Creating Accessible Domestic Violence Services Online Training Course

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Read the following survivor story.

Consider
• How would you respond to Daphne?
• How would you communicate with Daphne?
• What community services are available?
In the last place Daphne lived, she was part of Deaf community. She moved two years ago for a job and hasn't found a Deaf community where she lives now. She has a TTY machine, communicates via IP & Video relay, and is on the internet a lot.

She meets Rick online and they begin chatting online a lot. Rick is a writer for a local paper. He has a bone disorder that has stunted his growth. Rick uses a wheelchair. They begin dating.

Even after Daphne and Rick have been dating for about a year and have been living together for 7 months, Rick doesn't know much sign language, but Daphne reads lips. Rick has been getting physically abusive. Daphne seeks help from the DV/SA program. Her legal advocate works with her to help her access the court system. When she goes to court to get an IFP there is no interpreter. The judge doesn't believe that Rick is capable of abusing Daphne.

She returns home and Rick mentions that he knew when Daphne contacted "that women's program" that nothing would come of it. He continues to physically abuse her. Daphne fears that Rick has placed spyware on her computer. You work at the local DV/SA program she calls the hotline.

Remember the Story of Daphne and Rick

You will revisit it later in the course
Course Objectives: Increasing Accessibility of Services to Survivors who are Deaf or are Living with Disabilities

• Why should we increase accessibility?
• What services should be accessible?
• How can your center be more accessible?
• Who should we be accessible to?

Why become accessible?

1. Florida’s Certified DV centers provide Survivor-First Advocacy are committed to serving survivors regardless of ability.

2. People with disabilities are at an increased risk of victimization.

3. It’s the law.
People with disabilities are at an increased risk of victimization.

- For longer periods of time
- By multiple perpetrators over a life time

Up to 85% of women with disabilities are victims of domestic abuse.
Incidence of Abuse Towards Women with Disabilities

- Nosek, Young & Rintala (1995) study found women with physical disabilities:
  - 62% experienced some form of abuse in their lifetime
  - The abuse was longer lasting and more insidious, using the disability factors to physically abuse, neglect, verbally/emotionally abuse.

- Powers et. al. (2002) study found women with physical and physical and cognitive disabilities:
  - 67% experienced physical abuse in their lifetime
  - 53% experienced sexual abuse in their lifetime

People with disabilities are at an increased risk of victimization

- Trauma related to domestic violence, sexual violence or child abuse are often not considered in a medical model
  - Physical or emotional symptoms of a traumatic event may be addressing the cause of the trauma.
People with disabilities are at an increased risk of victimization

• Victims of violence are at risk of permanent disability such as
  – Traumatic Brain Injury
  – Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
  – Spinal cord injury
  – Broken limb or the loss of a limb
  – Hearing or Vision Loss
  – STDs

People with disabilities stay in dangerous conditions significantly longer

• 11.3 years vs. 7.1 years in situations of physical abuse

• 8.3 years vs. 4.1 years in situations of sexual abuse (Baylor University Study)
Independence, Rights and Access

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)
Title III Public Accommodations

Domestic Violence centers are required to provide reasonable accommodations to survivors with disabilities who access services.

Reasonable Accommodations

- Shelters must consider any request and provide it as long as it does not change the basic nature of the program or result in a “fundamental alteration” or undue financial or administrative burden.
Examples of Reasonable Accommodations

1. Hotline services that are accessible to Deaf callers or callers with speech disabilities like Relay Service access or TTY access
2. Private room in shelter if the individual has a immune disorder that prohibits the person from sharing a room
3. Installing ramps or lifts in order to give access to individuals with limited mobility

Right to Accommodations

• Centers should post a notice in residential and non-residential service areas that survivors may request reasonable accommodations to make services accessible.
Defining Disability

• Physical or mental impairments
• An impairment that substantially limits a major life activity (Caring for oneself, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, performing manual tasks).
• There is a record of such disability OR the individual is regarded as having a disability

Types of Disabilities

• Physical
• Cognitive
• Learning

• Emotional or behavioral
• Sensory
  – Deaf or Hard of Hearing
  – Blind or Low
  – Deaf and Blind
  – Speech Disability
Physical Disabilities (cont.)

A physical disability may be:

• Developmental- a disability or condition someone is born with or acquired in childhood

• Sensory- hearing loss, vision loss, speech disability

• Acquired- as a result of an accident, violence or disease

A Disability can be

Visible
• Loss of a limb
• The use of an assistive mobility or communication device may indicate a disability (white cane, hearing aid, wheelchair)

Hidden
• HIV/AIDS
• Mental Illness
• Hearing Loss
• Traumatic Brain Injury
What services must be accessible?

ALL SERVICES

Becoming Accessible

1st Decide as an individual AND as an agency to ensure accessible services.

2nd Consider how each service may be accessed by survivors who are Deaf or living with different disability.

3rd Adjust programs to be accessible to all
Universal Access

Strive to create programs that are accessible to all instead of augmenting services upon request.

In other words be prepared when someone with a disability accesses your services.

Accessibility

1. Plan ahead and be prepared. For example, know your local sign language interpreter service.

1. Don’t make assumptions of an individual’s needs or wants. Ask. For example, not all individuals who are blind read Braille. Some may prefer an audio file or other form of media file of safety planning tools.
Who can help you increase accessibility?

- Centers for Independent Living (CIL)
  – www.floridacils.org
- Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST)
  – www.faast.org
- Florida Telecommunication Relay, Inc. (FTRI)
  – www.ftri.org

10 Principles of Center Independent Living Philosophy

- Civil Rights
- Consumerism
- De-Institutionalization
- De-Medicalization
- Self-Help

- Advocacy
- Barrier Removal
- Consumer Control
- Peer Role Models
- Cross Disability

Invite your local Center for Independent Living to assess your center for Accessibility. They are the experts and are available to help.
Services CIL Provides

- Advocacy
- Peer Support
- Interpreter Services
- Skills Training
- Home Modifications
- Employment Services
- Community Training
- Information 7 Referral
- Accessibility Services
- Telecommunications

CIL services run parallel to services provided at Florida’s certified domestic violence centers. Doesn’t it make sense to partner?

Florida Association of Centers for Independent Living (FACILs)

www.floridacils.org

- FL has 17 community-based non-profit CILs
- Work to empower persons with disabilities to move from dependence to independence.
• helping people with disabilities achieve their self-determined goals for independent living.

• consumer-driven organization based on peer role models: people with disabilities empowering people with disabilities and their families on the road to independence.
Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST) [www.faast.org](http://www.faast.org)

- Created in 1992 “to improve the quality of life for all Floridians with disabilities”

### Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology

- Consumer advocacy, awareness, education
- Increase access to & acquisition of Assistive Technology (AT) & services
  - Hands on AT demonstrations and trainings
  - Assistive device lending programs
  - Financing & loans for AT purchases
- Accessible, affordable housing
FL AT Regional Demo Centers

Regional Demonstration Centers and Satellite Partners
1-800-788-9216

The Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology Inc. (FAAST) is a non-profit organization funded by the United States Department of Education, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR), as authorized by U.S. Public Law 105-324. The Assistive Technology Act of 1998 (ATA) also commonly known as “The Tech Act.” FAAST Inc. promotes the use of assistive technology for all Floridians with disabilities through education and advocacy.

So now what?

How do we increase accessibility?
Increasing Accessibility to survivors who are Blind or have Low Vision

Consider
- Is your website accessible to screen readers?
- Are your safety planning materials accessible to survivors who are blind?


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Increasing Accessibility to survivors who are Blind or have Low Vision

- Braille or Electronic Version of Printed Materials
  - Brochures
  - Support group materials
  - Intake Forms
- Create audio files of safety planning tools and provide headphones for individuals to listen to the audio files on the computer or CD player

- Install screen readers on computers in shelter
  - Free screen readers are available online
- Service Animals: Centers are required to permit service animals (See ADA and Fair Housing Act conditions)

- Install Accessible Signage: Using Braille or large font
COMMUNICATION WITH DEAF/ HARD OF HEARING/LATE DEAFENED/DEAF-BLIND PEOPLE

• American Sign Language (ASL)

• Oral/lip reading- Only 30-40% of dialogue is understood when reading lips. Using lip reading for safety planning would not likely be an effective form of communication.

• Writing

IT IS BEST TO ASK THE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING PERSON DIRECTLY AS TO WHAT WILL BEST MEET THEIR COMMUNICATION NEEDS.

Deaf or Hard of Hearing

• Two types of Interpreter Services
  – Video Remote Interpreters
  – In Person Interpreters

• What if she doesn’t use ASL? Do not assume that all Deaf individuals use ASL. Immigrants may use other forms. Other individuals may never have learned ASL.
VIDEO REMOTE INTERPRETING (VRI)

- A PAID service - Combines video conferencing technology with a live remote (off-site) sign language interpreter. (e.g. use a Video Phone, MSN Messenger, Skype, Polycom, etc.)
  
  A. 2-way Web-based Video Application, with computer, webcam & broadband connection.
  B. Computer, webcam, broadband connection, Videoconferencing Software
  C. Video Phone and broadband connection.
  D. Traditional Videoconferencing equipment (Polycom, Tandberg, Sony.)

Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Be Prepared: Practice making TTY and relay calls before you receive a call on your hotline.

- Provide private computer access: Turn computer desk so that the computer monitor faces the wall OR set up a screen to block the view of others in the house.
Relay Services

- National Free U.S. service
- Operators facilitate phone/internet “calls”
- Relay Provider/Operators must ensure user confidentiality & may not keep records of conversation contents.
- 911 access only available for some Relay types

Hotline

- The hotline is your doorway to services
  - Screen in NOT
  - Screen out
    - Don’t ask:
      • “Can you care for yourself?”
      • “Are you on medication for a mental illness?”
Hotline

- Do ask
  - “Will you need any special accommodations during your stay in shelter?”

Hotline

- Ensure Access for TTY and Relay Services
  - Do not make assumptions about someone’s speech: Slurred speech may indicate a speech disability

- Ask everyone the same qualifying questions.
Intake and Exit

- Keep it trauma-informed
- Offer Interpreters to Deaf and hard of hearing survivors
- Alternate formats of printed materials
  - Large Print or Braille
  - Electronic version
  - Black and White, simple font with limited images
  - Simpler Language
  - A little at a time

Support Group Accessibility

- Multiple advocates
- List of online support groups
- Alternate format of printed materials like safety planning handouts
- Address various topics related to barriers faced by survivors due to a disability
Public Awareness Activities

• If you announce your public education activities on your website, make sure the site is accessible to screen readers.
• Provide alternate formats of handouts
  – Larger print, 14 pt or higher
  – Print PPT presentations with 2-slides per page
  – Offer an electronic version
    • Created in plain text
• Read all text on PPT slide if an attendee is blind or has low vision.
• Offer to provide ASL interpreting services.

Summary

• Disabilities can be developmental or acquired; they can also be visible or hidden.
• ADA requires services to be equally accessible and prohibits discrimination.
• Think beyond physical accessibility when assessing your services.
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Please call or email me with accessibility questions or challenges!! It’s one of my favorite subjects!