's it gonna be like... it's just Hollyweird paints a picture of what a shelter looks like, or what an abused person looks like...But I didn't know I was being abused. So you know, just breaking open even that maybe a little? Saying, this is our facility or sharing what services are available. Because I do get that question a lot. What do they have? You know, what do they have for me? After I leave? ”*

## Strategy: Survivor support

The support strategies that survivors described mainly focused on creating opportunities to provide emotional and logistical assistance. They also discussed the importance of offering activities for children and opportunities for survivors to learn about and practice self-care techniques ranging from breathing and meditation to art classes.

**Online support and information** — Survivors told us that online groups and resources are an accessible way to get support, to feel connected to other survivors, and to have their experiences normalized.

*“ I do go to the Facebook support groups, it does help a lot. I think sharing, just sharing the stories, can probably speed that up. Yeah, because my story is very similar to everybody's story. There are just certain details are different, the names and the location. Every time someone posts that, it makes me feel that I'm not alone, it makes me feel that I'm not crazy. And she survived it. ”*



*“ One person posted today, and she’s like, Yeah, I’ve been through it. I was there three years ago. And now you know, I’m better. Now I have a job. I graduated from school, and my kids are happier and all that. And I’m like, I really needed to read this today. Because I just felt so depleted. And like, I feel like I’m drowning in the dark. And just, I needed something and this really did help. So, just sharing, and encouraging any survivor to share depending, it doesn’t matter, the timeline that they’re at, it really does help. ”*

**Mutual aid** — In addition to emotional support, participants focused on the fact that survivors are often overwhelmed by all of the logistics that they have to manage after separating from their relationship. They may be moving, setting up new households, attending legal and medical appointments, navigating services, and many are managing extreme poverty. Because survivors are often isolated from friends and family throughout their experiences of abuse, many don’t have social support to rely on as they navigate these physically and emotionally exhausting responsibilities. Group participants suggested multiple mechanisms to facilitate mutual aid and support — from creating safe, online space where survivors could request assistance, to longer term mentoring relationships where survivors could share emotional support and assistance.

*“ That’s kind of where a St. Jude’s support group would come in handy on Facebook, as you said, you know, because if it’s a safe group, with everybody, with the mentors, with the advocates, and the survivors, to where you can say, hey, you know what, I have to do this, is somebody available? So, like a private, like a closed group where you can say, hey, you know what we need on this day... who would like to get together this day and help? Facebook has everything you know, to where people can sit and say, hey, look, I’m going through this right now. Do you have this? Do you? I have no groceries... ”*

**Mentoring** — Participants liked the idea of creating mutually supportive relationships among survivors. They thought that a survivor mentor could assist with ongoing emotional support, and they could provide mutual aid to help with some responsibilities — things like errands, childcare, etc.

*“ There’s so many survivors out there, what if there was a way to pair up with someone as a mentor, because you need someone who you can call, in the middle of the night. Almost like AA. You need someone you can say, like, watch my kids today, and I’ll watch your kids, tomorrow. Someone who’s been out a little bit longer who can mentor you along. Somebody who could just be there, to call and check in on you... ”*

*“ That would be nice, too, because, like, I have to go to the courthouse, and I don’t want to have to drag my kids along. They don’t have to be there. That was a pain in the butt. They had to wait for my attorney with me. But if you were paired up with someone, you would know that you could count on them for that. ”*

## Activities

**Skill building** — Survivors told us that practice sessions, on a range of skills that they'd been unable to develop or to practice during their abusive relationship would be helpful. They talked about the need for education about managing finances, and also about healthy relationship skills.

*“A way to help people to socialize and to make friends with others who have experienced abuse in a setting that will help reinforce healthy boundaries — kindness to self and kindness with others.”*

**Restorative, nurturing activities** — In addition to supports designed to help them navigate their experiences of violence, survivors wanted opportunities to simply be in community — to rebuild social connections and hobbies after their experiences of isolation.

*“Creative play, like when you're a survivor, you know, a lot of people have been isolated so I think of bringing people together to where it is a safe space and doing creative things doing nature things like a walk, having a survivor walk. Even like game nights, I mean anything to give people that thing to look forward to, to grow community. I could go on and on.”*

## Strategy: Survivor outreach

**Periodic check-ins** — Survivors said that they would appreciate the option of follow up contact from an advocate to ask how they're doing at points in time after they exit the program.

*“6, 12, 18 months review with graduates just to check in about progress on goals and resources. You know, make sure she hadn't fell back off the bandwagon...like she's still standing strong, getting counseling, you know, what's going on with you? You know, can we point you somewhere else to help you? I think the statistics should play a role in follow up. I mean, it takes a long time.”*

**Survivor newsletter** — “So basically, you graduate, you can sign up to be a part of a, you know, a monthly, quarterly email or newsletter that about like Center events — the stuff that the center is doing. Information about groups that are happening that we're aware of, and other things — essentially a way that the center can communicate, not in a development fundraising way but in a client facing directing kind of way.”

## Strategy: Advocacy efforts

**Systems advocacy** — Survivors told us that they wanted advocacy opportunities to improve the competence and compassion of response systems that many survivors navigate. They described interest in participating in court watch programs, and in participating in trainings for the range of professionals who respond to domestic violence.





“ Maybe a Court Watch program? I will be happy to have that part of my case. Anyway, I asked, where we are documenting what is happening in our courtrooms. Are our constitutional rights being upheld? Are they being denied? Our Indiana statutes being upheld? Victims’ rights being provided?”

“ I’ve always wanted to go back to the police department...They told me to stop being a victim when I was literally calling them to uphold the protection order that was violated...They may not know and of course I always have positive intent in my mind for others, but he just didn’t know. But how insensitive is that? Like going back in sensitivity training for them, to let them know that this is really what it’s like; I really did survive. I really don’t need your sympathy. What I need you to do is help me help me. Right? And not criticize you know, but say hey, these things are real.”

## Timing and readiness

We told the survivors in our listening sessions that many domestic violence agencies have policies that restrict survivors’ volunteer service with their programs for a designated period of time after their separation from an abusive relationship — usually 6 months to two years. We explained that these policies were created with the intention of protecting survivors grounded in the belief that those who try to “give back” before they had sufficient time to heal might be over-burdened or retraumatized by other survivors’ stories; alternately, survivors still in the process of healing might not be able to provide other survivors with the types of support that they need.

We asked participants about how much recovery time they would want after their experiences of trauma before they felt ready to get involved. They told us that our movement’s effort to standardize and be prescriptive about timelines for survivor readiness was misguided. They expressed concern that for some, our arbitrary timelines would be too long, and would exclude them from participation that could support their connections and recovery. For others, it would be too short, reinforcing the sense that “they should be over it by now”. For some, a period of separation from the trauma of two years felt like forever; for others, two years felt like the blink of an eye with all of the responsibilities and feelings they were managing.

They told us that individuals’ needs would probably vary, but that they would like to be informed about opportunities for involvement right away, even while they were still receiving services. They told us that being connected with other survivors — knowing that they weren’t alone — helped them to be ready earlier. Some suggested that a progression of involvement, beginning with participation in lower-responsibility activities, and then progressing to more leadership roles so that they would have time for their personal recovery, and to learn about the leadership responsibilities. Their bottom-line guidance to us was that arbitrary timelines don’t make sense; that we should just ask each survivor that comes forward, if they are ready, and for what types of engagement. We should trust survivors to know best about their own processes of recovery.

“ I did start talking about it right away, and there’s different levels of comfort that have come. I used to feel more like scared and timid about telling my story, and I’d break down and cry, but I’d get back up. And there’s more strength there... And not everybody’s gonna need to stand up in front of everybody...Everybody does develop in different timelines, like, just in life, generally speaking, like we all develop on different timelines. So, I don’t think that you can put like a stamp on that time.”

“ A neuroscientist who talks about it, she says the greatest thing to do in a situation when you’re coming out of trauma or you’ve been in trauma is to help others because it helps you to heal those open spaces while you’re helping other people. And for myself, you know just being able to help somebody else has really helped to keep me up here and not down there in the depression or whatever. So, if you could have those options for people even during the program.”

“ I would want to know before I graduated. Yeah, I think it’d be nice to have that just as options and say, Hey, these are a list of things that we offer, or that we know of this person who’s leading this group over here. Just having those before we get out there.”

## Participation support

We asked our participants about the types of training and ongoing support they would want to participate in, and lead survivor-centered engagement strategies. They told us that clear program guidelines/expectations, training, continuing education and support mechanisms would give them the foundation that they needed to feel confident and supported in their ability to serve other survivors.

### **SUPPORT: Program development, role definition and expectations**

Survivors indicated that they would feel more comfortable leading strategies if the basic framework and expectations of that strategy were defined. They were comfortable with activities that were intended to be unstructured, like informal support groups, but they wanted clarity around the purpose, goals, and expectations of the activities so that they could make informed decisions about which would be a good fit for them.

“ I just think there should be a format to an extent, like, what’s the mission? And they’re kind of, kind of like, other support groups like AAA and NA, things like that, where you have kind of a format like this is our mission, this circle by having this meeting. So you have something really to follow.”



## SUPPORT: Training

The resounding response that we got to our question about the amount and types of training that participants would want to prepare for volunteer service, was “yes, please!” Our group members expressed enthusiasm about learning more about a range of topics related to supporting other survivors.

**Amount/duration** — The survivors agreed that a graduated training process tailored to the level of responsibilities for each volunteer role made sense. For one-time events or activities with minimal contact, they thought that 10-15 hours was a good amount of time to balance what they needed to know with the amount of time that they were able to invest. For responsibilities that involved deeper engagement with other survivors like mentoring, or facilitating support groups, they thought that 40 hours of training, on a range of topics, would be necessary. They also suggested that continuing education opportunities would help them to stay current with emerging challenges or resources in the community. They wanted enough training to feel confident in their ability to support other survivors with complex needs.

“*Participating in like support groups or doing public events. If somebody feels safe...I feel like helping out with setting things up breaking things down. I don't feel like that requires a crazy level of training. But when we're dealing with, like, one on one time, or you're leading the race, you're gonna have to figure out like, how is this gonna go, and things are gonna come up as you do the meetings that you're gonna have to figure out.*”

**Topics** — We asked survivors to help us brainstorm a list of training topics that they thought would be necessary to prepare them to support others. We know that this is not an exhaustive list, but the topics that rose to the top in these conversations. Survivors recommended that programs ask the survivors who volunteer with them about their training needs and priorities.

They also emphasized that the nature of the training conversations was important. Rather than providing a general, 101 type of overview of the concepts to an audience that was new to them, they wanted to be engaged in the conversations in reciprocal, trauma informed ways, with recognition that they were survivors with personal experiences of these issues.

- Self-care techniques/coping mechanisms — Participants wanted training on coping skills so that they could offer these practices to other survivors, and to help themselves use self-care as they managed their own trauma while supporting others. Techniques like meditation, breathing, art, and spending time in nature were particular areas of interest.
- Relationship information — Overview of relationship qualities, and strategies for discussing them.
  - Healthy relationships
  - Information about abusive behaviors/red flags
  - Healthy boundaries
- Safety planning — Inclusive of safety plans for physical safety, and also planning for emotional safety — recognizing personal triggers, etc.
- Resources — Both services that the DV agency can provide and community resources.
- Trauma informed care
- Communication skills — Specific areas identified included group facilitation skills, conflict management techniques, and strategies for sharing your story.

## **SUPPORT: Ongoing**

Group members emphasized the importance of creating mechanisms for ongoing support to help sustain survivors' participation. They wanted touch points to help with answers to complicated questions and to help them process their own feelings and trauma triggers. Their recommendations included designating a staff point person for assistance, questions and feedback; and convening a support group among survivor volunteers to share information and support.

*“ So the advocates, have advocates, have advocates.”*

*“ Having somebody to be able to go to if you find yourself in a situation that you don't know how to handle right?”*

*“ And I would want a support group for if you become a leader. If that's something you take on, and you go through the training, having your own support group to be able to, you know, take things off your chest. Yeah. Other people's feedback, I would love to pick everyone's brains because then you know, I get her idea about this, and, oh, I didn't think about that. And your idea, your idea, everyone. Yeah, self-care.”*

They also recommended that survivor-lead programs use a shared leadership model so that leaders would have the space to step back, as needed to manage their own feelings, needs, or life changes, without feeling like they were disrupting the program or letting other survivors down.

*“ Triggers, you don't know when they're gonna come. You don't know if something that somebody up here says, or somebody over there does...we learn to try to work with them a little bit better, but they're still unpredictable. So that can happen, especially if you're advocating to those that have been in a situation.”*

## **SUPPORT: Safety**

We asked survivors what they would need to feel safe, physically and emotionally in engaging in ongoing activities. Survivors discussed elements of safety including possible danger from their former partner, risks related to child custody, and emotional safety related to sharing their stories. The survivors we spoke with indicated that with clear information about each strategy, survivors could determine for themselves whether each option felt like a safe and supportive fit for them.

*“ I think if there was an option to just do what we think we're capable of, with the guidance, because if we were to make a decision to go out in the community, and we didn't have an opportunity to ask someone is this a safe area? Is this a safe place? Is this a safe, relatively safe person?”*



# Our next steps

For decades, survivors involved with domestic violence programs have been telling their advocates that they want to help. We have mostly asked them to wait. We have asked them to wait because we believed that those currently navigating abuse needed and deserved to receive support — not to give it. We have put them on hold because of concerns about their safety, readiness, boundaries and liability. We have put them on hold because we believed that someone close to, or still experiencing victimization, could not also be a good advocate.

But we know that survivors also make great advocates, because so many of us in the field hold both identities. And many survivors have told us that “giving back” is a key part of their healing process. And, ultimately, survivors are not waiting for us; we know that so many are already engaging in grassroots advocacy and support efforts in both private and in public ways. They’re supporting friends and neighbors, bringing donations to shelters, convening survivor support events, and telling their stories through social media platforms, speeches and podcasts.

With this guidance, we will take our next steps to initiate a range of new opportunities for survivors’ involvement, connections and leadership. Our cohort of member programs will continue to listen to survivors in their communities to understand the ways that they would like to be supported, and survivors’ roles with those efforts. We will collaborate to assemble training content on the topics that survivors requested and we will build out and pilot these new engagement strategies. We will continue to evaluate our progress, and we will report our successes and challenges to support the broader adoption of survivor engagement strategies among our colleagues.



## ADDENDUM 1

# Listening Session Question Guide

## The Center for Women and Families Survivor Focus Group (Empowerment Program)



The goal of the Empowerment Program is for The Center to continue to offer engagement and leadership opportunities for survivors that have graduated from our Mobile Advocacy Program at our Indiana Center. We have heard from survivors that they want to stay connected with The Center, with other survivors, or take action about the prevalence of intimate partner violence and/or sexual violence. We hope that through the Empowerment Program, we will help current/future survivors make connections and meet some of these goals. Your participation in this focus group will be the first step in understanding more about the needs of survivors after case management. Your input will inform the direction of the program for current and future clients of The Center.

### Questions:

- 1) This is a list of potential activities that a survivor could choose to participate in. We would like your feedback on these activities. Do you have any reservations about any item on this list, if so, please share any concerns?
  - a) Survivor Council
  - b) Survivor led (Support) Group
  - c) Survivor talks/ sharing story/ Speak Out
  - d) Internal Southern Indiana Center Committee(s)
  - e) Southern Indiana Partnership Council (1 Term)
  - f) Safety Planning workshops (Survivor led)
  - g) Survivor-led Workshops
  - h) Alumni email (Newsletter, events, etc.)
  - i) Peer support/mentor
- 2) What type of activities do you believe other survivors would you be interested in participating in after case management/completing the Mobile Advocacy Program?
- 3) After you have completed case management services with The Center, how much time would you need before someone contacts you for services related to the Empowerment Program?
- 4) Some of the activities would involve a survivor leading. What do you believe a survivor would need to feel comfortable leading one or more of the activities listed/discussed?
- 5) Should the length of time out of trauma be considered in readiness to participate in leading an activity (i.e. sharing a story publicly or leading a support group)? If so, how much time would you suggest?
- 6) If training were available, what training topics do you think would be most useful?
- 7) If training were available, how much time would you be willing to commit to (1-40 hours)?
- 8) If levels of training were available, would you be more likely to participate in training (time committee for training would vary based on survivors' choice in which activities they want to participate in)?
- 9) What kind of support would you want from a peer versus from an advocate?
- 10) What is your definition of Peer support versus Advocate support?
- 11) What resources would you need to speak about your experience in writing or verbally?



## ADDENDUM 2

# Menu of Survivor Engagement Strategies

## Addressing Loneliness in the Domestic Violence Field

Opportunities to increase connections, support and mutuality among survivors of abuse

### ADDRESSING LONELINESS WITHIN YOUR PROGRAM

Changes to organizational practices to reduce loneliness

Making shelter location information public

Allowing for shelter/safe house visitors

Social network development and restoration-focused case management

Network mapping and relationship focus in support groups

Identifying/creating lots of small opportunities for survivors to contribute; allowing for mutual support

Allowing for pets; adopting an organizational support animal

Implementing support programs for survivors' support people; family and friends, etc.

Offering a check-back option for clients exiting services — offering follow up contact from an advocate at points post-exit

Offering an open-house or office hours where survivors can visit leaving formal services

### ADDRESSING LONELINESS WITH OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Changes in outreach supports that address loneliness (strategies that we're involved with)

Informal, survivor-lead support groups — in person and online

Workshops or events — food and holiday celebrations, learning/skill development events (financial skills, healthy relationships, exercise activities), art activities, game nights, self-care practice sessions

Survivor mentoring/peer support networks

Survivor newsletter — content and updates from program, opportunities for survivors to connect with ongoing activities, to contribute content, and to request/provide mutual aid

Advocacy opportunities — court watch, trainings for responders (law enforcement, judges, healthcare)

Committee participation within your agency; Service advisory committee

Participating in awareness and education strategies — contributing stories, volunteering on projects, providing personal testimony about agency services, etc.

Focus groups — invite survivors to provide feedback and advice about programs and services

### SUPPORTING SURVIVORS' GRASSROOTS EFFORTS

Support for grassroots, community-based survivor supports (strategies that we announce, support, but we're not hosting)

Promote survivor-lead events through our communication networks

Offer our contact information/materials to these events in case any participants need professional support

Offer childcare in support of grassroots events

Collaborate with survivors to secure donations in support of events (community space, food donations, art supplies, etc.)



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