

Middlesex L.E.A.D.S.

LISTEN, EDUCATE, ADVOCATE, & DEMAND SAFETY

Listening Sessions with People Served
Needs Assessment Plan



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Introduction

Founded in September 2014, Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. (the Collaborative) is a Middlesex County initiative to LISTEN, EDUCATE, ADVOCATE, AND DEMAND SAFETY for all sexual violence survivors. The Collaborative is comprised of the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment (the Center), a sexual violence program; and Alliance Center for Independence (ACI), a Center for Independent Living, both located in the city of Edison in Middlesex County, New Jersey.

The Collaborative aims to address the intersection of sexual violence and disability, including the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) community, and with the guidance of the Office on Violence Against Women and the Vera Institute of Justice, hopes to increase each agency's capacity to serve survivors and prevent victimization against people with disabilities and Deaf and HOH people.

The following document outlines the Collaborative's needs assessment plan, detailing how the group intends to gather information from the sexual violence survivors, people with disabilities, and Deaf and HOH people they serve. Information will be collected from "listening sessions," or focus groups and interviews allowing the Collaborative's clients and consumers to share their thoughts on safety, accessibility, support, and comfort when receiving services. The information collected will identify gaps in service to assist the collaborative in prioritizing their areas of focus

Partner Agencies

Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. (the Collaborative) is comprised of the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment (the Center) and Alliance Center for Independence (ACI).



Founded in 1977, the Center serves survivors of sexual violence and their loved ones in Middlesex County, New Jersey. The Center's free services include counseling, support groups, 24-hour hotline, and 24-hour in-person legal support. It also provides free prevention education and free sexual violence professional trainings, educational seminars, and community presentations. The Center facilitates the Sexual Violence Prevention Coalition of Middlesex County, in which ACI is an active member. As the lead agency of the Collaborative, the Center commits Jeanne Manchin, Program Coordinator and Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Decision Maker, and Gabrielle Gault, Counselor Rape Victimization and Prevention Program.



Founded in 1986, ACI is a Center for Independent Living serving Middlesex, Somerset, and Union counties of New Jersey. It is a 501(c)(3) community-based,

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grassroots organization that supports and promotes independent living for people with disabilities. Its services include information and referral as well as educational and recreational programs which promote activism, peer support, independent living, health and wellness, employment, housing, and emergency preparedness for people with disabilities and their allies. In addition, ACI provides Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) services. ACI commits Carole Tonks, Executive Director and OVW Decision Maker; and Luke Koppisch, Deputy Director, to the Collaborative.

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The Center and ACI's history of collaborating dates back to 2010, when the partnership first applied for the OVW Disabilities Grant. Although they were not awarded at that time, they maintained a relationship, working together on projects and training one another's agencies. Today, the partnership is known as "Middlesex L.E.A.D.S." With the support of the OVW and the Vera Institute of Justice, the Collaborative seeks to Listen, Educate, Advocate, and Demand Safety for sexual violence survivors with disabilities and Deaf and HOH survivors. The Collaborative's Project Director is Monica Avisado.

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Vision

The vision of Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. (the Collaborative) is to ensure all sexual violence survivors in the community have access to equitable, competent, survivor-focused services regardless of ability.

Mission

Their mission is to identify and close gaps in service by:

- Commitment to the strategic planning process to create powerful and sustainable change.
- Honoring and respecting each partner agency and individual participant and utilizing a strengths-based approach.
- Valuing the importance of this partnership which allows us to create a seamless experience for survivors with disabilities and Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) survivors and properly address the needs of an underserved population.
- Spreading awareness about the intersection of sexual violence and disability/Deaf and HOH community and promoting a culture of inclusiveness.
- Creating a safe and comfortable space for survivors with disabilities so they may openly express their needs, knowing their voices are heard and they are supported.

The plan outlined in this document will help the Collaborative gain insight into the needs of sexual violence survivors, people with disabilities, and Deaf or HOH community they serve. The Collaborative's vision and mission have informed this plan and will continue to inform their planning moving forward.

Listening Sessions with People Served Goals

Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. (the Collaborative) is prepared to engage in listening sessions with the survivors, people with disabilities, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) people it serves to achieve the following goals:

- To provide a platform for the survivors, people with disabilities, and Deaf and HOH people s to openly express their service needs regarding safety, access, comfort, and support.
- To identify and understand the gaps in service which exist for survivors with disabilities and Deaf and HOH survivors so collaboration members can work to properly close them.
- To use the data collected to identify the Collaborative’s priorities and inform its strategic plan moving forward.

To achieve these goals, the Collaborative will maximize the quality of the information gathered by asking participants to answer a series of open-ended questions relating to their service needs and preferences. Furthermore, they will maximize the quantity of information gathered by offering clients and consumers several opportunities to get involved.

Information Sources

The Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. (the Collaborative) needs assessment will have a local focus, narrowing in on needs of those residing in or receiving services in Middlesex County. This includes people served by the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment (the Center) and Alliance Center for Independence (ACI). The assessment will examine needs of survivors of all types of sexual violence, including but not limited to sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, sexual contact, lewdness, and voyeurism; as well as persons with any type of disability, including but not limited to physical, developmental, intellectual, and sensory and Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) individuals.

The Collaborative's main information source will be focus groups. However, they hope to maximize participation by accommodating clients and consumers who prefer individual in-person or telephone interviews.

The Collaborative will conduct two focus groups at the Center and four focus groups at ACI. The Center will host one daytime and one evening focus group for sexual violence survivors. Likewise, ACI will host three daytime and one evening focus group for people with disabilities and Deaf and HOH people. Individual in-person and telephone interviews will be scheduled as necessary.

Collaboration members will use the information collected from these sources to identify priorities and narrow the focus of their work moving forward.

Recruitment Strategies

Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. (the Collaborative) hopes to reach 50 clients and consumers for the needs assessment and has developed a structure for the recruitment of participants. The Collaborative's recruitment goals include reaching the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment's (the Center's) and Alliance Center for Independence's (ACI's) regular clients and consumers and allowing those interested several opportunities to participate.

First, the Collaborative's Project Director (PD) will speak to the Center's and ACI's staff to introduce them to the needs assessment and prepare them to recruit clients and consumers to participate. All staff will be provided the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document (*Appendix A*) to assist staff in introducing clients and consumers to the needs assessment and recruiting them as participants.

The PD will attend ACI's regular consumer groups, including but not limited to its Men's Peer Group, Women's Peer Group, Coloring Book Group, Walking Group, Integrated Belly Dancing Group, Advocacy Group, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Group to introduce the listening sessions, answer questions, and recruit participants. The PD will also speak to the Center's client groups, including the Sexual Violence Survivor Support Group and Male Survivor Support Group. The Center's clinicians will facilitate this discussion with their individual-counseling clients. ACI's case managers will facilitate this discussion with their individual consumers.

All staff from the Center and ACI will utilize the Focus Group/Interview RSVP Form (*Appendix B*) to take down the names, contact information, listening session appointment information, and accommodations needed of those interested in participating. They will provide this form to the PD two weeks prior to the client's or consumer's scheduled listening session.

This recruitment process will help the Collaborative track participants, stay organized, and work toward its goal to reach 50 people.

Compensation

Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. will provide stipends in the form of generic Visa or American Express gift cards for needs assessment participants as compensation for travel and time. Participants will receive their stipends prior to their listening session. Those participating via telephone interview are required to pick up their stipend at the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment or Alliance Center for Independence.

50 gift cards will be purchased with Office on Violence Against Women funds at the cost of \$20.00 each plus a \$3 activation fee per card, if applicable, for a total of \$1,500.00.

Consent and Confidentiality

Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. (the Collaborative) takes consent and confidentiality of its clients and consumers very seriously. Clients and consumers will be informed of their right to fully consent to participate in listening sessions and choose to accept or decline participation at any time without consequences. Participants will be reminded of this right from recruitment to the start of their listening session. Furthermore, they will have the opportunity to choose how they wish to contribute to the needs assessment, whether it is through the focus groups, individual in-person interview, or individual telephone interview.

All participants will be informed of the confidentiality policies, the limits of confidentiality, and what will be done with the data once it is collected. This disclosure will take place at recruitment and at the start of each listening session. Throughout the data collection process, collaboration members will follow the confidentiality policies highlighted in the Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. Collaboration Charter (*Appendix C*) to protect the confidentiality and privacy rights of all needs assessment participants.

The Project Director will utilize the Focus Group/Interview RSVP Form to document contact information, reservations, and requested accommodations of listening session participants. When all listening sessions are completed, these documents will be destroyed. The Collaborative will, however, keep signed or initialed receipts to track their costs and as a requirement of the Office on Violence Against Women, keep a signed or initialed inventory log to track the movement of gift cards. The receipts and inventory log will be confidential and only released in the event of an audit.

Safety Considerations

One of the primary goals of Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. (the Collaborative) is to increase safety of survivors with disabilities and Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) survivors. Safety practices begin in the recruitment stage of the needs assessment process.

When clients and consumers first show interest in participating, they will complete a Focus Group/Interview RSVP Form. Using this form, clients and consumers can choose the date, time, and location of their listening session. In addition, they may choose to be reminded of their listening session and will have the option to receive a telephone, mail, or email reminder. They will indicate the best time to contact them and if it is safe to leave a message.

Focus groups and in-person interviews will take place at the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment (the Center) and Alliance Center for Independence (ACI), both of which are safe and accessible locations, familiar to listening session participants. Both locations are accessible to public transportation and are NJ Transit Access Link destinations. Clients and consumers will receive a stipend as compensation for travel and time. If they have any problems concerning their stipend, they will be encouraged to speak to collaboration members, who will do everything in their power to advocate for the person and solve the problem.

At the start of all listening sessions, participants will be reminded of the confidentiality policies put in place to protect them. They will also be reminded of the limits of confidentiality so as to make an informed decision regarding what should or should not be shared during listening sessions.

During the session, participants will be asked questions related to safety and access only. They will not be asked to share anything in relation to violence or victimization. It is important to note that all collaboration members are mandated reporters for child abuse and neglect. In addition, the Collaborative's social workers are mandated reporters for abuse and neglect against institutionalized elderly persons and vulnerable adults residing in a community setting and have a duty to warn law enforcement and other parties when someone is at risk of causing harm to him/herself or another. The Collaborative's social workers are

Jeanne Manchin, Program Coordinator and Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Decision Maker of the Center; Gabrielle Gault, Counselor Rape Victimization and Prevention Program; and Monica Avisado, the Collaborative's Project Director (PD). Collaboration members will always follow these legal requirements. However, they understand the risks involved for survivors when a report is mandated and will take every precaution to ensure survivors are not put in a dangerous position. In the event that a report is mandated, collaboration members will follow the mandated reporting policies (*Appendix D*) outlined in the Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. Collaboration Charter.

Listening sessions with Deaf and HOH participants will require American Sign Language interpreters. Due to the close-knit nature of the Deaf and HOH communities, collaboration members will do everything in their power to ensure that interpreters and participants do not know one another. If interpreters and participants do know one another, participants will be given the opportunity to reschedule their listening sessions. The PD will find different interpreters.

The safety of the Center's and ACI's clients and consumers is the top priority of the Collaborative. In addition to these safety considerations, needs assessment participants may request additional accommodations to increase their safety. They may do this as they are scheduling their session or at any time by reaching out to the PD, whose contact information will be provided to all prospective participants. If they feel more comfortable doing so, participants may contact Jeanne Manchin; Gabrielle Gault; Carole Tonks, Executive Director and OVW Decision Maker of ACI; or Luke Koppisch, Deputy Director of ACI to request additional safety accommodations. Deaf and HOH consumers will contact ACI's Deaf and HOH Services Coordinator, to arrange accommodations.

Access Considerations

One of the primary goals of the Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. (the Collaborative) is to increase access to sexual violence services. During the needs assessment, the Collaborative will ensure accommodations to increase physical and programmatic access to the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment (the Center) and Alliance Center for Independence (ACI). Accessibility will be a priority starting at the recruitment stage.

At the recruitment stage, needs assessment participants will have the opportunity to choose a focus group, individual in-person or telephone interview and a day, time, and location that works best for them. All participants will be asked to identify accommodations needed so each listening session can be tailored to the individual's needs. Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) consumers will address accommodations with the Deaf and HOH Services Coordinator. Accommodation requests will go to the Project Director (PD) two weeks before the scheduled listening session.

Focus groups and in-person interviews will be held at the Center and ACI, both of which are safe and accessible NJ Transit Access Link destinations and familiar to their clients and consumers. In addition, plain language will be utilized in all needs assessment tools. During focus groups and interviews, participants will be encouraged to ask questions and request assistance when needed. Support persons will be available on-site.

Focus groups and individual in-person interviews with Deaf and HOH participants will include hearing facilitators and American Sign Language interpreters. The Deaf and HOH Services Coordinator will always be available on-site for additional support. The PD has met with the Deaf and HOH Services Coordinator to ensure the listening session scripts and questions are as Deaf and HOH friendly as possible. As previously mentioned, all accommodation requests for Deaf and HOH consumers will go through the Deaf and HOH Services Coordinator, who will relay them to the PD.

The Collaborative has prepared these accommodations to ensure that participation in the needs assessment is as accessible and feasible as possible. In addition to these access considerations, participants may request additional

accommodations to increase access and comfort. They may do this as they are scheduling their session or at any time by reaching out to the PD, whose contact information will be provided to all prospective participants. If they feel more comfortable doing so, participants may contact Jeanne Manchin, Program Coordinator and Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Decision Maker of the Center; Gabrielle Gault, Counselor Rape Victimization and Prevention Program; Carole Tonks, Executive Director and OVW Decision Maker of ACI; or Luke Koppisch, Deputy Director of ACI to request additional safety accommodations.

Training Plans

The roles involved in the facilitation of listening sessions include a facilitator leading the discussion, a note taker recording responses, and possibly a floater available to provide assistance. These roles will be filled by key members of Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. (the Collaborative). The floater role may be filled by other Middlesex County Center for Empowerment and Alliance Center for Independence staff or volunteers in the event that collaboration members are unavailable.

Any person who will be joining the Collaborative to assist with the listening sessions will be required to meet with the Collaborative's Project Director (PD), who will provide the person an overview of what is required of them in their role. They will then be provided a copy of the Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. Needs Assessment Plan for their review. The PD will be available to answer questions, address concerns, and hear suggestions. At this point, the person will be familiar with the purpose of the needs assessment and their role in the process.

American Sign Language interpreters will be provided copies of the listening session tools so they are prepared to interpret them for Deaf and Hard of Hearing participants.

This training plan will be utilized to prepare all those recruited to help with the facilitation of listening sessions.

Tools for Survivor Listening Sessions

The following scripts will be utilized for listening sessions with the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment (the Center's) clients served who are survivors.

Introduction to Survivor Focus Group

Thank you for your participation in this focus group. You are helping us gather information on how to better provide services. Before I give more information, we would like to go around the room and have staff introduce themselves. I will start with myself. (*Introduce self and role in L.E.A.D.S.*)

This focus group is being brought to you by Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. a Middlesex County initiative to LISTEN, EDUCATE, ADVOCATE, AND DEMAND SAFETY for survivors. The initiative is collaboratively led by the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment and Alliance Center for Independence, our local Center for Independent Living which serves people with disabilities. At this point, we are conducting focus groups at both agencies to learn more about the needs of survivors.

The information we collect today will help us make changes to the Center for Empowerment and Alliance Center for Independence so services are more safe and accessible.

By being with us in this room, you agree to participate in the focus group. Thank you for making the choice to be here. We hope you continue to make choices regarding your participation. Please only answer questions you feel comfortable answering and if at any point, you feel uncomfortable and wish to stop, feel free to step out. We understand and respect your decision.

I, (*Group Facilitator's Name*), will be facilitating the group and asking the questions. Monica will be the note taker. Monica will not use identifying information in her notes, but she will focus on taking down your responses to my questions. For this reason, we ask that you speak one person at a time. Other ground rules of the focus group include:

- Be respectful to each other.
- Do not judge each other.
- Everything said here is confidential.
- No cell phone use.

Your participation and responses will remain confidential. However, there are limits to confidentiality. The information we collect will be shared with the Center for Empowerment staff, Alliance Center for Independence staff, the Office on Violence Against Women (our funders) and the Vera Institute of Justice (our technical assistance provider). It is also important to note that (*Names of facilitators*) will breach confidentiality if you are planning to harm yourself or another and if we are mandated to report abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult. Does everyone understand? (*Pause*) Good.

Are there any questions before we begin? (*Pause*) At this point, we will begin the focus group questions. If you need assistance with anything, raise your hand and I will do what I can to help you. If for any reason you are not comfortable answering a question in front of the group, you may speak to me or (*Other Collaboration Member's Name*) privately after the group is over.

Introduction to Individual Survivor Interview

Thank you for your participation in this interview. You are helping us gather information on how to better provide services. Before I give more information, I would like to introduce myself. (*Introduce self and role in L.E.A.D.S.*)

This focus group is being brought to you by Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. a Middlesex County initiative to LISTEN, EDUCATE, ADVOCATE, AND DEMAND SAFETY for survivors. The initiative is collaboratively led by the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment and Alliance Center for Independence, our local Center for Independent Living which serves people with disabilities. At this point, we are conducting focus groups and interviews at both agencies to learn more about the needs of survivors.

The information we collect today will help us make changes to the Center for Empowerment and Alliance Center for Independence so services are more safe and accessible.

By speaking with me now, you agree to participate in the interview. Thank you for making this choice. We hope you continue to make choices regarding your participation. Please only answer questions you feel comfortable answering and if at any point, you feel uncomfortable and wish to stop, let me know and we will stop. I understand and respect your decision.

I will ask you questions and take notes on your responses. For this reason, I ask that you speak slowly. I may ask you to repeat something to make sure I have it written down correctly. Your participation and responses will remain confidential.

However, there are limits to confidentiality. The information we collect will be shared with the Center for Empowerment staff, Alliance Center for Independence staff, the Office on Violence Against Women (our funders) and the Vera Institute of Justice (our technical assistance provider). It is also important to note that (*Names of facilitators*) will breach confidentiality if you are planning to harm yourself or another and if we are mandated to report abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult. Does everyone understand? (*Pause*) Good.

Are there any questions before we begin? (*Pause*) At this point, we will begin the focus group questions. If you need assistance with anything, let me know and I will do what I can to help you.

Survivor Questions

Today, we are going to be asking questions to help us gain your insights as a survivor of sexual violence. We ask that when answering these questions you think about them through the lens of a survivor of sexual violence.

1. I'd like to begin by asking you about how you learn about services available to survivors.

- a. Where do you think it would be good to share information about services?
- b. Does/Did anybody help you find out about services?
- c. What may keep you from getting the services you need?

Now, I'm going to ask you to think about a place in your community where you use services, where you feel comfortable and trust the staff. For example, a place where the staff makes it easy for you to talk about what you need and the problems you have. *(Pause)* Does everyone have a place they are thinking of? Good. Think about this place for the next few questions.

2. What does this place do to help make your experience with them a positive one?
 - a. What about the physical space or location?
 - b. What about the staff behavior, competency, and knowledge?
 - c. What about confidentiality and privacy?
 - d. What about the overall atmosphere, comfort level, and approachability?
 - e. What about materials and resources?

3. What kinds of things help you feel safe when you're in that place?

4. What kinds of things help you feel you can trust the people there?

Now, think about a place in your community where you use services, where you feel uncomfortable and do NOT trust the staff. For example, a place where it is hard for you to talk about what you need and what problems you have. *(Pause)* Does everyone have place they are thinking of? Good. Think about this place for the next few questions.

5. What does this place do that contributed to making any part of your experience with them a negative one?
 - a. What about the physical space or location?
 - b. What about the staff behavior, competency, and knowledge?
 - c. What about confidentiality and privacy?

- d. What about the overall atmosphere, comfort level, and approachability?
 - e. What about materials and resources?
6. What about the place makes you feel uncomfortable?
7. What kinds of things help you know you cannot trust the people there?

The next group of questions will help us gain your insights on the concept of confidentiality.

8. First we want to know, what does confidentiality mean to you?
- a. How important is confidentiality when you're seeking or receiving services?
 - b. In what instances would it be okay to share identifying information and the details of your experience with other organizations?
 - i. After signing a one-time release of information as part of the intake process?
 - ii. Or do you prefer to be asked each time prior to your information being released?
 - iii. Or are you comfortable with an agency sharing your information anytime?

The next question is about how you want places where you use services to work with your loved ones. Think about how much involvement they should or shouldn't have in matters involving you and your services.

9. Sometimes, people have parents, family members, or guardians who help care for and/or support them. Is there anything, good or bad, you would like us to know about working with your parents, family members, or guardians?
- a. How about with decision making?

- b. How about with confidentiality and sharing information with them?
- c. How about with their involvement in your services?

Now, that we have learned about what safety, comfort, and confidentiality mean to you, we would like to gather your insights on what agencies and the community can do to make you feel safer and more comfortable when accessing services.

10. What would you like places where you get services, such as doctor offices, therapists, or social services agencies, to know about how to best support survivors of sexual violence?

- a. What types of accommodations may survivors need?
- b. What do they need to know about how to treat survivors?
- c. What might they need to know about meeting areas?
- d. What do they need to know to refer survivors to other service providers?
- e. What else may they need to know about confidentiality?
- f. Of those, which is the most important?

We are almost done. Next, think about the last time you received a referral from one service to another.

11. What was helpful about that experience?

- a. What was unhelpful?
- b. Did you follow up with those referrals?
- c. Did you know what would happen when you got there?
- d. Did they set it up or did you have to call?
- e. How did you feel about the level of confidentiality? Was it enough or did you need more? What did you need?

This is the last question.

12. Is there anything you would like the Center for Empowerment to offer that is not currently available?

- a. Regarding services?
- b. Regarding the environment?
- c. Regarding staff?

Tools for Disability and Deaf or HOH Listening Sessions

The following scripts will be utilized for listening sessions with the Alliance Center for Independence's (ACI's) consumers served with disabilities or are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (HOH).

Introduction to Disability and Deaf or HOH Focus Group

Thank you for your participation in this focus group. You are helping us gather information on how to better provide services. Before I give more information, we would like to go around the room and have staff introduce themselves. I will start with myself. (*Introduce self and role in L.E.A.D.S.*)

This focus group is being brought to you by Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. a Middlesex County initiative to LISTEN, EDUCATE, ADVOCATE, AND DEMAND SAFETY for people with disabilities and Deaf and HOH people. The initiative is collaboratively led by the Alliance Center for Independence (ACI) and Middlesex County Center for Empowerment, the local sexual violence program. At this point, we are conducting focus groups at both agencies to learn more about the needs of people with disabilities.

The information we collect today will help us make changes to the Alliance Center for Independence and Center for Empowerment so services are more safe and accessible.

By being with us in this room, you agree to participate in the focus group. Thank you for making the choice to be here. We hope you continue to make choices regarding your participation. Please only answer questions you feel comfortable answering and if at any point, you feel uncomfortable and wish to stop, feel free to step out. We understand and respect your decision.

I, (*Group Facilitator's Name*), will be facilitating the group and asking the questions. Monica will be the note taker. Monica will not use your names in her notes, but she will focus on taking down your responses to my questions. For this reason, we ask that you speak one person at a time and raise your hand if you want to answer a question. Other ground rules of the focus group include:

- Be respectful to each other.
- Do not judge each other.
- Everything said here is confidential.
- No cell phone use.
- No sleeping.

Your participation and responses will remain confidential. However, there are limits to confidentiality. The information we collect will be shared with the Center for Empowerment staff, Alliance Center for Independence staff, the Office on Violence Against Women (our funders) and the Vera Institute of Justice (our technical assistance provider). It is also important to note that (*Names of facilitators*) will breach confidentiality if you are planning to harm yourself or another and if we are mandated to report abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult. Does everyone understand? (*Pause*) Good.

Are there any questions before we begin? (*Pause*) At this point, we will begin the focus group questions. If you need assistance with anything, raise your hand and we will do what we can to help you. If for any reason you are not comfortable answering a question in front of the group, you may speak to me or (*Other Collaboration Member's Name*) privately after the group is over.

Introduction to Individual Disability and Deaf or HOH Interview

Thank you for your participation in this interview. You are helping us gather information on how to better provide services. Before I give more information, I would like us to introduce myself. (*Introduce self and role in L.E.A.D.S.*)

This interview is being brought to you by Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. a Middlesex County initiative to LISTEN, EDUCATE, ADVOCATE, AND DEMAND SAFETY for people with disabilities and Deaf and Hard of Hearing (HOH) people. The initiative is collaboratively led by the Alliance Center for Independence (ACI) and Middlesex County Center for Empowerment, the local sexual violence program. At this point, we are conducting focus groups and interviews at both agencies to learn more about the needs of people with disabilities.

The information we collect today will help us make changes to the Alliance Center for Independence and Center for Empowerment so services are more safe and accessible.

By speaking with me now, you agree to participate in the interview. Thank you for making the choice to be here. We hope you continue to make choices regarding your participation. Please only answer questions you feel comfortable answering and if at any point, you feel uncomfortable and wish to stop, let me know and we will stop. I understand and respect your decision.

I will ask you questions and take notes on your responses, but I will not use your name in my notes. For this reason, I ask that you speak slowly. I may ask you to repeat something to make sure I have it written down correctly.

Your participation and responses will remain confidential. However, there are limits to confidentiality. The information we collect will be shared with the Center for Empowerment staff, Alliance Center for Independence staff, the Office on Violence Against Women (our funders) and the Vera Institute of Justice (our technical assistance provider). It is also important to note that (*Names of facilitators*) will breach confidentiality if you are planning to harm yourself or another and if we are mandated to report abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult. Does everyone understand? (*Pause*) Good.

Are there any questions before we begin? (*Pause*) At this point, we will begin the questions. If you need assistance with anything, let me know and I will do what we can to help you. Let's begin.

Disability and Deaf or HOH Questions

Today, we are going to be asking questions to help us see from your perspective.

The first group of questions is about finding out about services. For example, medical services, counseling services, education services, employment services, or other community services.

1. I'd like to begin by asking, how do you learn about services available to you?
 - a. Who helps you find services?
 - b. What may keep you from getting the services you need?
 - c. What can agencies and the people who work there do to help you get the services you need?

Now, I am going to ask questions about accessibility to services, or being able to easily receive a service you want or need.

2. Sometimes, agencies make it difficult to receive services you want or need... what are some problems you experience?
 - a. What are the building and office barriers you face? For example, having to use stairs when you use a wheelchair.
 - i. What would make it easier for you? For example, having a ramp available so you do not have to use the stairs if you're in a wheelchair.
 - b. What are the communication problems you experience? For example, when you have difficulty understanding someone or they have difficulty understanding you.
 - i. What would make it easier for you? For example, using pictures, using an interpreter, simple language, or being provided more examples.
 - c. What are the other problems you experience?
 - i. What would make it easier for you?

For the next group of questions, we will focus on what you want or need when it comes to safety and comfort. Let's begin.

3. Think of a place where you get services, like a doctor's office or social service office, where you feel safe and trust the people. Do you have a place in mind? (*Pause*) Good.
 - a. What about the place and environment makes you feel safe?
 - b. What about the people makes you feel safe and that you can trust them?

4. Now, think of a place where you get services, like a doctor's office or social service office, where you feel comfortable, can relax, and be yourself. Do you have a place in mind? (*Pause*) Good.
 - a. What about the place and environment makes you feel comfortable, like you can be yourself?
 - b. What about the people help you feel comfortable, like you can be yourself?

5. Now, that we know what makes you feel safe and comfortable when you're at a place receiving services, we want to know more about what places where you get services need to avoid or stop doing so you can feel more safe and comfortable.
 - a. What do places need to stop doing so you can feel safer?
 - b. What do places need to stop doing so you can feel comfortable?

We are more than halfway through the questions. For the next group of questions, we are going to ask you to share your opinions on confidentiality and support. Let's begin.

6. Sometimes, we want personal things to be kept confidential. For example, you might go to a counselor or case manager for help on a personal problem and ask them not to tell anyone.
 - a. What about confidentiality is important to you?
 - b. What can agencies and the people who work there do to give you more confidentiality?

7. Sometimes, people have parents, family members, or guardians who help care for and support them. Is there anything (good or bad) you would like us to know about working with your parents, family members, or guardians?
 - a. How about with decision making?
 - b. How about with confidentiality and sharing information with them?
 - c. How about with their involvement in your services?

8. How do you know when you are supported by an agency and the people who work there?
 - a. What can agencies and the people who work there do to make you feel supported?
 - b. As a follow-up, what should they absolutely avoid doing?

We are almost done. The next group of questions is about the referral process or when one agency connects you with services at another agency.

9. What helpful things can agencies and the people who work there do to help you get connected with services you want or need?
 - a. What unhelpful things should they absolutely avoid doing?

10. What do agencies and the people who work there need to know about working with people with disabilities or are Deaf or HOH?

11. This is the final question. Is there a service or program ACI should offer that it is not already offering? What would you suggest?

Work Plan

Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. (the Collaborative) will utilize the following work plan to determine the timeframe at which the listening sessions with people served must take place and the deadlines for which primary objectives must be completed. The Middlesex County Center for Empowerment (the Center) will refer to this work plan with its clients and the Alliance Center for Independence (ACI) will refer to this work plan with its consumers.

November 2015	Recruit Participants
November 30 – December 4	Listening Sessions Begin
December 7 – 11, 2015	ACI Focus Groups
December 14 – 18, 2015	Center Focus Groups
December 21 – 23, 2015	Listening Sessions Wrap-Up
January 2016	Needs Assessment Report

Collaboration members will utilize the timeline (*Appendix E*) throughout the life of the grant to ensure they are on track with the needs assessment process. They will hold each other accountable to ensure their deadlines are met and if they find themselves requiring assistance, will contact the designated Vera Institute of Justice Technical Assistance specialist, Lisa Becker, and explore alternatives together.

Appendices

Appendix A

Listening Sessions with People Served

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Middlesex L.E.A.D.S.?

Founded in September 2014, Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. (L.E.A.D.S.) is a Middlesex County initiative to LISTEN, EDUCATE, ADVOCATE, AND DEMAND SAFETY for survivors of sexual violence with disabilities or are Deaf or hard of hearing (HOH). L.E.A.D.S. is comprised of the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment (the Center), a sexual violence program; and Alliance Center for Independence (ACI), a Center for Independent Living, both located in the city of Edison in Middlesex County, New Jersey. It aims to address the intersection of sexual violence and disability/Deaf community and hopes to increase the Center's and ACI's capacities to serve survivors and prevent victimization against persons with disabilities/Deaf. L.E.A.D.S. is currently conducting a needs assessment of the clients of the Center and consumers of ACI.

2. What is the purpose of the needs assessment?

The purpose of the needs assessment is to learn more about the needs of the people the Center and ACI serve and to learn more about the gaps in service for people with disabilities and the Deaf and HOH community. We are collecting information by conducting "listening sessions."

3. What is a "listening session?"

If you are a client of the Center or consumer of ACI, you can participate in a "listening session." A "listening session" is a focus group or an individual interview, where a L.E.A.D.S. member will ask questions and you or the

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group will respond. The responses will be recorded and used for data, but they will be confidential. It is called a “listening session” because it is an opportunity for L.E.A.D.S. members to listen to your needs.

4. How long will the listening session be?

The listening session will be 1.5-2 hours. You will be compensated for time and travel.

5. What kinds of questions will I be asked?

- Client of the Center – You will be asked about the experiences of survivors when they are seeking or receiving community services. L.E.A.D.S. wants to know more about your needs regarding safety, support, and comfort.
- Consumer of ACI – You will be asked about the experiences of people with disabilities OR the Deaf and HOH community. L.E.A.D.S. wants to know about your needs regarding access, support, and comfort.

6. What will be done with the information?

The information we collect from the listening sessions will help us make changes to the Center and ACI so services are more safe and accessible. Your participation and responses will be confidential and documents will be stored in a locked cabinet and locked office, but there are limits to confidentiality. The information will be shared with the Center staff, ACI staff, the Office on Violence Against Women (our funders) and the Vera Institute of Justice (our technical assistance provider). In addition, you will be required to sign or initial a receipt and inventory log for your stipend.

7. Will there be compensation for time and travel?

For time and travel, you will receive a \$20.00 stipend in the form of a gift card.

8. Will there be a penalty if I do not participate?

There will be no penalty if you do not participate in the needs assessment. You may choose to participate or not to participate and it is always acceptable to change your mind. Even during your listening session, you may change your mind and there will be zero consequences. L.E.A.D.S. will always respect your decision.

9. How can I participate?

If you are interested in participating in a focus group or interview, contact Monica at 732-816-3809 or monica.avisado@co.middlesex.nj.us. She will work with you to schedule your listening session and arrange accommodations. If you are Deaf or HOH, you may speak to Susan Bartose, ACI's Deaf and HOH Services Coordinator to arrange your listening session.

10. Where will I go for my listening session?

- Client of the Center – Your listening session will be at the Center regardless of whether it is a focus group or interview. You may also participate in a telephone interview, but you will need to pick up your stipend at the Center.
- Consumer of ACI – Your listening session will be at ACI regardless of whether it is a focus group or interview. You may also participate in a telephone interview, but you will need to pick up your stipend at ACI.

11. How can I arrange accommodations?

You can arrange accommodations when you schedule your listening session. The person scheduling you will ask you what accommodations you need for your listening session. You can also call or email the L.E.A.D.S. Project Director, Monica, at 732-816-3809 or monica.avisado@co.middlesex.nj.us to change or add to your requested accommodations. If you feel more comfortable doing so, you may speak to Carole Tonks or Luke Koppisch at ACI (or Jeanne Manchin or Gabrielle Gault at the Center). If you are Deaf or HOH, you may speak to Susan Bartose, ACI's Deaf and HOH Services Coordinator to request accommodations.

Appendix B

Focus Group/Interview RSVP Form

This form is due to the Project Director at two weeks prior to the scheduled focus group/interview.

Participant (1st name only): _____

Please check ONE of the following:

____ I wish to participate in a **focus group** on:
_____ at _____ at _____.
(date) (time) (location)

____ I wish to participate, in an **in-person/telephone (choose one) interview** on:
_____ at _____ at _____.
(date) (time) (location)

Telephone interview ONLY:

I will pick up my stipend before my interview on:
_____ at _____ at _____.
(date) (time) (location)

Meeting Reminder Options:

____ I would like a meeting reminder.

Best way to contact me:

____ Phone Is it okay to leave a message? Yes / No
____ Mail
____ Email

Contact Information: _____

Best time to contact me: _____

ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS:

Appendix C

Confidentiality

Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. (the Collaborative) honors the confidentiality policies of both the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment (the Center) and Alliance Center for Independence (ACI) and commits to developing and implementing new policies for the purpose of this partnership and its projects. The following plan highlights the Center's, ACI's, and the Collaborative's confidentiality policies.

Collaboration members commit to honoring the Center's following confidentiality policies:

- Center staff and Confidential Sexual Violence Advocates (Advocates) do not report sexual or Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) disclosures to law enforcement unless it meets New Jersey mandatory reporting requirements. Center services are confidential and available to survivors and loved ones whether or not incidents are reported.
- All interactions between clients and Center staff or Advocates are confidential.
- Client records are stored in either a locked cabinet or on password protected software.
- Client information can only be released to a third party with the client's written consent.
- Staff and Advocates can breach client confidentiality when a mandatory report is necessary. These instances include:
 - Child abuse or neglect
 - Abuse of vulnerable adult
 - Abuse of institutionalized elderly
 - Persons at risk of serious imminent harm to self
 - Persons at risk of serious imminent harm to others

- Advocates are available to support survivors and loved ones throughout the legal process. They are confidential and do not disclose client information to law enforcement or Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs).
- Only Center staff have access to client information. Staff may use each other for case consultations, sharing only the details which are necessary to ensure proper consultation.
- If necessary for the client's case and with written consent from the client, staff may consult a third party, such as a previous counselor or doctor, sharing only the details which are necessary to ensure proper consultation.
- Clients and legal guardians are required to sign a consent of services form on which it is explicitly stated that counselors will not breach client confidentiality at the guardian's request. If a client requests the presence of their guardian or other support person in counseling, the request will always be accommodated.

Collaboration members commit to honoring ACI's following confidentiality policies:

- ACI ensures that operations, activities and affairs of the organization and its consumers are kept confidential. Employees are to hold in complete confidence all information about consumers and their families.
- ACI employees are to hold in complete confidence all information obtained during the course of business concerning co-workers, which is confidential and medical information.
- ACI employees maintain a professional distance with consumers and their families. Discussions of personal, confidential information between agency staff and consumers and their families, which cross the boundary of professionalism, are prohibited.
- ACI employees will breach confidentiality to make a mandatory report for child abuse or neglect.

Collaboration members commit to adhering to each partner agency's confidentiality policies and the following Collaborative confidentiality policies moving forward:

- When making referrals to the Center, ACI staff will provide the interested consumer or family member with the Center's contact information, allowing the person to make the contact on their own when they are ready. This protocol empowers the person by allowing them to seek sexual violence services on their own time and at their own pace while protecting their privacy and right to confidentiality. If the person insists on ACI staff making the initial contact, then ACI staff will do so with the person's full consent.
- Center staff will follow the same protocol, providing interested clients with ACI's information and allowing them to contact the agency on their own when they are ready, unless they request staff assistance in doing so.
- All collaboration conversations are confidential, especially those pertaining to clients or consumers. If ever collaboration members are required to share confidential client or consumer information with a third party, collaboration members are only to share the information which is necessary to the third party's needs.
- All collaboration members are mandated reporters and will breach confidentiality for the purposes of reporting, sharing only the information necessary for the third party agency's investigation. Collaboration members understand the dangerous and disempowering impacts mandated reporting can have on survivors. They will do everything in their power to protect an adult survivor's confidentiality and right to self-determination when a report is mandated and take steps to prevent putting adult survivors in a position where they no longer have choice. See the Collaborative's full policies regarding mandated reporting.
- ACI collaboration members are not mandated reporters for abuse, neglect, or exploitation of adults and will take steps to protect adult survivors who disclose abuse. If adult survivors fit the criteria for a mandated report, but

do not want the abuse reported, their choices will be respected and appropriate services will be offered. If ACI collaboration members are unsure as to whether a report would be necessary for the survivor's safety or survival, they will consult Center staff, sharing the minimum amount of information necessary to ensure the client's confidentiality and a thorough consultation. The collaboration members will discuss the details of the case and agree on a course of action. See the Collaborative's mandated reporting policy regarding reporting consultations.

- Lastly, all clients and consumers will be informed and reminded throughout their involvement in the program of the Collaborative's confidentiality policies, mandated reporting requirements, and goals to protect the rights of all survivors. Survivors will be informed of their right to choose what they say and to whom they say it to.

Appendix D

Mandatory Reporting

Overview

Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. (the Collaborative) has five core members, all of whom are mandated reporters. Both the Middlesex County Center for Empowerment (the Center) and Alliance Center for Independence (ACI) staff are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. Center staff have additional responsibilities as they are licensed social workers and are required to report abuse of certain adult populations. The following section illustrates the legal requirements of collaboration members as mandated reporters and the Collaborative's protocol when a report is mandated.

Statutory Requirements

As residents of the State of New Jersey, all collaboration members are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. In addition, Monica Avisado, the Project Director (PD); Jeanne Manchin, the Center's Program Coordinator; and Gabrielle Gault, the Center's Counselor and Rape Victimization Prevention Program are social workers licensed by the New Jersey Board of Social Work Examiners and are responsible to report abuse of:

- Institutionalized elderly persons.
- Vulnerable adults in the community.

They are also required to contact the appropriate authorities and third-parties regarding:

- Persons at risk of causing serious imminent harm to self.
- Persons at risk of causing serious imminent harm to others.

New Jersey Revised Statute §9:6-8.10 indicates that all residents of the state of New Jersey are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. All Center

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and ACI staff and volunteers are responsible for contacting the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) at **1-877-652-2873** when they are aware of a case of child abuse or neglect. They are also responsible for informing their direct supervisor of the report.

According to New Jersey Statute §52:27G-7.1 (Appendix C), “any caretaker, social worker, physician, registered or licensed practical nurse or other professional, who, as a result of information obtained in the course of his employment, has reasonable cause to suspect or believe that an institutionalized elderly person is being or has been abused or exploited, shall report such information in a timely manner to the ombudsman or to the person designated by him to receive such support.” This law applies to adults who are at least 60 years of age, who reside in a public or private facility that is regulated or supervised by any government agency. Mandated reports by the Collaborative’s social workers will be made to the State of New Jersey Office of the Ombudsman for the Institutionalized Elderly at **609-943-3479**.

In addition, the Collaborative’s social workers are mandated to report abuse of vulnerable adults living in community settings. New Jersey Statute §52:27D-307 states that health care professionals, law enforcement, fire fighters, paramedics, and emergency medical technicians are required to report this to their County’s Adult Protective Services office. Social workers are included in the statute’s definition of “health care professionals” as professionals licensed by the New Jersey Board of Social Work Examiners. “Vulnerable adults” are specified to be those who are 18 years of age or older and have significant disabilities affecting their capacity to understand and make decisions, thus making them more vulnerable to abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Furthermore, “community setting” is defined as a private residence or non-institutionalized setting. If the Collaborative’s social workers become aware of the details of a situation with specific circumstances such as these, they are responsible for calling the Middlesex County Adult Protective Services provider, Middlesex Family and Children Services at **732-745-3635**.

Lastly, the Collaborative’s social workers are required to notify the proper authorities or third-parties in the event that a client appears to be at risk of causing serious imminent harm to him/herself or another. New Jersey Revised Statute §2A:62A-16 explains these persons should be hospitalized; law

enforcement should be notified; and the person at risk of being harmed and that person's guardian should be alerted immediately.

Middlesex L.E.A.D.S. Protocol

When collaboration members are mandated to report abuse, neglect, or exploitation, the following protocol will take place to ensure the client's or consumer's safety, knowledge of the laws, and involvement in the process:

- When a report is mandated, the program participant in question will be immediately notified of the situation. The reporter will attempt to speak with the person before contacting the appropriate third-party agency, so they may plan the conversation together.
- If the person is the survivor, the reporter and survivor will develop a personalized safety plan prior to or after contacting the appropriate third-party agency.
- The person's guardian will be notified depending on their type of guardianship. They can also be included in the reporting process, if they are not the perpetrator.
- The reporter will give the person and/or guardian the opportunity to report the abuse, neglect, or exploitation themselves by creating a time frame in which the person and/or guardian can contact the appropriate third-party agency independent from the reporter.
- When it is time to report, the reporter will provide the appropriate third-party agency with the minimum amount of information necessary for the agency to execute a proper investigation.

The following protocol will take place throughout the life of this project to protect the rights of survivors with disabilities to self-determination and confidentiality and enforce prevention of re-victimization, during and after a mandatory report is made:

- Program participants will be informed and reminded of the Collaborative’s mandated reporting requirements from the start of and throughout their involvement in the program, so all participants are aware of the possibility of a report and are not caught off guard when the need for a report is substantiated.
- Program participants will be informed and reminded of the Collaborative’s unique mandated reporting protocols from the start of and throughout their involvement in the program, so they are fully aware of their options prior to and at the moment that a report is being made.
- Throughout their involvement in the program, participants will be able to choose who they speak to (or speak near), especially as it relates to abuse, neglect, or exploitation. Program participants will always be informed and reminded of who in the Collaborative are mandated reporters and the responsibilities of which that title entails.
- Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) or residential program staff will not be included in confidential individual nor confidential group conversations, unless previously discussed and agreed upon by the program participant(s). The Collaborative recognizes the unique reporting requirements of workers of DDD and residential programs and believes that including them in confidential conversations, especially those pertaining to abuse, neglect, or exploitation, may compromise the safety and confidentiality of program participant(s).
- Program participants will be informed and reminded of their right to choose what they say to ACI and Center staff. They are not required to answer questions which make them feel uncomfortable and they are not required to speak about abuse, neglect, or exploitation. They are encouraged to withhold or terminate program participation when they want to, especially if they are feeling uncomfortable, upset, or disempowered.
- ACI collaboration members will take steps to protect adult consumers who disclose abuse. If adult survivors fit the criteria for a mandated report, but

do not want the abuse reported, their choices will be respected and an appropriate referral will be made.

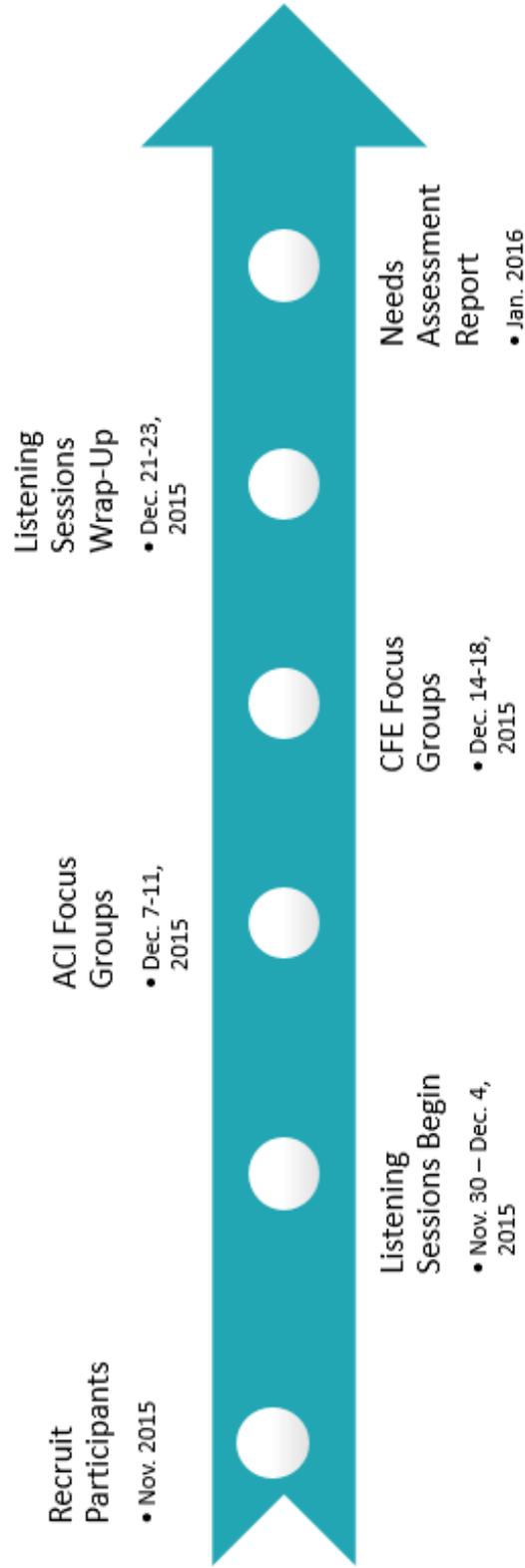
- ACI collaboration members will keep disclosures confidential, but may choose to seek consultation from Center staff if they are unsure as to whether or not a report would be crucial to the person's safety or survival. ACI staff will only share the minimum amount of information necessary to initiate a proper consultation from Center staff. The group will discuss the case carefully and mutually decide on a course of action, which may include reporting the case or offering the person services and resources. See the Collaborative's confidentiality policy regarding reporting consultations.

Appendix E

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Listening Sessions with People Served Timeline



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