

The Southeastern Oklahoma Continuum of Care Plan to Improve Services for Individuals and Families Fleeing Domestic Violence

This plan and strategies were developed after gathering input from survivors of domestic violence. All participants were at different stages in their journey.

Feedback and additions from the Lived Experience Working Group appear in italics.

Education

Education can help break the stigma and judgement associated with domestic violence.

Law enforcement needs to be aware of what constitutes domestic violence including physical, verbal, emotional, mental, *financial, technology, and sexual abuse*. Law enforcement needs to be aware of domestic violence resources including both mainstream and tribal.

Mainstream resource providers need to be aware of what constitutes domestic violence including physical, verbal, emotional, mental, *financial, technology, and sexual abuse*. They also need to be aware of domestic violence resources including both mainstream and tribal.

The general public, *including high school students*, also needs to be aware of what constitutes domestic violence including physical, verbal, emotional, mental, *financial, technology, and sexual abuse*, in addition to contact information for the local domestic violence program. *Education should include what shelter means and services provided (keeping in mind not all shelters provide the same services), victims will not lose their children just because they go to a shelter, and individuals are eligible and will receive the same domestic violence services as victims with children. It is critical to get this information to victims.*

Action Steps

- 1) Provide training to law enforcement on types and effects of domestic violence and available resources *at least* twice per year.
 - a. Training emphasis should be placed on the ways men manipulate women to avoid arrest.
- 2) Provide resource cards for law enforcement to *DISCREETLY* present to victims regardless of type of abuse, and especially including non-physical abuse.
- 3) Ensure resource information is available at the local jail, courthouse, police department, sheriff's office, *hospital, Health Department, Department of Human Services, clinics, and schools*.
- 4) Provide training to mainstream resource providers, *and schools* on types and effects of domestic violence and available resources. *Ensure resource information is available in lobbies and other public areas including restrooms.*

- 5) Provide resource cards for mainstream resource providers, *including hospitals, Health Departments, Department of Human Services, and clinics*, to present to victims regardless of types of abuse.
- 6) Provide educational sessions on types and effects of domestic violence to the general public in multiple venues throughout the year.
- 7) Ensure domestic violence program contact information and crisis line number are available throughout the community, *including flyers posted in local businesses and in public restrooms (especially gas station restrooms)*.

Access to Safe Shelter

Domestic violence victims need access to safe shelter. Transportation is a key issue when seeking shelter. In many circumstances, victims are reluctant to call law enforcement or family members when leaving.

Action Steps

- 1) Accommodation for transportation to safe shelter should be provided at all times. If shelter staff cannot transport, an advocate should accompany law enforcement when transporting. If staffing levels do not allow for transport or accompaniment, volunteers should be recruited and trained to assist.

Shelter Intake

Leaving their home and entering a shelter is traumatic for all domestic violence victims. Staff should ensure they are using a trauma informed approach when providing intake services.

Action Steps

- 1) Intake materials should be reviewed with a trauma informed lens and revised when necessary.
- 2) Staff should attend to immediate needs before starting intake.
- 3) Staff should use a trauma informed approach when doing intakes, including taking breaks as necessary, needed, or requested.

Entry Into Shelter

Entry into a congregate shelter can be difficult, traumatic, and frightening. Care should be taken to use a trauma informed approach when introducing victims to existing residents.

Shelter Services

Domestic violence victims can become survivors more quickly when they know what resources are available and what is expected of them. Shelter services should target both individuals and women with children.

Action Steps

- 1) Review shelter services to ensure they are voluntary, and trauma informed.
- 2) Provide resource information as soon after arrival as is appropriate for the situation.
- 3) The suicide hotline number should be included with resource information and be posted in the shelter facility.
- 4) Maintain information necessary for protective orders and other court-related proceedings.
- 5) Maintain knowledge of Department of Human Services procedures for reunification.
- 6) Educate employers and partner with employers who understand domestic violence and its effects.
- 7) Maintain information on Workforce Oklahoma and Work Ready Oklahoma.
- 8) Maintain information regarding safe affordable housing destinations.
- 9) Provide tenant education for survivors moving into their own homes.

Service Plans

Service plans provide a structured path to achieving goals necessary to become safely independent.

Action Steps

- 1) Service plans goals should be based on survivor choice and developed by the survivor with the assistance of staff.
- 2) Service plan goals should be reasonable and appropriate for the survivor's current situation.
- 3) Goals should be accompanied by achievable action steps with reasonable timeframes.
- 4) Service plan goals should be reviewed every two weeks to determine successes and barriers.

Shelter Staff

Shelter staff are key to the success of domestic violence services.

Action Steps

- 1) Staff should be trained in effective voluntary and trauma informed service approaches.
- 2) Staff should use trauma informed approaches to maintain structure in the shelter environment and keep residents accountable.
- 3) Staff should be available for informal one-on-one conversations with residents. These conversations may keep a situation from escalating into a crisis.