



Every Door is the Right Door: Skills and Tools for Working with Domestic Violence Survivors

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Objectives-Part I

- Enhance your ability to work with domestic violence survivors by incorporating a trauma informed framework
- Enhance your ability to become more self aware and minimize compassion fatigue by using a trauma informed framework



Objectives-Part II

- Understand the shelter/housing legal protections victims have in the District of Columbia, including local and federal protections
- Understand the legal protections to help ensure program compliance
- Understand the legal protections to provide tools and assistance to clients/program participants so they can utilize the protections afforded to them



Journaling Activity

- What are your personal thoughts, feelings about domestic violence?
- What are your personal thoughts, feelings about domestic violence victims, survivors, perpetrators?

Where do they come from?



What is Trauma?

- Trauma is simply exposure to any traumatic situation or event that overwhelms your ability to cope.
 - Sexual, Physical or Emotional Abuse or Neglect
 - Traumatic grief, loss or abandonment of a loved one
 - Natural or Man Made Disasters
 - Interpersonal or Domestic Violence
 - Medical Trauma
 - Community or School Violence
 - Serious Accidents



Domestic Violence as a Trauma Experience

- Psychologically changes a persons belief in themselves
- Diminishes a persons ability to trust
- Hinders a persons ability to make decisions for themselves
- Decreased sense of safety
- Intense fear



Trauma Informed Framework

- being trauma informed is about creating a culture that understands the physical, mental, and emotional impacts of trauma
- provides trauma sensitive services to everyone
- provides a framework for understanding



Trauma Informed Framework

- understanding how certain behaviors are linked to traumatic experiences
- frames survivors' symptoms as adaptations, rather than as pathology.
- creates a safe environment for people to journey towards recovery



Symptoms are Adaptations

Every symptom helped a survivor in the past and continues to help in the present — in some way.

Survivors who manifest trauma symptoms usually present in one of four ways:

- **Sad**
- **Mad**
- **Bad**
- **I've Been Had**



SAD

- persistent negative mood/affect
- suicidality
- passive suicidality
- low self esteem
- self-injury
- shame, feeling stigmatized by the abuse
- hopelessness and despair
- feelings of isolation and withdrawal
- helplessness



MAD

- dissociative episodes/ amnesia
- compulsions
- depersonalization
- obsessional thinking
- feeling totally different from everyone (special, unique, bizarre)
- preoccupations with the perpetrator which may appear delusional
- paranoia
- eating disorders



BAD

- explosive anger and ragefulness
- hyper sexuality
- drug use and sale
- run-away or truancy in adolescence
- gang related violence
- preoccupation with revenge toward the perpetrator
- frequent physical fights



I'VE BEEN HAD

- distrust and re-victimization
- disrupted relationships
- domestic violence
- failure to protect oneself and to accurately assess dangerousness
- pattern of succumbing to damaging peer pressure



SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY

Question: How do the trauma symptoms show up in your work with clients? Provide one or more examples of how a client you've worked with displayed one of the symptom adaptations.

Follow up Questions:

- Was it challenging working with that person? Why or Why not?
- What strategy/approach did you use to work with that person?
- Was the strategy/approach trauma informed? If so, how?



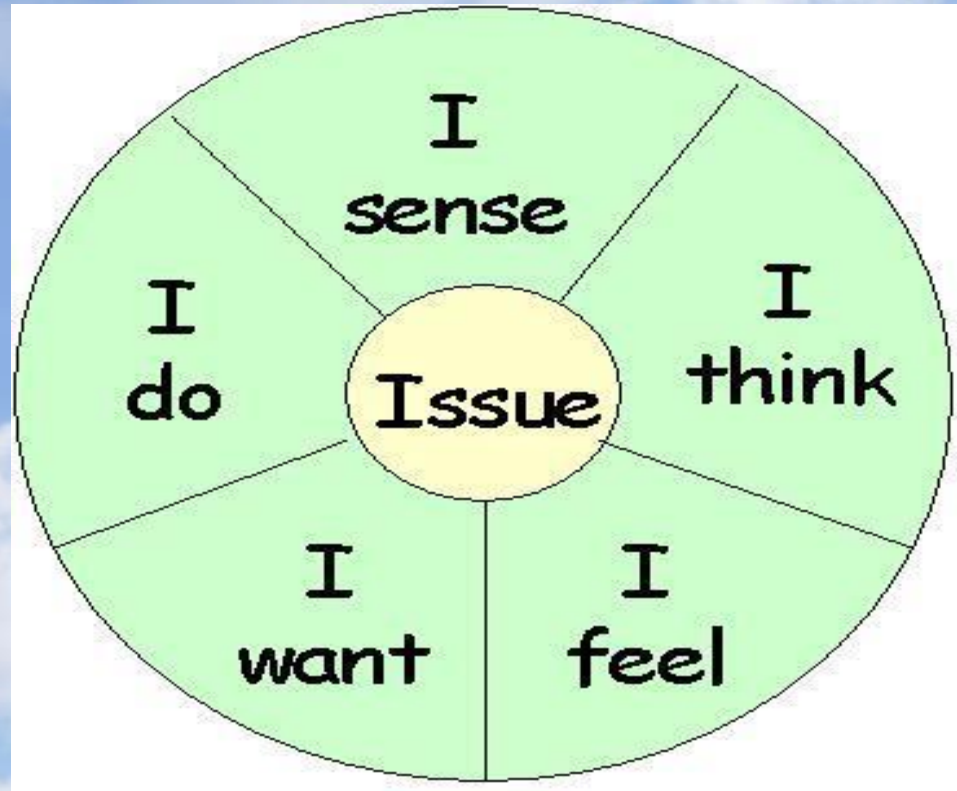
SELF AWARENESS

Self Awareness is your ability to be in tune with yourself for the purpose of understanding why you do what you do.



Self Awareness Wheel

- Adapted from *Alive & Aware* by Miller, Nunnally & Walkman





Sensory Data

- Sensory data is all the information we receive through our five physical senses, i.e. our eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin.
- Once received it's immediately processed in our mind by comparing it with previous experiences.



Thoughts

- Our thoughts are the story we tell ourselves and others about the sensory data that we have interpreted.
- Our thoughts result in
 - Impressions
 - Conclusions
 - Assumptions
 - Expectations
 - Reasons
 - Stereotypes



Feelings

- Our Feelings are a spontaneous reaction to the data we've received
 - Physical signs
 - Anxiety
 - Fear
 - A mixture of emotions



Wants/Intention

- Our Intention is what we want from the situation for self, for others
- What are my intentions, desires, hopes
 - To support
 - To avoid
 - To demand
 - To be responsive
 - To care
 - To listen



Actions

- Our Actions are others sensory data
 - Words
 - Silences
 - Making plans
 - Movement
 - Posture
 - Voice characteristics
 - Expression



Self Awareness as a Tool

- To avoid projecting personal feelings/values onto clients.
- Recognize and accept areas of vulnerability and unresolved issues which in turn interfere with your capacity to be objective.
- Realize how they influence outcomes.
 - Actions



Self Awareness as a Tool

- Behave based on personal needs and style rather than in response to the needs and reactions of clients.
- Helps you to re-center on your own role, tasks and boundaries



Trauma Work Do's

- Assume that everyone you see is a trauma survivor
- Assess for the trauma and abuse
- Value the individual in all aspects of care
- Avoid interventions that result in shame, humiliation or unlawful action
- Understand how your actions could trigger trauma reactions
- Assess the agency for trauma–informed practices
- Refer to community resources
- Practice self care



Trauma Work Don'ts

- Do not take away their power and control
- Do not violate their privacy or confidentiality
- Do not look away or say “I don't think I'm the one you should be talking to” when they tell you their trauma story



Small Group Activity

- Think of a client that you have now.
- What thoughts and feelings do you have about that person and/or the situation?
 - How did your thoughts/feelings drive your intentions/actions?
- Were you aware of your intention at the time or were they hidden?
 - How might you work with them differently?



Questions & Answers



LUNCH BREAK

We will resume at 1pm
ENJOY!!!



Objectives Part II

- Understand the shelter/housing legal protections victims have in the District of Columbia, including local and federal protections
- Understand the legal protections to help ensure program compliance
- Understand the legal protections to provide tools and assistance to clients/program participants so they can utilize the protections afforded to them



Group Brainstorm

What are barriers facing victims of domestic violence when they seek shelter and/or housing in the District of Columbia?



Local and Federal Law Overview

District of Columbia Laws

The Human Rights Act of 1977 (“HRA”) and Rental Housing Act (“RHA”) were amended March 2007, providing extensive protections to victims in **public and private housing**

Special Note: This includes homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, housing programs, privately owned apartments/houses, public housing, Section 8 Housing, Subsidized housing).



Local and Federal Law Overview

District of Columbia Laws Continued

Survivors have the right to:

- be treated the same as other tenants or housing program participants;
- be protected from discrimination when seeking (or while in) public or private housing;
- have the locks changed;



Local and Federal Law Overview

District of Columbia Laws Continued

Survivors have the right to:

- reasonable accommodation in restoring or improving security and safety measures;
- be released from a lease early free of penalty within 14 days of giving notice;



Local and Federal Law Overview

District of Columbia Laws Continued

Survivors have the right to:

- stay in her/his home without threat of eviction if they experience domestic violence in their residence; and
- stay in his/her home without threat of eviction if they contact the police or emergency services during or after a domestic violence incident.



Local and Federal Law Overview

Federal Laws:

Violence Against Women Act 2013 (“VAWA”)

Under VAWA someone who is a survivor of domestic violence and a tenant in federal public housing, Section 8 voucher- or project-based housing, or in a program that receives McKinney Vento funds (funds homeless shelters/housing programs) (includes Continuum of Care) has rights.



Local and Federal Law Overview

Violence Against Women Act (“VAWA”) Continued

- Applies to survivors regardless of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability or age.
- Provides housing protections to survivors of dating violence, sexual assault, stalking and also applies to an affiliated individual of the survivor (including individuals who are not on the lease but are in the survivor’s immediate family or individual living in the household).



Local and Federal Law Overview

Violence Against Women Act (“VAWA”) Continued

Survivors have the right to:

- be accepted into a shelter/housing program. For example, a housing provider cannot deny an applicant housing/assistance on the basis that s/he is or has been a survivor;
- remove the batterer from the public housing lease (or Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher) and stay in the unit;



Local and Federal Law Overview

Violence Against Women Act (“VAWA”) Continued

Survivors have the right to:

- ensure that DC Housing Authority and Section 8 landlords honor a civil protection order, specifically if it addresses the batterer’s access to where the survivor lives;
- Port (move to another location) if s/he has a Section 8 voucher, so long as it’s within the DC Housing Authority jurisdiction;
- seek an emergency transfer;



Local and Federal Law Overview

Violence Against Women Act (“VAWA”) Continued

Survivors have the right to:

- stay in the unit, even if there is (or has been) criminal activity that is directly related to the domestic violence; and
- confidentiality of information about domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking. This information can only be shared if requested by the survivor in writing, is required for use in an eviction proceeding or by law.



Local and Federal Law Overview

Other Federal Protections Include:

- Fair Housing Act
- Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act
- Americans with Disabilities Act



Common Scenarios: Group Brainstorm and Group Activities

Special Note: Remember these scenarios apply whether you are a permanent supportive housing program, transitional housing program, emergency shelter, etc. The laws apply to all shelters and housing programs in the District.



Group Brainstorm

- 1) Get into group of 3-4
- 2) Read scenario 1
- 3) Answer the question presented after the scenario (write down answers on the paper provided)
- 4) Share Out & Full Group Discussion



Can This Survivor Move Into Shelter?

Scenario 1

You are an intake counselor. You overhear another intake counselor doing an interview. The person disclosed that she is a survivor. The intake counselor tells her that “We do not take domestic violence survivors – there are other shelters out there for you.”



Can This Survivor Move Into Shelter?

Scenario 1 Question

Assume there was space in the homeless shelter/housing programs. Since the intake counselor decided she was not going to let the woman in the shelter, was that legal?

Why or Why Not?



Can This Survivor Move Into Shelter?

Scenario 1 Answer

A shelter (including central intake) cannot deny shelter to someone because they believe or are told that person may be a victim, whether it is true or not.



Discussion



Group Brainstorm

- 1) Stay in your group
- 2) Read scenario 2
- 3) Answer the question presented after the scenario (write down answers on the paper provided)
- 4) Share Out & Full Group Discussion



Can This Survivor Move Into Shelter?

Scenario 2:

I am an intake counselor for our shelter, and someone called seeking shelter. I went through our intake form and asked for the person's name. When she told me, it sounded very familiar. I remembered having a conversation with one of our case managers a few months ago and remembered her saying this woman was trouble, with an abusive girlfriend and drama in her life. When this came back to me, I told her we couldn't take her.



Can This Survivor Move Into Shelter?

Scenario 2 Question

Assume the shelter had space. Since the intake counselor decided she was not going to let the woman in the shelter, was that legal?

Why or Why Not?



Discussion



Can This Survivor Move Into Shelter?

Scenario 2 Answer

A shelter cannot deny shelter to someone because they believe that person may be a victim, whether it is true or not.



Partner Activity

- 1) Find one person to partner with
- 2) Read scenario 3
- 3) Discuss and answer questions
- 4) Write down answers on paper provided
- 5) Share with full group
- 6) Group Discussion



Survivor Wants to Stay in Housing But...

Scenario 3:

A survivor wants to stay in her transitional housing unit with her kids, but her husband—who calls her names and has even hit her lives with them. She doesn't want him to have access to the apartment anymore. You're her case manager and she shares this with you.



Survivor Wants to Stay in Housing But...

Scenario 3 Questions

- 1) Can the husband be removed from the apartment?
- 2) Does the client/program participant need to show me anything to prove that she is the victim so that I can go ahead with helping her?
- 3) What if I do want documentation?
- 4) Since she requested the locks to be changed what do we need to do? Do we have to change the locks?



Discussion



Survivor Wants to Stay in Housing But...

Scenario 3 Questions

- 1) Can the husband be removed from the apartment?
- 2) Does the client/program participant need to show me anything to prove that she is the victim so that I can help her?
- 3) What if I do want documentation?
- 4) Since she requested the locks to be changed what do we need to do? Do we have to change the locks?

Scenario 3 Answers

- 1) Yes. If he is not on the lease no documentation is necessary. If he is on the lease she will need to get a protection order.
- 2) No. You do not have to ask for proof of any kind that she is a survivor. You can move ahead immediately.
- 3) The survivor will need to provide a temporary or civil protection order **only if he is on the lease**; otherwise, no documentation is necessary.
- 4) Your program needs to do so within 5 business days of her request.



Partner Activity

- 1) Find a different partner (just one)
- 2) Read scenario 4
- 3) Discuss and answer questions
- 4) Write down answers on paper provided
- 5) Share with full group
- 6) Group Discussion



Survivor Wants to Leave, But...

Scenario 4:

The survivor is scared for her safety and wants to leave but has eight months left on her one-year lease in your program. Your program requires that the survivor pay a percentage of the rent.



Survivor Wants to Leave, But...

Scenario 4 Questions

- 1) Does the survivor have the right to be released from her lease?
- 2) Does the survivor owe rent?
- 3) Does the client/program participant need to show me anything to prove that she is the victim (i.e documentation)?
- 4) What if I do want documentation?



Discussion



Survivor Wants to Leave, But...

Scenario 4 Questions

- 1) Does the survivor have the right to be released from her lease?
- 2) Does the survivor owe rent?
- 3) Does the client/program participant need to show me anything to prove that she is the survivor (i.e documentation) ?
- 4) What if I do want documentation?

Scenario 4 Answers

- 1) Yes, she has the right to be released from her lease within 14 days of giving notice.
- 2) The survivor will still be responsible for a prorated rent to the 14 days or the date when the housing provider finds a new tenant, whichever comes first.
- 3) No (same answer as scenario 3)
- 4) The survivor can provide either a copy of a temporary or civil protection order OR a letter signed by a **qualified third party**.



Survivor Wants to Leave, But...

Special Note: Only one document is required to be released from the lease.



Survivor Wants to Leave, But...

Qualified Third Parties are:

- Law enforcement officers
- Domestic violence counselors (individuals that work for a domestic violence organization)
- Health professionals (doctor, nurse)
- DC Housing Authority Office of Public Safety Officer



DISTRICT ALLIANCE FOR SAFE HOUSING

CASE STUDY



SELF CARE

- Clinical Supervision
- Group/Peer Support
- Utilize Community Resources
- Your own self care rituals/practice