

2016

Mohawk Valley Collaboration

Needs Assessment Plan



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I. Introduction

The Mohawk Valley Collaboration is comprised of two agencies, Resource Center for Independent Living and YWCA Mohawk Valley. Each organization has a presence in Herkimer and Oneida Counties of Central New York State. The Collaboration received funding in 2014.

RCIL provides a variety of services to supplement the core Independent Living Center services of Information and Referral; Individual and Systems Advocacy; Independent Living Skills; Peer Counseling, and Transition/Deinstitutionalization. RCIL's core services are available to individuals with disabilities and their families living in Oneida, Herkimer, Montgomery and surrounding counties of New York State, out of their centers in Utica, Herkimer and Amsterdam. RCIL provides Service Coordination, Community Support Service, Employment Services and Elderly Services in much of central and northern New York. Additionally, other programs have a service area which covers the eastern part of the state from the Canadian border to Long Island.

In addition to shelter, safe-dwelling and transitional housing in Oneida County, YWCA Mohawk Valley provides transitional housing for homeless survivors of domestic violence in a region spanning five counties. Residential services are only a portion of what the YWCA does to assist individuals of Mohawk Valley communities. Individuals also receive non-residential support for their experiences with domestic and sexual violence. YWCA staff provides counseling sessions, community outreach to local schools, colleges and service organizations, and advocacy at medical appointments, court and legal proceedings.

As of mid-September, 2015, the Collaboration has completed the collaboration charter and statement of focus, and is currently working on the needs assessment plan. The findings of the needs assessment will be utilized in the creation of the strategic plan, which in turn will be used to create sustainable change within RCIL and YWCA, and ultimately improve services to women with disabilities who are

experiencing domestic violence and sexual abuse in Herkimer and Oneida Counties.

The overall vision and mission of the Mohawk Valley Collaboration is to create sustainable, systemic change in the way we deliver services to survivors with disabilities, allowing the individual to make informed, self-directed decisions. We will develop and implement policies and procedures which are trauma-informed and person centered. We will foster collaboration between our organizations, and ensure that staff, volunteers and providers will be informed and knowledgeable, with access to resources and supports.

II. Needs Assessment Purpose

The overarching purpose of the Needs Assessment, as described by the Office on Violence Against Women is to:

- Provide practical information about services for survivors with disabilities, and how to improve them.
- Identify our selection of implementation activities.
- Increase buy-in and support for our collaboration's work from our respective organizations.

III. Needs Assessment Goals

- Identify current organizational structures, barriers, and gaps with regard to policies, procedures, and practices at RCIL and YWCA Mohawk Valley that address how to respond to, serve, and support survivors with disabilities.
- Identify what supports and limits exist in each organization's culture; to respond to and address staff's ability to provide a safe, accessible and responsive service delivery system for survivors with disabilities.

- Identify what works and what barriers exist in each organization to ensure accessibility, safety, and responsiveness through the lens of survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence and people with disabilities.

IV. Methods and Information Sources

a) Existing Data

The Mohawk Valley Collaboration is located in central New York State and funded by the Office on Violence Against Women. The goal of the Collaboration is to improve services for individuals with disabilities who are survivors of domestic and/or sexual abuse. The Collaboration has opted to direct our focus on a cross-disability population of victims/survivors who are experiencing/have experienced domestic violence or sexual abuse in Herkimer and Oneida Counties of central New York State. Both collaboration organizations are aware that individuals with disabilities experience abuse in far greater numbers than those of their peers who do not have disabilities. We are also learning about the complexities of working with each other's populations served, and acknowledge the importance of working together to improve our delivery of service.

In the spring of 2015, collaboration members completed Performance Indicators developed by the Vera Institute, to obtain a baseline of where each agency stood in regard to the provision of safe, accessible services, with policies that consider all of the aspects of service delivery to this population. As expected, both agencies achieved low scores, and some of the spring 2015 scores were the result of misinterpretations of the questions by both organizations. RCIL scored higher in some areas because of existing policies pertaining to violence in the workplace, and background checks of some agency staff. Additionally, between spring and fall/winter,

coincidentally, RCIL created a “safe space” for visitors to the agency, allowing for privacy and increased safety to those who come to the agency for information or access to services. The Performance Indicators were repeated in the winter of 2015, and compared to the spring scores. We will repeat the indicators every six months, and use our outcomes to assist in our organizations’ improvements during strategic planning.

RCIL	Basket/Theme 1 Responsibility % Achieved	Basket/Theme 2 Partnerships % Achieved	Basket/Theme 3 Policies % Achieved	Basket/Theme 4 Material Resources % Achieved	Basket/Theme 5 Human Resources % Achieved	Basket/Theme 6 DV Program Resources % Achieved	Basket/Theme 7 SV Program Resources % Achieved
Spring 2015	4.167%	37.500%	0.000%	25.000%	0.000%	0.000%	0.000%
Fall/Winter 2015	29.167%	45.833%	30.000%	50.000%	43.750%	25.000%	0.000%

RCIL Overall Scores	Commitment	Capacity	Total
% Achieved Winter 2015	35.294%	37.500%	36.290%

YWCA	Basket/Theme 1 Responsibility % Achieved	Basket/Theme 2 Partnerships % Achieved	Basket/Theme 3 Policies % Achieved	Basket/Theme 4 Material Resources % Achieved	Basket/Theme 5 Human Resources % Achieved	Basket/Theme 6 DV Program Resources % Achieved	Basket/Theme 7 SV Program Resources % Achieved
Spring 2015	16.667%	20.000%	28.571%	10.000%	30.000%	10.000%	8.333%
Fall/Winter 2015	12.5000%	35.000%	3.571%	30.000%	0.000%	10.000%	12.500%

YWCA Overall Scores	Commitment	Capacity	Total
% Achieved Fall/Winter 2015			
Non-Residential	15.625%	13.095%	14.189%
Residential	15.278%	13.095%	14.103%

b) New Data

Overview of Method:

The Mohawk Valley Collaboration will use listening sessions for gathering information from survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, and survivors with disabilities. The collaboration feels the listening session is the most efficient way to effectively engage groups of individuals in a short period of time. Additionally, we believe that a listening session will help to generate a diverse range of ideas and perspectives. However, if an individual wants to provide input, but doesn't feel comfortable in a group setting, we will arrange for a private interview with that individual.

During the needs assessment process, we will focus on both residential and non-residential services at the YWCA. However, given the size of RCIL, and the large number of programs offered, we have realized that it would be most effective to focus our change efforts on a few programs at RCIL, rather than trying to affect change across all programs, which is too large of an undertaking for this grant period. We have identified three programs that we would like to explore during the Needs Assessment. Based on what we learn during the Needs Assessment, we may decide to narrow our focus even more during strategic planning. We feel this narrower focus will allow for a greater impact for our populations served.

As such, we will talk to individuals from RCIL who are participants of the Social Model Day Program; the licensed home care agency, At Home Independent Care, and the Advocacy Department. We chose these programs with several thoughts in mind. RCIL's Information and Referral Specialist is part of the Advocacy Department, who every day talks to countless numbers of people with disabilities and their families who have questions about resources and services in the community. Additionally, the advocates at RCIL are often the gateway to life changing services, and have daily interaction with individuals with rich and diverse life experiences. When considering the potential for systemic change, and improvement of services, the Advocacy Department seemed an obvious option. We tried to keep impact potential in the forefront when considering the groups we would work with. All of the programs we chose include regular training and in-service components, making systemic change more feasible. Consumers from all of these programs are seen by staff either in their homes, or at our centers, and sometimes in the community, providing a diverse cross-section of life experiences from which to draw. Additionally, having received authorization from OVW to do so, our collaboration has the opportunity to talk to a group of survivors with disabilities, thereby increasing our impact potential.

Audience:

We believe that people with disabilities and survivors of abuse are the experts of their own experiences and have the power to represent their own needs and expectations. As a result, it is imperative to ask them directly what their personal expectations are when receiving services so that we may make our organizations more comfortable, accessible and disability aware. Because the strategic plan will ultimately influence the way services and supports are provided, it is imperative that we ask the individuals who will be most impacted by our systems changes.

By engaging people with a cross-section of disabilities, we hope to gain information about the following:

- What makes a service provider accessible and comfortable for people with disabilities;
- The best methods of outreach to alert people with disabilities about accessible and disability-informed services;
- The best practices for serving people with disabilities (including staff behavior, knowledge and skills);
- What service providers need to know about informed consent and what are the best practices for obtaining informed consent from people with disabilities.

The Collaboration will engage survivors of domestic and sexual abuse who receive supports from the YWCA Mohawk Valley. We believe domestic and sexual abuse survivors are the experts of their own experience and have the power to represent their own needs and expectations. As a result, it is imperative to ask them directly what their own personal experiences are when receiving services so that we may make our organizations safer and more trauma-informed. Because the strategic plan will ultimately influence the way services and supports are provided,

it is critical that we ask the individuals who will be most impacted by our systemic changes.

We will also engage a small group of survivors with disabilities. Both RCIL and YWCA have several program participants who have survived domestic/sexual violence, who have a disability and have previously disclosed both. We feel extremely fortunate to have these individuals willing to contribute to our work, and believe that as a result, will come away better informed.

Audience Type	Number of Potential Groups/Participants per Group	From What Organization
Domestic Violence Survivors Residential	1/8-12	YWCA Mohawk Valley
Domestic Violence Non-Residential	1/8-12	YWCA Mohawk Valley
Sexual Assault Survivors Non-Residential	1/5-7	YWCA Mohawk Valley
People with Disabilities Licensed Home Care	2/10	RCIL
People with Disabilities Adult Day Services	2/10	RCIL
People with Disabilities Advocacy	2/8-12	RCIL
Survivors with Disabilities	1/10	YWCA Mohawk Valley & RCIL

V. Listening Session/Interview Procedure

- Listening sessions and interviews will involve a moderated discussion using open-ended questions, unique for each audience, based on the goals of that particular group.
- Those conducting listening sessions and interviews will be members of the Mohawk Valley Collaboration and/or staff members from one or both organizations. The YWCA will use two listening session facilitators, both of whom are

collaboration members, for the listening sessions consisting of domestic and sexual violence survivors. There will be three groups, one comprised of domestic violence survivors receiving residential services, one comprised of sexual assault survivors receiving non-residential services, and another comprised of domestic violence survivors who receive non-residential services. Both YWCA collaboration members also facilitate support groups, but they will switch roles for this purpose. Sade Cardin, Case Manager works with YWCA's residential clients; she will facilitate the non-residential listening sessions. Denise Deliberto, Support Group Coordinator usually facilitates the non-residential groups, and will facilitate the residential listening session. Because both Denise and Sade regularly see their groups' members, we thought it may be easier to keep the groups on track if they are facilitated by staff with whom the participants are not so familiar. We want to avoid the potential for conversation to slip away from the listening session questions and into other areas if participants and staff are too familiar with one another. Sasha Rodriguez will facilitate the listening sessions made up of individuals with disabilities and a separate session consisting of survivors with disabilities.

- Each listening session will utilize a facilitator, a note-taker, a floater, and a counselor.
- A listing of local community resources will be available at all listening sessions, should any participant need information on where to obtain support (Appendix I).
- At the beginning of each listening session, the following will be explained:
 - Passive consent and voluntary participation
 - The purpose of the listening session and that they're being called upon as experts to assist us.

- Confidentiality and exceptions to confidentiality
- For all listening sessions, there will be the availability of an on-site counselor in case participants would like emotional support during or just following the listening session.

VI. Roles of those Conducting Listening Sessions and Interviews:

The following is a list of those conducting listening sessions and interviews, and a description of each role. There is one role being filled by a YWCA staff member who is not a collaborator; she will participate in a brief training (pg. 17) that includes:

- An overview of the grant and the needs assessment process;
- An overview of the role and expectations;
- Training on the specific requirements of the role;
- How to manage special circumstances: safety, confidentiality, reporting requirements and accommodations.

Facilitator

The facilitator of the listening sessions for individuals with disabilities and survivors with disabilities will be Sasha Rodriguez, an RCIL staff person who is also a Mohawk Valley Collaboration member with experience in facilitating groups, effectively working with people with all types of disabilities, and who is familiar with disability services. Both YWCA collaboration members also facilitate support groups, but they will switch roles for this purpose. Sade Cardin, Case Manager works with the residential participants; she will facilitate the non-residential listening session. Denise Deliberto, Support Group Coordinator usually facilitates the non-residential groups, and will facilitate the residential listening session.

The facilitator will:

- Welcome participants and introduce the other people conducting the meeting.

- Make sure everyone is comfortable.
- Review general housekeeping details, and will address safety and confidentiality issues using script created by the collaboration, prior to getting into the pre-created questions and prompts.
- Keep the discussion in line with the questions and will intervene quickly in cases of possible arguments or personal disclosures.
- Be responsible for insuring that people feel the environment is comfortable and safe, and understand that they can leave at any time. For all listening sessions, the facilitator will be responsible for keeping track of time.

Note Taker

The Collaboration's Project Coordinator will be the note taker at all listening sessions and interviews. The note taker will:

- Objectively take notes of the discussions
- Not participate in the discussion and will sit in a part of the room that will be the least distracting for participants when possible.
- Document what each person says without paraphrasing and will document when emotions such as frustration, anger, or happiness are expressed. The note taker may ask that something be repeated by raising her hand.
- Not link any information shared to specific participants and will exclude any identifying information other than which organization and type of group they are from.
- Be responsible for insuring that all written information and notes are kept in a safe and confidential place (see Confidentiality Considerations on page 18-19)
- At the end of each listening session/interview, the note taker will facilitate a debriefing session with the facilitators, jointly identifying themes, significant comments, and new information related to the goals of the needs assessment. If the counselor is interested in attending, she may also.
- Be responsible for translating all notes into "note summaries" which will be provided to team members.

Floater

The primary responsibilities of the floater are to assist with ensuring the facilitator and note taker have what they need to conduct the meeting, and to attend to any comfort and safety requests of the participants. For the YWCA listening sessions, Sasha Rodriguez will act as floater; for the RCIL sessions, Denise Deliberto and Sade Cardin will be the floaters for the groups they are not facilitating.

The floater will:

- Assist with food (if applicable) and room set-up and ensure that listening session participants feel safe and comfortable.
- If anyone wants to access the counselor or their own personal care attendant, the floater will escort them out of the room.
- Assist with keeping track of time when not assisting the individual participants.

Counselor

A counselor will be available at all listening sessions to provide emotional support either during or just after the group session. Margaret Batson, RCIL Collaboration member, with previous experience working with domestic violence survivors, will fill this role for the RCIL sessions and Kristie Cieslak, YWCA, not a collaboration member, but who has experience working with survivors with disabilities, will be available for the YWCA sessions. The counselor will:

- Be in a safe, separate, private, accessible space to insure confidentiality and safety.
- Have training in disability awareness and services, and/or trauma informed service and domestic violence/sexual violence services.
- Have lists of local resources.

RECRUITMENT PLAN

A) Recruitment Methods

The following is an explanation of the method which we will use to recruit each group we will be engaging, as well as who will primarily act as the recruiter for each group.

Collaboration members Denise and Sade from the YWCA Mohawk Valley will recruit domestic violence and sexual violence survivors from their respective support groups by informing members of the work of the collaboration and asking if any member is interested in assisting us. Those members who express interest will then meet with the recruiter. Collaboration members who are staff at RCIL will recruit individuals with disabilities. For the recruitment of licensed home care and adult day services participants, we will enlist the assistance of staff from those programs. We think that having people with whom the participants are comfortable and see on a regular basis will ensure that these individuals are more at ease with a process with which they're unfamiliar. The project coordinator and recruiter will be present as well, and will be introduced to the participants at that time. The same applies to individuals recruited from YWCA programs; Sade and Denise will recruit from their respective support groups, but will switch groups when it comes to the facilitation of the listening session. We will ask RCIL program directors (At Home Independent Care and Adult Day Services) to identify those program participants who would be good candidates to recruit, informing them of our need to hear their opinions and experiences. The program director will inform the project coordinator of those individuals who are interested in meeting with the recruiter. As for advocacy consumers, we will make initial contact by phone, after talking with the advocates to find out if they can recommend some of their consumers to approach for their assistance. Again, once the individual expresses interest, they will meet with the recruiter.

Participants for all RCIL listening sessions will be recruited by individual face to face conversations facilitated by Sasha Rodriguez, RCIL, Mohawk Valley Collaboration member. The recruitment materials will include an RSVP form

(Appendix II, III) that will list accommodation options, and invitees will be instructed to complete the form and return directly to the recruiter. We want to make sure that each potential participant is comfortable with what they're agreeing to, the recruiter will monitor the RSVP process carefully, and be prepared to provide clarity or additional information to anyone who requires it.

All invitees will be assured that participation is optional and the decision whether or not to participate will not impact their service provision in any way.

Although the mandated reporter status of Collaboration members is not yet clear, for the purposes of our needs assessment, we are assuming that all members are required to report to the NY State Justice Center any knowledge of current or recent abuse inflicted upon an individual with a disability; this will be clearly communicated to all potential participants during the recruitment process. Additionally, we will inform participants that everyone is required to report knowledge of child neglect or abuse.

To mitigate for safety concerns, we will only engage people with disabilities who are their own guardian and/or can consent to participate in the needs assessment process themselves. The recruiters will consult with program directors to find out beforehand who is and is not their own guardian.

YWCA plans to recruit participants from their residential and non-residential programs; the same method will be used for all groups. YWCA facilitates several weekly support groups. One week, participants will be recruited to participate in the listening session to be conducted the following week.

RCIL plans to recruit participants from three programs; the methods used will vary only slightly from program to program.

- **Adult Day Services:** RCIL's social model day program is attended by individuals of all ages, many of whom attend the program five days per week. Recruitment will take place on site and in person for the listening session which will also take place on site. The recruiter will meet only with those individuals who had previously expressed a desire to assist us. The

program's space includes a private room in which both recruitment and the listening session will occur.

- At Home Independent Care: RCIL's licensed home care agency provides service to multiple individuals in multiple apartment buildings throughout the community. As with the Adult Day Program, we will recruit only those individuals who had expressed the desire to assist us. Our plan for recruiting and listening will occur in the buildings' community rooms, which will be reserved in advance for these purposes. Recruiting and listening will not take place on the same day, and only those individuals who are interested in participating in the listening session will know when it will take place.
- Advocacy: RCIL's advocates will be asked for their assistance in identifying those consumers who would be interested in assisting us. The recruiter will collect the names from the advocates and make phone contact to arrange for the recruitment process of participants for the individuals with disabilities listening session. If individuals prefer to go through the process over the phone, that will be acceptable. The listening session will take place at RCIL's Columbia St., Utica location.
- Survivors with disabilities who participate in the YWCA support groups will be recruited in the manner described above for RCIL advocacy consumers. These individuals will be contacted by the recruiter after hearing from YWCA staff that they are interested in assisting us. Survivors with disabilities who receive/have received RCIL services will be recruited in a separate recruitment session at RCIL's Columbia St., Utica location, after being contacted initially by phone, as per the plan for individuals with disabilities.

B) Recruitment Process

The recruiter will follow the recruitment scripts (Appendix IV,V, VI) developed by the collaboration for the targeted population. The recruiter will:

- Alert the invitee of the collaboration members' mandated reporter status.

- Review the recruitment materials, including RSVP form and Frequently Asked Questions (Appendix VII)
- Discuss what compensation they will receive (see compensation pg. 18)
- Review date, time and location of the listening session.
- Review accommodation options (RSVP for complete list Appendix II,III)
- Confirm whether or not the individual is willing to participate.
- Provide the invitee with an RSVP form and request that they complete the form while the recruiter is present. The recruiter will go through each section of the RSVP form, explaining what is needed and ensuring that the invitees understand what they are being asked.
- Offer an individual interview for those who do not want to participate in a listening session. If the invitee prefers an individual interview, the recruiter will have a list of pre-selected date/time offerings that works best for them. The recruiter will ensure that this date and time is listed on the RSVP form.
- Answer any additional questions.

The recruiter(s) are to contact the Project Coordinator by phone or email with the responses of invitees. The recruiters will submit the RSVP forms to the Project Coordinator not later than one business day following the recruitment session.

C) Recruitment Tools

Recruiters will utilize the following tools during recruitment. For anyone needing assistance, the recruiter will read aloud all documents. However, given the safety risks inherent in sending recruitment materials home with people served, we will not allow any of the materials to leave the premises. We will ensure invitees have a clear understanding of expectations prior to their leaving the recruiter.

RSVP Form

All invitees will receive an RSVP form (Appendix II, III). The RSVP form will ask for the invitees first name only, if they want to participate in the needs assessment process, how they'd like to participate (listening session/optional interview), and

what accommodations they need. First names collected from the RSVP forms will be utilized to connect participants with their requested accommodations, only.

The Project Coordinator will be the designated point person for keeping track of all RSVP responses and accommodation requests for all listening sessions and interviews. The Project Coordinator will destroy all RSVP forms within one day following the listening session. The recruiter and Project Director will be the only individuals to view the names of participants. The participants' names will in no way be linked to any information shared during the listening session/interview.

Frequently Asked Questions Sheet

The FAQ sheet will answer general questions about what the listening session/interview will entail. Participants will be informed that we will take back the FAQ sheet prior to their leaving and the reasons why.

Meeting Card Reminders

We recognize that some participants may want a meeting reminder. **We will provide a meeting reminder to those participants from RCIL who request a written reminder** (Appendix VIII). YWCA participants meet regularly on a weekly basis; the week prior to the listening session, participants will be recruited and informed that the group will meet on the following week. There will be no need to issue reminders and the Collaboration members recognize this as ideal for this group of participants. The reminder will be the only written material that will leave with the RCIL participant who requests a written reminder. The card will be the size of a business card, and will only list the date and time of the meeting. There will be no phone number, meeting location, or information on RCIL or YWCA Mohawk Valley or information on the Project Coordinator included on the reminder.

D) Recruitment Training

All listening session recruiters are collaboration members, therefore a formal training is not required. Prior to the recruitment sessions, we will review the

topics below to make sure everyone participating is clear on what is involved and comfortable with their role.

Training will include:

- Important considerations around safety, confidentiality, reporting requirements and accessibility.
- Recruitment tools
- How to recruit a minimum/maximum number of participants for listening sessions and keep track of the limited number of each group.
- For recruiters of people with disabilities: how to screen out those that are not their own guardian.
- For recruiters of survivors with disabilities: how to screen out those currently in abusive situations.
- Keeping the conversation on track
- The importance of providing a clear understanding of RCIL and YWCA's Mandated Reporter status, so they are able to make an informed decision about whether or not disclose abuse.

E) Compensation

During all listening sessions, The Mohawk Valley Collaboration will provide light refreshments. The Project Coordinator will make accommodations for any food/drink restrictions and requirements as needed. Additionally, at the beginning of all listening sessions/interviews, during the check-in process the facilitator will provide each participant with a \$20 Visa gift card to cover their time and travel to the listening session/interview. Individuals will be told during recruitment and at the beginning of each listening session/interview that a gift card will be provided to them and that if they prefer not to take it with them, the Project Coordinator will keep it for them until they are ready to use it. Individuals will also be told that they can discontinue their participation at any time during the listening session/interview, without losing their gift card.

The note taker will count the number of participants and gift cards given out and keep a record of this aggregate data for potential auditing requirements. The facilitator will sign off that this number is correct after each listening session/interview as a witness and to ensure accuracy (Appendix XIV).

F) Consent Process

We will use a Passive Consent Process for all groups and interviews because it provides for stricter confidentiality of participants; prevents a paper trail, and eliminates time spent on administrative matters in the session itself. Passive consent will be clearly outlined in the facilitator's opening remarks (Appendix IX, X). Participants will be told they can leave or discontinue at any time. Once the remarks have been read, it will be assumed that all participants who choose to stay will be giving consent for their participation. Participants of listening sessions and interviews are agreeing to:

- Participate in a listening session/interview
- Have their comments anonymously recorded in writing
- Have their comments anonymously used in the needs assessment report
- Have their comments anonymously used for developing the collaboration's strategic plan and implementation activities.

G) Confidentiality Process

The following information outlines the specific considerations we have made to preserve confidentiality:

- Personally identifying information will only be collected during the RSVP process, when participants will be asked their first name for the purpose of linking them with their requested accommodations. The Project Coordinator will keep a list of any individuals who request accommodations and their first names. This information will be brought to each listening session/interview as needed, and will be destroyed within one day following the listening session/interview.

- The number of participants who attend listening sessions and interviews will be aggregated for the needs assessment report. No other RSVP information will be aggregated or shared.
- In listening sessions and interviews, participants will be asked not to provide any identifying information about themselves, specific staff, or program participants. See Appendix IV-VI, IX-X) for Recruitment and Facilitators' Opening Remarks.
- The recruiters who receive the RSVP forms will keep the RSVP forms in a sealed envelope while they have them. Immediately after each recruiting session, the recruiter will contact the Project Coordinator and arrange for the pick-up of RSVP forms within one day of the recruiting session.
- All RSVPs will be destroyed after each listening session/interview.
- There will be no adverse ramifications for employment/services due to any information shared.
- Listening session participants will be asked to keep confidential any information discussed or shared during the listening session with anyone who did not participate in their specific group. Additionally, participants will be asked to not discuss what is said in the group with other group participants once the session is over. However, because we cannot ensure that participants preserve confidentiality, participants will also be encouraged to be mindful of what they share.
- The note taker will not link personal identifying information to comments made during any listening sessions or interviews.
- The final needs assessment report will identify trends, barriers and strengths linked to what each organization and group as a whole stated during the needs assessment process in summary form. In order to make systemic changes at the collaborative organizations, it is imperative to identify strengths and needs to enrich the development of our strategic plan.
- Any information gathered through the needs assessment process will be kept by the Project Coordinator in a locked cabinet and stored in a

password-protected computer that can be accessed only by the Project Coordinator.

- In the event of an emergency, preventing the Project Coordinator from accessing these documents, the RCIL Program Director, who is also a collaboration team member, will also have access to the computer password/cabinet key where the documents are stored.
- The Project Coordinator will act as note taker and will provide collaboration members with summaries of the listening sessions and interviews. The note taker will be identifying themes, patterns, and issues that emerge utilizing the facilitator and floater following each listening session and interview to ensure all information is captured and consistent.
- The report will not be shared with anyone outside of the collaboration until it has been reviewed and approved by the collaboration, the Vera Institute of Justice, and the Office on Violence Against Women. The collaboration will determine who will see this information once it is approved, using our decision making process, but it certainly would not be shared outside of our organizations.
- All notes, records, and anything else in writing that is related to the needs assessment will be destroyed after the strategic plan has been approved by Office on Violence Against Women and RCIL and YWCA Mohawk Valley have signed off on it.

H) Mandatory Reporting

In New York State, the mandatory reporting requirements for abuse/neglect of adults with disabilities are established and overseen by the Justice Center for People with Special Needs. We acknowledge that the very notion of mandatory reporting is a very complex one, and the reporting requirements in New York State are unclear. During the development of our collaboration's charter, and again during the needs assessment process, we did our best to obtain a clear understanding of the requirement, as it pertains to us and our work. In so doing

we reached out the compliance department at RCIL, as well as individuals at the Justice Center, and still have questions about the requirement. Because of the lack of clarity of this requirement, for the purposes of our needs assessment, we are all mandated reporters. We expect that one result of our work will be a better understanding of the requirement and the opportunity to spark a systemic change if we find it is needed.

Listening session participants will be informed of the collaboration's interpretation of the Mandatory Reporting policy in the FAQ sheet and the listening session facilitator's opening comments for each session.

I) Accessibility Considerations

The Mohawk Valley Collaboration is committed to providing fully accessible listening sessions and/or interviews for all participants throughout the needs assessment process. To the best of our ability, accessibility will be ensured through the following:

- Accessible space will be used for all listening sessions/interviews. Listening sessions will take place in a space that is commonly used by the participants, so that they are already familiar with the surroundings.
- Reasonable accommodation will be provided to those participating. The RSVP form for listening sessions will include a checklist of available accommodations. The Project Coordinator will be responsible for overseeing requested accommodations.
- All participants will be asked not to wear perfume or scented lotions
- Recruiters and facilitators will be instructed to attend to the particular needs of each audience and speak in a manner that is accessible to all participants.
- All print materials and needs assessment tools will be developed using plain language and large font (14 pt. or greater).
- Participants who employ Personal Care Aides will not be permitted to have them in the room during the listening session. However, if a participant needs to have a PCA in the room, the collaboration will access a PCA from

At Home Independent Care (RCIL's licensed home care agency) for the listening session. If a participant requires their PCA be on the premises, but not in the room, the Floater will escort participants requesting their PCA out of the room and to that individual, who will be permitted on the premises, outside of the listening session area.

J) Safety Considerations

Physical and psychological safety is a primary consideration of the Mohawk Valley Collaboration. We understand that safety is defined differently for each individual. Every effort will be made to protect the safety of individuals participating in the needs assessment process. The collaboration will also make every effort to develop tools and processes to maximize everyone's safety.

During recruitment, and at the beginning of each listening session/interview, the following will be made clear to participants:

- Questions are intended to elicit perspectives about what makes services safe and accessible. Questions are not intended to gather personal experiences related to violence, abuse or neglect.
- If the discussion of services or service access brings up memories or intense feelings and/or if a participant appears likely to disclose, a counselor will be available at each listening session for survivors and people with disabilities to provide emotional support for anyone needing it either during the session or just following the session. A private, accessible space will be made available to insure confidentiality and safety. Participants will be told that the counselor is available and where the counselor will be located, or they can request an escort to the counselor.
- Lists of local resources will be made available to anyone requesting one.
- Anyone can discontinue at any time if they feel uncomfortable.
- No one has to answer any question that makes him or her feel uncomfortable.
- There will be no consequence to employment/services for anyone who chooses to participate or not participate in the needs assessment process.

- No personal identifying information will be linked to those participating in the group, other than to provide them with their requested accommodations.
- We will offer optional individual interviews to anyone who would prefer to participate outside of a group setting.
- Anyone has the option for their gift card to be kept by the Project Coordinator until they are ready to use it.
- We will be taking back all forms at the end of the recruitment process.
- We will take first names only of all participants on the RSVP form for the purpose of connecting individuals with their requested accommodations and will not be linked to any individually identifying information.
- Any print materials and signage at listening session/interview meeting sites will not list Mohawk Valley Collaboration or use language regarding the intersection of domestic and/or sexual violence and disabilities.
- An individual's own Personal Care aide will not be permitted in the room during listening sessions/interviews. However, we will make special accommodations for anyone requiring the assistance of a PCA (see accessibility pg. 22).
- Sites selected for listening sessions/interviews will be where people feel safe. The sites selected are ones in which participants already have an established routine, so their presence would not be out of the ordinary or bring attention.
- Additionally, we have taken special considerations when selecting the groups we will be engaging, including the following:
 - We are only recruiting people with disabilities who are their own guardians, so as not to create a situation where they would have to disclose to another their participation and potentially put them at risk.
 - YWCA and RCIL will not recruit anyone who we know to be currently in a potentially vulnerable or dangerous situation.

K) Work Plan Outline

ACTIVITY	TIMEFRAME
Collaboration Building/Charter Development	February 2015-August 2015
Narrowing the Focus/Defining Scope	August 2015-September 2015
Needs Assessment Plan Development	September 2015-January 2016
Conducting Needs Assessment	January 2016-March 2016
Create Needs Assessment Report	March 2016-April 2016
Strategic Plan Development	April 2016 – June 2016
Implementation	June 2016-September 2017

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APPENDIX

- I. Community Resources
- II. RCIL RSVP
- III. YWCA RSVP
- IV. Recruitment Script for Individuals with Disabilities
- V. Recruitment Script for Survivors
- VI. Recruitment Script for Survivors with Disabilities
- VII. FAQ Sheet
- VIII. RCIL Reminder Cards
- IX. YWCA Facilitator Opening Remarks
- X. RCIL Facilitator Opening Remarks
- XI. Facilitator Script Individuals with Disabilities
- XII. Facilitator Script Survivors
- XIII. Facilitator Script for Survivors with Disabilities
- XIV. Listening Session Compensation Tracker
- XV. Checklists

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