

**HOPE, HELP, AND HEALING**

**JULY 7-8, 2016**

**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF  
AMERICA**

**ARLENE VASSELL**

**NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER  
ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
(NRCDV)**

# BACKGROUND

## **Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (State Coalition)**

- ✧ Peace of Mind Florida Project: Intersection of Traumatic Brain Injury and Domestic Violence
- ✧ Director of Training and Technical Assistance

## **Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (State Coalition)**

- ✧ National Demonstration Project: Enhanced Services for Children Exposed to Domestic Violence
- ✧ Immigration Technical Assistance Project
- ✧ Managed the Statewide Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline

## **YWCA Domestic Violence Shelter, Chesterfield Virginia**

- ✧ Hotline Specialist
  - ✧ Case Manager
  - ✧ Program Director
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# NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## Our Mission

**To strengthen and transform efforts to  
end domestic violence**



# WHAT WE DO...

- **Technical Assistance and Training**
- **Specialized Resource Materials**
- **Key Initiatives**
  - Building Comprehensive Solutions to Domestic Violence
  - Domestic Violence Awareness Project
  - DV Evidence Project
  - PreventIPV
  - VAWnet
- **Other projects**
  - The ACE-DV Leadership Forum
  - The Access Initiative

# THE ADVOCATE'S ROLE

WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

# LANGUAGE MATTERS...

Victim – Victim is often times used because the word is widely understood to differentiate the person *experiencing violence* from the person *who batters* and conveys the harmful reality of violence.

Current labels, including “victim,” “battered woman,” and “survivor” are inadequate and are not the words that those experiencing violence use to describe their experiences or themselves. The NRCDV *Building Comprehensive Solutions (BCSDV)* initiative continues to seek language that honors the experiences of all those affected.

Gender – There are women who are the victim of a male or female partner. There are men who are the victim of a male or female partner. Because a man abusing a female partner is by far the most common, “she” or “woman” is most frequently used when referring to a victim and “he” or “man” when referring to those who batter.

*All victims/survivors deserve advocacy that is accessible and helpful, and that they define.*



# **YOUR ROLE...**

- 1. PROVIDE SUPPORT**
  - 2. TREAT SURVIVORS WITH RESPECT**
  - 3. COMMUNICATE CLEARLY AND HONESTLY**
  - 4. PROVIDE SURVIVOR-DEFINED, TRAUMA-INFORMED, EMPOWERING SERVICES**
  - 5. CREATE A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT**
  - 6. PROMOTE COMMUNITY AMONG SURVIVORS ( PEER SUPPORT)**
  - 7. GET TO KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY RESOURCES**
  - 8. ADVOCACY BEYOND LEAVING**
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# PROVIDE SUPPORT

- LISTEN
- BELIEVE
- ACKNOWLEDGE
- SAFETY PLANNING



# TREAT SURVIVORS WITH RESPECT

- Offer services in a way that protects an individual's dignity
  - Confidentiality
  - Self-determination
- Avoid the appearance of being dismissive
- Pay attention to your body language
- Spaces should be accessible for all survivors
- Avoid demeaning language

**“Sheila is a chronically homeless alcoholic with children. She has been resistant to treatment in the past and very manipulative while in the shelter program. She has asked for help to get into a treatment program, but will most likely change her mind right before it is time to attend.”**



**“ Sheila is a mother with two children who had been staying with a friend since she lost her job and apartment two weeks ago. She had started drinking again and taking prescription medications after losing her job, but states she stopped a few days ago. Sheila would like to start treatment for substance use even though she has had trouble completing treatment programs in the past.”**



# COMMUNICATE CLEARLY AND HONESTLY

- Clear direct language and repetition- as needed
  - Assist survivors with creating step-by-step instructions to achieve desired personal goals –as needed
  - Acknowledge and honor cultural differences
  - Clearly communicate your limitations
  - Be observant regarding someone needing accommodations to fully engage in your services
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# SURVIVOR-DEFINED ADVOCACY

Begins with an understanding of the needs, resources, perspectives and culture of each victim. As part of that process, a working relationship or partnership is built in which the survivor's perspective and the advocate's information, resources, and assistance are combined to enhance the victim's safety strategies.

- The *survivor is the center* of services.
- Advocates and service providers acknowledges and respects the survivor as being the *expert on their own life*.
- Advocates *prioritize survivors' needs and wants*
- Requires that service providers *empathize with survivors*

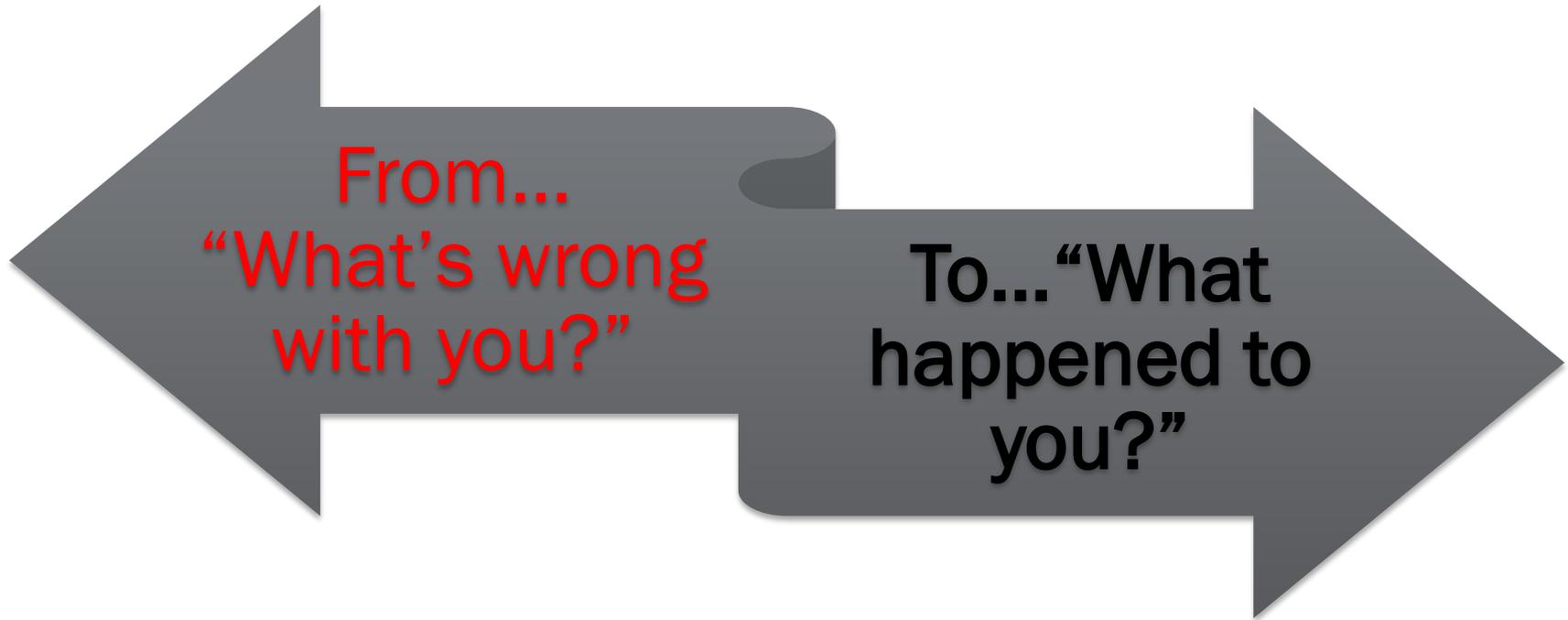
- **Helps survivors develop greater self-determination and autonomy in their day-to-day lives**
- **Survivors develop their own goals**
  - Fosters motivation and personal investment in desired outcome



# TRAUMA-INFORMED SERVICES

- *A trauma-informed approach* assumes that all survivors have a history of trauma(s) in addition to their current circumstances that have led them to seek services.
  - The survivor's current needs and responses are understood through the *lens of trauma*
  - Trauma-informed service providers *believe survivors and work with them* to develop a partnership based on trust and respect
  - Service providers/advocates see *beyond "symptoms"* and view the survivor as a whole person whose experience and world view has been shaped by their experiences with trauma
  - Trauma informed policies are *clear, flexible and emphasizes clients' choices*
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# PARADIGM SHIFT



# EMPOWERING SERVICES

- Services that are empowering requires advocates to support survivors in setting and achieving personal goals, encourage personal decision making, and increase knowledge and competencies.
- Empowering practices also involves building and sustaining relationships with outside systems to enhance survivors' access to community resources and support systems' advocacy.



# CREATING A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT



- **The environment you create communicates your beliefs about the people you serve**
  - **Greeters/intake procedures**
  - **Make sure immediate needs such as food, clothing, medical needs, etc...are addressed upon arrival**
  - **Physical and emotional safety**
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- **Adapt physical environment to accommodate a wide range of feelings, interactions, and behaviors, we make our programs more accessible to all**
  - **Art work that reflects the cultures of the communities that you serve**
  - **Appropriate lighting inside and outside**
  - **Spaces for confidential conversations**
  - **Child-appropriate areas for children**
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# PROMOTE COMMUNITY AMONG SURVIVORS

- Peer led support groups
  - Opportunities to share community resources
  - Share their stories/life experiences
  - Others?
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# GET TO KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- No one agency or system can meet all the unique needs of survivors and their children.
  - Create and sustain meaningful relationships with other relevant service providers ( including domestic violence and victim advocates)
  - Create your personal advocacy toolkit
  - Initiate and participate in cross training activities
  - Attend community events hosted by other services providers
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# ADVOCACY BEYOND LEAVING

- Advocacy beyond leaving reinforces our commitment to support *every survivor's right* to make decisions about her relationship in the context of her life, culture, and assessment of what is best for her children.
- It does not say that survivors should stay, nor does it abandon the important option of leaving...

**ADVOCACY**

**RESPECT  
CONFIDENTIALITY...**

All discussions must occur in private,  
without family members present.  
This is essential to building  
trust and ensuring  
her safety.

**BELIEVE AND  
VALIDATE HER  
EXPERIENCES...**

Listen to her and believe her.  
Acknowledge her feelings and  
let her know she is not alone.  
Many women have similar  
experiences.

**PROMOTE  
ACCESS TO  
COMMUNITY SERVICES...**

Know the resources in your  
community. Is there a hotline and  
shelter for battered women?

**HELP HER PLAN  
FOR FUTURE SAFETY...**

What has she tried in the  
past to keep herself safe?  
Is it working? Does she  
have a place to go  
if she needs  
to escape?

**ACKNOWLEDGE  
INJUSTICE...**

The violence perpetrated  
against her is not her fault.  
No one deserves to  
be abused.

**RESPECT HER  
AUTONOMY...**

Respect her right to make decisions  
in her own life, when she is ready.  
She is the expert in her life.

**“I invite you to understand – not judge – my family and the contact with my partner. My life is my business, filled with my joy to celebrate, my hardship to endure, and my decisions to make. I ask that you listen, support me, and offer help that makes things better for me and my children.”**



# CONTACT INFORMATION

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