

NIWAP

CONFERENCE

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON
COLLEGE OF LAW

Strengthening Community and Organizational Responses: Serving Immigrant Victims of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking

Interviewing Survivors: Trauma-Informed Techniques

Workshop 4A

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NIWAP

National Immigrant Women's Advocacy Project,
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Introductions



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Thank You to OVW

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Learning Objectives

By the end of this workshop participants will be better able to:

- Understand what trauma is and how trauma plays a role in all aspects of a client's case
- Develop a trauma-informed approach to legal advocacy to improve case outcomes and increase access to justice
- Create trauma-informed collaborations
- Discuss and explore trauma-informed interviewing skills when working with immigrant survivors



WHAT IS TRAUMA?




T R A U M A

Traumatic Event Re-experience Avoidance Unable to Function Month (at least) Arousal



Intense fear

Traumatic experiences can have a different impact depending on the person's character



Helplessness

Traumatic experience typically overwhelms an individual mentally, emotionally, and physically



Loss of control

Trauma is based in the individual's perception of the event and does not have to come from a huge catastrophic event



Threat of annihilation

An event or experience overwhelms normal coping mechanisms

TYPES OF TRAUMA

INDIVIDUAL AND INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

Individual incidents that cause adverse effects on survivors

Trauma that is inflicted and passed down within communities and within families

COMMUNITY, CULTURAL AND SYSTEMS INFLICTED TRAUMA

Community, cultural norms and systems are part of, and can further exacerbate trauma

COLLECTIVE TRAUMA DIRECTED AT A SPECIFIC GROUP

Members of a group can face trauma as a collective because of their membership in a particular group

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN, IMMIGRATION STATUS, AND HISTORICAL TRAUMA

Members of a group can face trauma as a collective because of their membership in a particular group

BARRIERS AND FEARS OF GBV VICTIMS TO SEEK HELP

- Language Barriers
- Cultural Barriers
- Legal Barriers
- Economic Barriers
- Fear for safety
- Fear of deportation
- Fear of losing the custody of her children



Providing Language Access to Survivors

- Plan ahead for interpretation needs
- Important for survivors communicating in their own language
- Educate interpreters and translators
 - Domestic violence and sexual assault training
 - Interpreter training – confidentiality and ethics
 - Trauma-informed
- Be creative

Large Group Discussion

If a survivor speaks a little English, when should you get an interpreter?

When Working With Interpreters Consider...

- Who can serve as an interpreter?
- Things to consider - Maintaining a trauma-informed approach
 - What are the objectives of the conversation?
 - Phone v. in-person interpretation
 - How to arrange the room if in-person - where do you sit in relation to the survivor and where does the interpreter sit?
 - Additional potential barriers to interpretation (cultural competency, dialect, gender, etc.)
 - Respecting the interpreter: pauses, taking breaks, length of conversation, bilingual(ish) clients

When Working With Interpreters Consider... (continued)

- Who is having the conversation?
 - Interpreter should interpret everything that is said exactly as it is said without any modifications
 - If interpreter needs clarification, they should let you and survivor know that is what they are doing first and then seek clarification
- What should you do if the interpreter is unclear about their role?

The rules, expectations and attitudes that shape our societies exist beneath the surface

Our values and beliefs dwell down at the base of the iceberg, forming the foundation of how we view the world



Trust and Confidentiality

- Take a trauma-informed approach sensitive to the victim's trauma history
- Have a non-judgmental attitude
- Remind survivors of confidentiality, not only within your relationship
- Explain VAWA Confidentiality protections
- Be mindful of non-verbal cues

Safety and Trustworthiness




Large Group Discussion

For those of you that work within law enforcement or victim witness in District Attorneys offices-- How might trauma impact crime victims?

Impact of Trauma on Crime Victims

- Trauma impacts a survivor's brain and the way it processes and retains information can lead to difficulty:
 - Telling their story in a chronological manner
 - With credibility
 - Testifying in court
 - Coping mechanisms
 - Forgetting, dissociation, depression, substance dependency

Law Enforcement and Prosecutors Are Challenged With Two Goals



Trauma Informed
and Victim
Centered
Approaches

Community Safety
and
Evidence-based
Prosecutions

BECOMING TRAUMA- INFORMED

Adapting practices, policies, physical spaces and more to make services more accessible for everyone. This is especially important for people who have lived experiences of trauma, including staff



TRAUMA

Attending to survivors' emotional as well as physical safety Assist survivors in strengthening their own psychological capacities to deal with the multiple complex issues that they face in accessing safety, recovering from the traumatic effects current crime and other lifetime abuse and rebuilding their lives



Large Group Discussion

What does being trauma-informed mean to you, --in providing services to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking?

TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES



Awareness

Basic understanding of trauma and how trauma impacts survivors, understanding trauma triggers and unique vulnerabilities of trauma survivors, consciously avoid re-traumatization.



Safety

Physical and Emotional. Access to shelters, housing, safety plans. Access to Legal Protection. Access to primary health care and specialist gender-based violence services.



Trustworthiness

Confidentiality and privacy for victims and survivors.



Empowerment

Accessible information about rights and entitlements, including free access to qualified and impartial interpreters and the translation of documents. Prioritizing survivor/ victim decision making.



Inclusiveness for all

including individuals from historically marginalized groups and people with disabilities.

Partnering Up and Power Sharing

- Lifting up survivors to increase their capacity
- We need to meet the survivor where they are at
- Let them defined what justice is for themselves



EMPOWERMENT

RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY ...

All discussion must occur in private, without other 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.

ADVOCACY

PROMOTE ACCESS TO COMMUNITY SERVICES ...

Know the resources in your community. Is there a hotline or a 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 THE 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 on her own life.

Collaborative Relationship: Building A Supportive Connection

- Human Connection
 - Establish empathic and warm connection
 - Attunement to client “where she/he is,” - nonverbal, body cues
- Attention to Safety and Ongoing Risk
- Building Relationship
 - Non-judgment and validation of the client’s expertise and life experience – including cultural, social, political context
 - Honor your own expertise and experience
 - Acknowledge areas of not knowing
- Clear, but not Rigid, Boundaries
 - Confidentiality of client information not only within your relationship, but explain VAWA confidentiality protection for immigration applications

EVERYONE FEELS VALUED AND RESPECTED

- Individuals feel valued when others treat them like they are important and receive the same services
- Provide similar opportunities
- Provide fair and unprejudiced treatment of different categories of people
- Factors associated with respecting others are equity and non-discrimination
- Commit to helping victims heal
- Trauma- informed approach
- Have an environment inclusive, welcoming, destigmatizing, and nonretraumatizing

INCLUSION



RECOGNIZE YOUR OWN TRAUMA HISTORIES AND ADDRESS VICARIOUS TRAUMA.

- Advocates may have faced many of the same difficulties as the survivors they serve.
- Shared your experiences might help to be more mindful of survivors' own traumas, and allow you to connect with survivors. But it also put you at risk for compassion fatigue.
- Advocates need self-care in order to strengthen themselves and to continually provide effective services.
- Find avenues for debriefing within your team to minimize vicarious trauma.



ADVOCACY ISN'T:

- Getting frustrated because things are not moving as fast as you would like to.
- Referring a victim to agencies she doesn't want to.
- Thinking that her reactions are inappropriate.
- Believing you are a super-hero.
- Encouraging the victim to think of herself only as a victim.

ADVOCACY ISN'T:

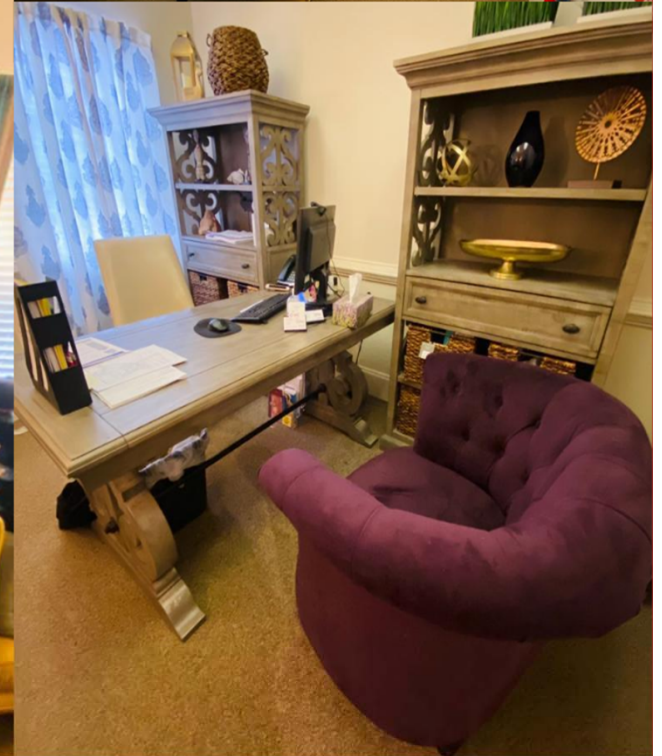
- Forgetting that the victim is in crisis.
- Rescuing a victim and encouraging her to dependent on you.
- Thinking you can protect a victim.
- Thinking you'll be the influence that changes the victim's life.
- Pressing a woman to deal with issues she is not ready to confront.
- Trying to have a friendship with the victim.

Best Way to Meet Survivors Where They Are At





ADAPTING SPACES





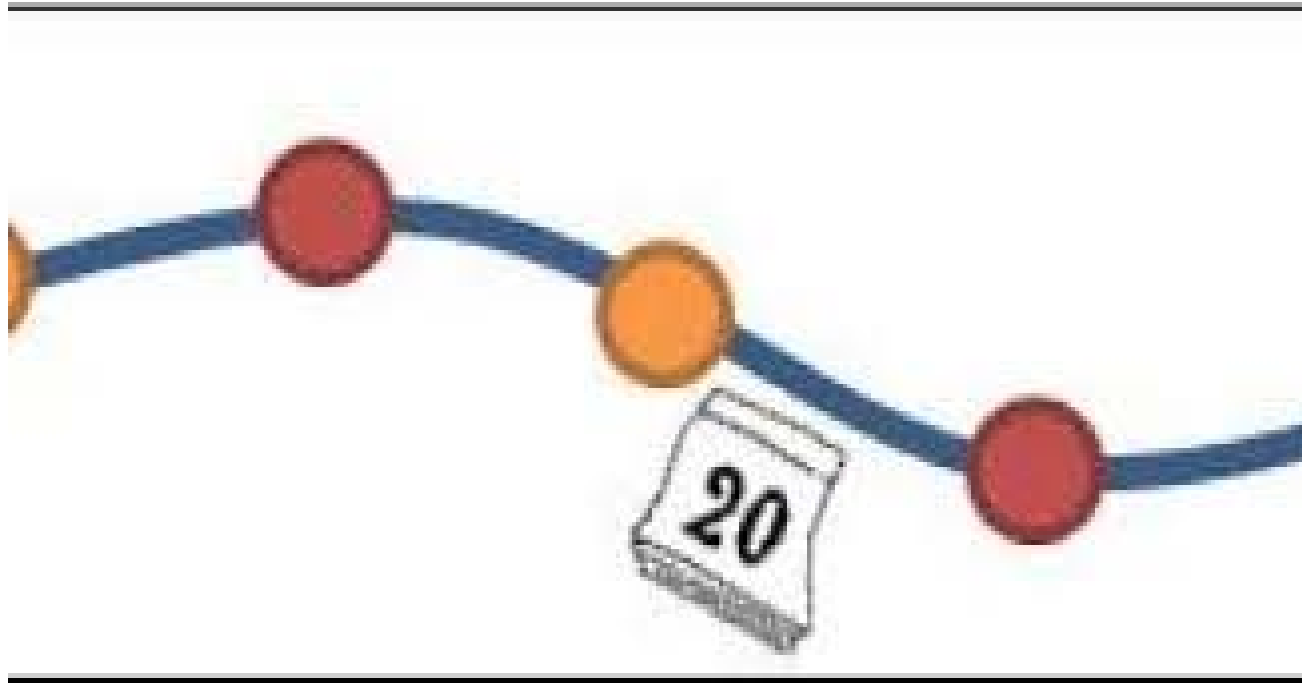
ADAPTING SPACES



Learning About A Survivor's Trauma Can Strengthen Your Case

- Protection orders
- Testimony
- Family law case
- VAWA self-petition
- U visa
- T visa

Patience and Difference Timeframes for Difference Purposes



Identification of Traumatic Experience

- Principles
 - Know why you are interested in identification of trauma:
 - What will you do with the information?
 - Knowing the details of (some) of the traumatic experience(s) may not be necessary
 - Recognize that many people may not have previously disclosed traumatic experiences to anyone
 - Disclosing trauma can trigger emotions, memories of the historical trauma and traumatic reactions
 - Know how to manage emotional dysregulation

Writing Intervention

- Writing intervention
 - *Process* by which attorney/advocate helps victim writes her/his story – trauma history
 - *Why* writing (or telling) interventions can help victims heal from trauma

A Survivor's "Story"

- Most important pieces of evidence submitted
- Opportunity for DHS to hear directly from the survivor, in her Voice
- The adjudicator should be able to understand and feel what survivor felt after being subjected to abuse or crime victimization
- Less of a formal affidavit, but rather "stories" of the survivor's experience

Standardized Tools: Assessing “*What Happened to Me?*”

- Multiple types of trauma exposure
 - Structured Life Events Screening Questionnaire (SLESQ)
- Domestic Violence
 - Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS-2)
 - Psychological Maltreatment of Women
 - Coercive Control Scale (IPV Coercion Measure)
 - Danger Assessment
- Indigenous Trauma
 - Additional traumatic effects based on oppression and discrimination

Standardized Tools:

Assessing “How did it change me?”

(Impact of battering or extreme cruelty)

- IPV (Intimate Partner Violence) Threat Appraisal and Fear Scale
- PTSD Checklist (PCL-C)
- Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9; depression)

Helping Survivors in Crisis

- Techniques you can use to help survivors:
 - Self-regulation techniques you can use
 - Breathing techniques
 - Other techniques
 - Additional resources on crisis care:
<https://niwaplibrary.wcl.american.edu/hands-on-trauma-crisis-training>

Large Group Discussion

What are some ways that you can provide opportunities for cultural-specific healing?

ADAPT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES TO MEET SURVIVORS' TRAUMA AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS



Meditation classes



Mindfulness: Meditation, Art and Creativity

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SURVIVORS TO DISCUSS THEIR RESPONSES TO TRAUMA



EMPOWERING SURVIVORS TO HEAL AND MEET THEIR NEEDS



TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF AS AN ADVOCATE

Advocates need to feel emotionally safe themselves in order to support survivors' emotional safety

Not doing so can lead to burnout, high levels of stress, and loss of passion ("compassion fatigue") for the work we do

It is inevitable that advocates indirectly experience the trauma of the individual they're helping



For More on Self-Care View NIWAP's Webinar

- National Judicial Network Webinar – Protecting Against Vicarious Trauma: Tools and Strategies for Providers Working with Survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Trafficking (January 31, 2023)
- <https://niwaplibrary.wcl.american.edu/njn-webinar-vicarious-trauma-jan-31-2023>
- Includes materials and connects you with research, resources and tools

Technical Assistance and Materials

- NIWAP Technical Assistance:
 - Call (202) 274-4457
 - E-mail info@niwap.org
 - Web Library: www.niwaplibrary.wcl.american.edu
- Materials for this Workshop:
 - <https://niwaplibrary.wcl.american.edu/BostonTraumaInformed>
- Contact NIWAP to provide training for your jurisdiction