

Addressing Loneliness in the Domestic Violence Field

Opportunities to increase connections among survivors of abuse with liability mitigation recommendations

Liability standard: negligence – Responsibility to create safe space – safe from bodily injury. Liability requires proof that a program breached that duty, and that the breach caused harm. Levels of care differ according to the situation. A reasonable person standard for determining risk/due diligence.

ADDRESSING LONELINESS WITHIN YOUR PROGRAM

Changes to organizational practices to reduce loneliness

Making shelter location information public

- Security measures – systems, LE agreements
- Protocols for responding to emergency
- Liability insurance policies

Allowing for shelter/safe house visitors

- Residents create a “safe” visitor list
- Establish programmatic parameters, eligibility – no visitors with prior histories of violence
- Protocols for responding to danger/emergency
- Considering eligibility on a case by case basis – according to client needs and community safety
- Visitors sign confidentiality agreement – agree not to disclose the safe house location

Social network development and restoration-focused casemanagement

Network mapping and relationship focus in support groups

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

- Contributions would need to be safe and reasonable/within programmatic guidelines (not sharing alcohol, etc)
- Background checks for childcare
- Indemnification form

Allowing for pets; adopting an organizational support animal

- Liability insurance
- Create precaution policies

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

- Document reasonable steps to increase safety:
- Code of conduct for events
- Safety planning for individuals who are participating and as an organization

Survivor mentoring/peer support networks

- Clearly define the organizational role. Connections, trainings. Explain mentor and participant responsibilities

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

- Guidelines for submission (no defamation, no sharing of personal info without permission, no publishing inciting information)

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

- No liability attaches to the agency since they are not the sponsor. Exercise due diligence around the nature of events

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

Offer childcare in support of grassroots events

- Background checks/first aid training, CPR
- Create a form describing the childcare agreement/rules; emergency contact/alternate pick up person

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

- Health and safety protocols – safety planning
- Permits
- Due diligence around venue safety
- Maintain written records/agreements