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SAFETY PLANNING DEMYSTIFIED – PART ONE: HOW TO BRING SURVIVOR SAFETY INTO EVERYDAY INTERACTIONS

Presenters

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• Georgia Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

This training is supported by Subgrant No. W16-8-008 awarded by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council administering office for the STOP Formula Grant Program. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed are those of the trainers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council or the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.



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Questions...

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What is Safety Planning?

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FORMAL VS. INFORMAL SAFETY PLANNING

What is Safety Planning?

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Formal	Informal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal safety plan form • Completed once, with assigned advocate • Requested by other agencies (DFCS, Housing programs) • Focus on physical safety and violence prevention • Static 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not written down • Spontaneous, based on survivor's immediate need • Fluid and flexible • Includes focus on emotional safety • Requested and led by the survivor

Informal Safety Planning

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be done by all staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Night/weekend, child advocates, crisis line advocates, etc. • Based on survivor's need or a new situation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Job search/new job ○ Going out with friends ○ Visiting family ○ Opportunities are endless! • Incorporate into every interaction
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Key Qualities of Good Safety Planning

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multifaceted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Batterer-generated and life-generated risks • Trauma-informed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emotional safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivor-led <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What the survivor is willing and able to do • Fluid and ongoing • In the moment
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Batterer-Generated & Life-Generated Risks

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SAFETY PLANNING AND THE COMPLEX AND MULTIFACETED LIVES OF SURVIVORS



I think that women are powerful and they're multifaceted and they're survivors; they don't have to depend on a man to do the things they needed them to do, whether it was hunting or lifting heavy things, so what's a man's place now? Who knows!

— *Barbara Jones* —

AL QUOTER

Batterer-Generated Risks

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- Risk of physical and sexual violence
 - Risk can increase after separation
 - Impact on physical health and wellbeing
- Child-related risks
 - Victims of direct physical violence
 - Witness abuse
 - Risk of losing children
- Financial risks
 - No control of money
 - Loss of wages
 - Risk to financial security and independence

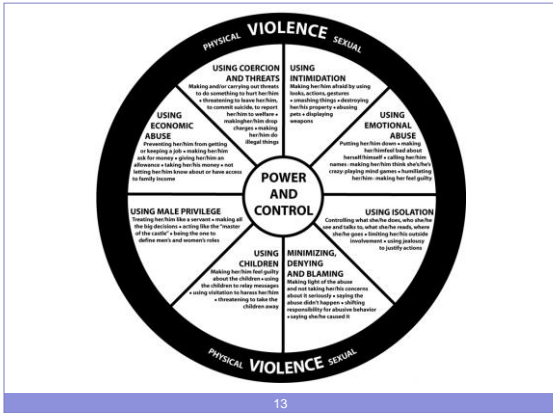
Davies, 2014

Batterer-generated risks

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- Risks of psychological harm and drug and alcohol use
 - Insults, threats and attacks
 - Using mental health as reason for control
 - Promoting use of alcohol or drugs
- Risks to friends and family
 - Threats
 - Isolation
 - Loss of relationships
- Risks involving arrest or legal status
 - Arrest as primary aggressor
 - Risk due to immigration status

Davies, 2014



What else in life affects our safety and security?

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Life-Generated Risks

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- **Financial considerations**
 - Loss or lack of income affects options
- **Home location**
 - Rural vs urban risks
 - Wealthy vs poverty-level
 - Access to resources
- **Physical and mental health**
 - Health issues or a disability can impact access to resources, increase vulnerability

Davies, 2014

Life-Generated Risks

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- Inadequate response from major social institutions
 - Legal system
 - Health care system
 - Religions institutions
 - Social services
 - DV programs
- Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other bias
 - Pattern of biased behavior
 - Intersections of oppression

Davies, 2014

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Batterer's Manipulation of Life-Generated Risks

Batterers are often aware of risks, manipulate them to reinforce power and control

- Financial limitations
 - "You can't afford to live on your own – where will you go?"
- Physical health
 - "Who is going to take care of you? You are so weak and pathetic – you would just be a burden."
- Mental health
 - "Officer, she's bipolar and refuses to take her medication. I'm sick of putting up with her crap!"
- Discrimination
 - "If you call the cops, you betray me as a lesbian. You know how I'll be treated if they put me in jail!"

Davies, 2014

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Practice – Life-Generated Risk

Scenario:

Rosalyn is an African American woman staying in your shelter. She is getting ready to go to a job interview at a local manufacturing plant. Her abusive partner, to whom she is married, lives in the same community but does not know where she is staying right now.

- What are potential life-generated risks for Rosalyn?
 - Finances – no current income
 - Race – African American, possible discrimination
 - Gender – manufacturing plant, typical male job
 - Housing – what would be safe? Affordable?
 - Social institutions – help with job application?
- Batterer-generated risks?
 - Married status
 - Lives in the same community

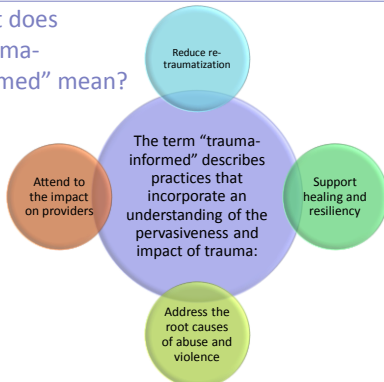
Trauma-Informed Safety Planning

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REACHING BEYOND IMMEDIATE PHYSICAL SAFETY



What does "trauma-informed" mean?



NCDV/TMH 2013, adapted from Harris and FalLOT 2001

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How does this apply to Safety Planning?

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- **Reduce Re-traumatization**
 - Emotional Safety – feeling accepted; safe from emotional attack or harm
 - We are skilled at attending to physical safety, but emotional safety is harder to measure
 - Emotional abuse more harmful than physical
 - Hard for survivors to find sense of calm and safety

NCDV/TMH, 2011

Emotional Safety

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- **Help survivors manage feelings**
 - Caring and calming presence
 - Help with overwhelming tasks
 - Identify achievable goals
 - Offer frequent breaks
- **Provide information about trauma**
 - Explain trauma triggers and responses
 - Normalize survivor's reactions

- **Provide a soothing place**
 - Corner of a quiet room, comfortable chair, privacy



NCDVTMH, 2011

Emotional Safety

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- **Provide clear information and avoid surprises**
 - Policies, procedures, rules and plans
 - How we do things and how decisions are made
 - Do what we say we're going to do



- **Help Survivors feel comforted and in control**
 - Tailor program and approach to survivor's needs, personality
 - Empower survivors to express opinions, wishes
- **Support emotional safety of staff**
 - All of the above applies to staff as well
 - This work has an impact on our feelings, energy and worldview
 - Ongoing training and supportive supervision

NCDVTMH, 2011

Emotional Safety and the Batterer

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- **Acknowledge and accept emotions**
 - This is/was an intimate relationship – all break-ups are hard!
 - It is ok to miss the abuser, think about going back, or to not be ready to leave
- **Reduce exposure to emotional triggers**
 - Prepare for contact with abuser
 - Texts, voicemails, social media
- **Increasing support systems – friends, family, faith, community, advocates/programs, crisis line,**
- **Counseling**



NCDVTMH, 2011

Self-Check/Self-care

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- What is coming up for you in the process?
- What do you do when you and the survivor don't agree?
- What triggers are present for you?
- Who is your emotional support system? Who do you talk to, debrief with?

- Being trauma-informed means understanding your own exposure to trauma – whether your own or the survivor's



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Survivor- led safety planning is a partnership, with both the advocate and the survivor bringing important information to the table



Survivor-led safety planning

Exchanging Information



Information she brings to the table:

- Her experiences
- What risks she faces
- Information about her partner
- What has helped her in the past
- What hasn't helped
- What she is or is not willing or able to do
- What are her resources
- What are her and children's coping mechanisms

Exchanging Information



Information you bring to the table:

- Knowledge of danger/lethality indicators
- Resources
- Agency processes
- Likely outcomes
- Pros and cons of certain options

Survivor-led Safety Planning is a Partnership



- What the advocate brings: Knowledge, resources, experience
- Ask questions:
 - What have you tried in the past?
 - What worked or didn't work?
 - How will your partner react if...?
- Identify warning signs
 - Threats to kill self or survivor
 - Stalking or controlling behavior
 - Obsessive jealousy
 - Escalation in violence

Survivor-led Safety Planning is a Partnership



- Brainstorm strategies
 - Could a co-worker walk you to your car?
 - Could you call your sister when you're feeling lonely?
 - Is it possible that any of your family/friends are sharing info with your partner?
- Suggest available resources
 - Legal resources such as a protective order
 - Support groups for emotional support
 - Locksmith to change locks

Survivor-led Safety Planning is a Partnership

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- What the survivor brings: knowledge of the abusive partner, past experience, support systems
- The survivor knows her abusive partner best
 - How they will react to legal action or police involvement
 - Exacerbating factors: alcohol or drug use, jealousy, job loss, etc.
 - Level of control
- The survivor has been using strategies for safety – help identify those and point out:
 - Taking “temperature” of the situation
 - Modifying behavior
 - Knowing when to leave

Survivor-led Safety Planning

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- What the survivor is willing to do
 - Contact with abusive partner
 - Relocate
 - Call 911 or filing a police report
 - Disclose abuse to family/friends/neighbors
 - Tell employer/coworkers about situation

Survivor-led Safety Planning

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- What the survivor is able to do
 - Stay sober
 - Risk being “outed”
 - Access a support system
 - Afford an attorney
 - Risk losing custody of children

Who is the Survivor?

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- **Undocumented/WOC**
 - How do they view law enforcement? Safety resource or a threat?
- **LGBTQ survivor**
 - Community/circle of friends – turned against them by abusive partner?
 - Family: supportive of sexual orientation or gender identity?
- **Person with a disability**
 - Access to medical care/medication: limit relocation options?
- **Addiction/substance abuse**
 - Quitting may not be an option – safety plan around substance use

Who is the survivor?

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- How the survivor identifies is important
- Be humble, inquisitive
- What is possible or normal for you may not be the same for the survivor
- Allow for possibilities, but don't make assumptions or rely on stereotypes

Fluid, Ongoing & Spontaneous

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SAFETY PLANNING SHOULD EVOLVE WITH THE SURVIVOR AND BE RELEVANT TO HER IMMEDIATE SITUATION



Clara

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- Clara, a young Latina who is a US citizen, is staying at the shelter, and she comes to the office to share her excitement that her sister is coming to visit for the weekend. Clara is asking for a weekend pass to spend time with her family.
 - Abuser (ex-boyfriend) lives in town
 - Clara has struggled with depression
 - Clara's brother is good friends with her ex
 - Small, close-knit community
- Who should safety plan with Clara?
- What are some life-generated risks?
- Batterer-generated risks?
- Emotional safety considerations?
- Culturally specific considerations?
- How do you let Clara lead the process?

Thomas

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- Thomas is a gay male survivor who attends your community support group. He is starting a new job at a local coffee shop, and he is concerned about his abuser finding out he works there and causing trouble for him
 - Thomas has a TPO against his abuser
 - Disconnected from his family
 - Has a few close friends, but lost many friends when he left his abuser and got the TPO
- Who should safety plan with Thomas?
- What are some life-generated risks?
- Batterer-generated risks?
- Emotional safety considerations?
- Culturally specific considerations?
- How do you let Thomas lead the process?

Judy

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- Judy is a crisis caller who explains that she has a little dog who is sick and needs vet care. Judy has a disability and relies on a wheelchair, and her controlling husband will not take her and her dog to the vet. She does not want to leave her husband or come into shelter
 - Judy is 71 years old
 - Husband is not physically abusive, but controlling and emotionally abusive
- Who should safety plan with Judy?
- What are some life-generated risks?
- Batterer-generated risks?
- Emotional safety considerations?
- Culturally specific considerations?
- How do you let Judy lead the process?

Questions...

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Thank You!

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