



Connections

Needs Assessment Plan

**Empowering people with disabilities
who have experienced
domestic violence and/or sexual assault.**

This project is supported by Grant No 2010-FW-AX-K003 awarded by the Office of Violence Against Women, US Department of Justice.

domestic abuse
intervention programs



Home of The Duluth Model
Social Change to End Violence Against Women



AICHO

American Indian Community
Housing Organization



The Arc
Northland



Safe Haven Shelter
for Battered Women

Table of Contents:

<u>Section 1 Introduction</u>	3
<u>Section 2 Vision, Mission,</u>	4
<u>Section 3 Purpose & Needs Assessment Goals</u>	5
<u>Section 4 Information Sources</u>	6
<u>Section 5 Methodology</u>	7
<u>Audience</u>	
<u>Partner Agency Participation</u>	
<u>Facilitation Team</u>	
<u>Recruitment</u>	
<u>Consent</u>	
<u>Incentives</u>	
<u>Confidentiality</u>	
<u>Mandated Reporting</u>	
<u>Section 6 Safety and Access Considerations</u>	23
<u>Section 7 Training Plan</u>	25
<u>Section 8 Work Plan</u>	27
<u>APPENDIX: Needs Assessment Tools</u>	28

Connections: Empowering people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

Section 1. Introduction:

Connections is a collaboration between:

American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO)

Access North, Center for Independent Living of Northeastern Minnesota

Arc Northland

Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP)

PAVSA (Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault)

Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women (Safe Haven)

These six partner agencies have committed to a long-term multi-disciplinary collaboration. Through this collaboration, each of the partner agencies will gain a greater understanding of the mission, programming, staffing, culture, abilities and limitations of each of the other organizations. This process will assist us to increase safety and accessibility for people with disabilities who have experienced violence.

Historically, agencies who serve people with disabilities and domestic violence and sexual assault agencies have not been connected in our local community. Additional complex barriers exist for a person with a disability and collaboration among agencies is needed to address these barriers. We acknowledge that this gap in service exists and possess a shared commitment to address the issues at hand. Since 2004, several efforts have been started to address the needs of people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault in the Duluth community. However, due to a lack of dedicated funding, we have been unable to build a consistent level of services and the collaboration has been relatively informal. We have made small changes, only to lose momentum when staff changed or lack of funding impacted partner agencies.

This three year project, funded by the Office of Violence against Women (OVW), allows our partner agencies to fully commit the time and energy to develop a true collaboration to result in effective, lasting and sustainable change to increase safe accessible services for people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault (DV/SA).

Between October 2010 and September 2013 the collaborative will go through two phases. We are currently in the planning and development phase and have developed a collaborative charter, which is the foundation for our collaboration. We then developed our needs assessment tools and plan which outlines how we will gather information from partner agencies across all levels to determine our existing strengths and challenges in creating a seamless approval to providing safe and accessible services to people with disabilities. Based on the findings of the needs assessment we will develop a strategic plan that will shape the ultimate goals for this project to help **Connections** and each individual partner agency best serve people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Once we have a strong strategic plan in place, we will move into implementation, the second phase of the project, which will give us the opportunity to carry out the goals of the strategic plan.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Section 2. Vision and Mission:

Through our collaboration charter development we developed a shared vision and mission to guide our project over the three year grant project, and as we continue to create sustainable change in the future.

We envision an informed community where people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault are empowered by a system of inclusive, accessible, and self-determined services, resulting in equal access to safety and justice.

The mission of Connections is to join disability, domestic violence, and sexual assault programs to create a seamless approach to providing safe accessible services to people with disabilities. We will:

- Listen to and validate the experiences of people with disabilities.
- Foster relationships among partners and fully utilize their resources and expertise.
- Remove physical, programmatic, communication, and attitudinal barriers to services.
- Enhance and promote safe and responsive services.

- Adopt policies and practices to instill safety and accessibility into each partner agency.
- Increase knowledge of domestic violence, sexual assault, and disability issues and their intersections among staff, people with disabilities, and the community to create long term social change.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Section 3. Purpose and Needs Assessment Goals:

The purpose of developing a needs assessment plan with specific goals and tools is to gather valuable input from all levels of each partner agency which will guide our work throughout development of a strategic plan and implementation within and among our partner agencies. The following four goals will assist our collaboration in identifying what is currently working and what can be improved upon within and among our partner agencies to best serve people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault for long lasting sustainability.

Goal 1:

Identify the level of knowledge of each partner agency staff that enhances or limits a safe and supportive environment for people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

Goal 2:

Identify current agency structures and gaps within partner agencies with regard to policies, procedures, protocols, and trainings that address the needs of people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

Goal 3:

Identify programmatic, attitudinal, and physical barriers to accessibility, and methods to enhance capacity of each individual agency.

Goal 4:

Identify what formal and informal relationships exist between partner agencies, barriers that limit these relationships, and opportunities to grow and sustain the collaboration.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Section 4. Information Sources:

Existing Information:

Currently there is limited data or research that addresses the needs of people with disabilities who are victims of DV/SA in our local region. However, we do have baseline data available through partner agencies as well as findings from a community needs assessment completed in 2009 that provides us with input from people with disabilities and survivors that will be included in our needs assessment report.

In 2008 DAIP was a sub-grantee of Safe Place in Austin, Texas through a two year grant project awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime in which a community needs assessment and strategic plan was developed to address the needs of people with disabilities who are victims of crime.

The community needs assessment included a series of five focus groups in 2009 with 25 Duluth women with disabilities, coupled with survey responses from 32 local victim service and disability service providers. The assessment revealed significant key issues: cross training, communication, and collaboration between agencies is needed; training for professionals is needed on many victim service/disabilities topics; education and outreach is needed for people with disabilities; women who participated in the focus groups expressed fear they would not be believed by systems, that available system responses are not worth the effort required, that they experienced stigmatization regarding their disabilities and fear of retaliation for reporting violence or abuse. We plan to include the findings from this community needs assessment into our needs assessment report because the information gathered through five focus groups conducted with clients provided us great insight into how we can increase safety and accessibility for the people we serve. Due to the number of clients involved in the 2009 focus groups, and the existing information we have gathered, we are able to ask more specific questions to a fewer number of people through this needs assessment process.

Statistics were gathered quarterly through DAIP, PAVSA, Safe Haven, Disability Law Center, and Access North to identify the number of people with disabilities that had reported abuse and/or violence. Statistics gathered from Safe Haven Shelter show that 138 (56%) out of 244 unduplicated women who were shelter residents in 2009 self-identified as having one or more disabilities. In addition 357 (57%) of the women who used legal advocacy services through Safe Haven's Family Justice Center (FJC) responded that they had at least one disability when asked. This baseline data will be helpful in moving forward with our collaborative work as we identify ways to make our agencies more accessible, safe, and welcoming.

Although we have begun to learn about the barriers faced locally over the last several years, additional data is still needed to inform the work of our collaboration and form the foundation for our strategic plan. Therefore we will be conducting a thorough needs assessment within all levels of our partner agencies.

New Information:

The data collected through this needs assessment process will give us insight into how each agency is currently supporting people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault and areas we can improve upon. We will gather data through focus groups, individual interviews, and the limited use of surveys to guide the development of our strategic plan. This information will assist us in determining system changes to make the services of all partner agencies more responsive, accessible, and safe.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Section 5. Methodology:

We plan to engage all levels of our six partner agencies including clients, volunteers, direct service staff, supervisory staff, executive directors, and board members. This section of the plan will outline the methods we plan to use to collect the information and the unique benefits of gathering input from each group of people.

We will primarily use focus groups for our needs assessment process because this is the most efficient way to engage larger groups of people in a limited time frame while getting a range of diverse perspectives. In addition, we will utilize a survey method to receive feedback from each partner agency's board of directors and an individual interview for each executive director and supervisory staff. We will provide an option for individual interviews for any client, staff, or volunteer who wishes to be involved but is not comfortable with doing so in a group setting.

Audience:

Clients

People with disabilities and survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault are the experts of their own experience and are best suited to guide the work we do. It is essential to receive their input since they will be most impacted by any changes we make through this collaboration. People with disabilities who are their own guardian will be selected and individually contacted in person or by phone by Access North and Arc Northland recruiters. Domestic Violence Survivors will be selected from past/present clients of AICHO, DAIP, and Safe Haven and Sexual Assault Survivors will be selected from past/present clients of PAVSA and all survivors will be individually contacted by the designated recruiter for each agency. There will be two scheduled focus groups for people with disabilities, two scheduled focus groups for survivors of domestic violence, and one scheduled focus group for survivors of sexual assault. Individual interviews will be offered and available as needed.

Direct Service Staff

Due to our number of partners and wide range of programs between agencies we will focus on reaching a specific population of each agency staff who has the most direct contact with clients. This will allow us to develop relevant focus group questions for each audience. Direct service staff is a vital audience to include in the needs assessment process as they have direct experience in planning, developing, and delivering services to people with disabilities and survivors. They also know firsthand what does and does not work well within the current service delivery systems, either through their own experience as service providers or through the experiences of the individuals they work with.

Work Group Members

We believe this is an important group of people to gather input from, as the work group members are often more intimately involved with the work at the intersection of disability and abuse, and therefore have valuable insight to include within our needs assessment. These staff members will not participate in the direct staff focus groups within their agencies, since other staff may have the impression that that the work group representative is the one person with the most knowledge or experience to respond to the questions and/or the work group member may not speak up to add input if concerned about not giving other staff the opportunity. As we develop this plan, we've decided a group discussion would be the best fit, as arranging individual interviews with all 4 people would take additional work and time, and would involve the same people as facilitator and note taker.

The collaboration work group members consist of a representative from each partner agency. The representatives from AICHO, Arc Northland, PAVSA, and the project coordinator from Access North, will schedule one weekly group meeting time during the needs assessment process to have a self-facilitated focused discussion to include their unique experiences at the intersection of disability and abuse within our needs assessment report using Appendix U. This work group also includes 2 executive directors (DAIP and Safe Haven), who will have in an individual interview due to their role so they will not need to take part in this focused group meeting.

Supervisory Staff

Supervisors from each agency will primarily receive individual interviews, however for Access North, three supervisory staff who are in similar roles within different service areas and programs will be asked the same questions and participate in a small focus group. This group has program oversight and management, authority over decisions made regarding direct client support, and is most directly involved with direct supervision and the training process for all staff.

Executive Directors

Each partner agency director will have an individual interview, to allow an opportunity to share their experiences honestly and openly in a confidential setting and to best accommodate their schedules. Executive Directors have

overall organizational oversight, a more global perspective on the community, and decision making power needed during strategic planning and implementation.

Board of Directors

Each board of directors will be given a survey to gather their experiences which will be presented at a regularly scheduled board meeting. Boards of Directors at all agencies are critical audiences to include in the needs assessment process as they are responsible for supporting services and programs. Also, they have considerable authority over policy and procedure implementation and fiscal matters. We feel they should not only be aware of Connections' mission, goals, and accomplishments, but their input might also inform our project's direction in valuable ways, and their buy-in is essential for the future work of this project.

Partner Agency Participation:

Overall, our partner agencies are of similar size and structure. All are non-profit organizations, with a board of directors, executive director, and approximately 10-30 regular employees. The following gives an overview of which staff will be invited to participate in focus groups and/or interviews and the reasons they are selected. Due to a variety of factors including number of partners, range in staff responsibilities, and maintaining a manageable time period for conducting focus groups and interviews, we have decided to narrow the scope of who we will engage. This section gives an overview of each partner agency's size and structure and provides the staff categories that will take part in the needs assessment.

Access North Duluth Office has 10 regular employees while the agency as a whole has approximately 35 regular employees. Independent Living Specialists and PCA Choice Qualified Professionals provide direct services and support to consumers and will be included in the Access North staff focus group. Access North serves 10 counties of Northeastern Minnesota, and the Duluth Office is a branch location. The executive director and board of directors are in our main office in Hibbing. In order to look at Access North's policies and procedures, it's essential to have input from the leadership of the agency as a whole. The executive director will have an individual interview, and the Duluth and Hibbing IL directors, along with the

PCA Choice director will take part in a small focus group, since they supervise the direct service staff and would be implementing any policy or procedure changes that result from our strategic plan.

AICHO has 15 regular employees. Case managers and shelter staff will take part in a focus group, as they all provide direct service. The Shelter Coordinator will have an individual interview.

Arc Northland has 10 regular employees. The family support coordinators, housing advocate, and PCA program staff will all be included in a staff focus group. The PCA Coordinator will have an individual interview.

DAIP has 22 regular staff within four program areas. A focus group including staff that work most directly with survivors will include a DVRT System Advocate, Native Woman's Resource Advocate, Visitation Center (VC) Advocate, VC support staff, VC Services Coordinator, VC Transition Program Coordinator, and Men's Program Monitor. Supervisors including the Coordinated Community Response Coordinator, VC Team Leader, National Training Project Team Leader, and Administrative Team Leader will be offered an individual interview.

PAVSA has 8 regular staff including advocates, coordinators, and a community educator, all supervised by the executive director and would all be included within the PAVSA staff focus group. PAVSA has approximately 15 active volunteer advocates and will offer a small group of volunteer advocates an opportunity to participate in a focus group, which we expect could give valuable information that is unique from paid advocate's experiences, and inform policy and training changes for the volunteer advocacy program. PAVSA also has a SANE (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners) Program; consisting of nurses who are specially trained in collection of forensic evidence, medical/legal interviewing and documentation, and expert witness testimony. The three participating nurses have been with the program since its inception and have a unique perspective in providing a service to sexual assault survivors. SANE nurses will participate in a separate focus group.

Safe Haven has 25 regular staff. Safe Haven’s staff focus group will consist of women’s advocates, legal advocates, children’s advocates, self-sufficiency coordinator, follow-up advocate, volunteer coordinator, community educator. The Shelter supervisor will have an individual interview. Staff and volunteers of the family justice center (FJC), which is a program within Safe Haven are included here as well. There are approximately 12 regular volunteers between the shelter and FJC and the recruiter will offer an interview to 2-3 individuals. In addition Safe Haven employs a financial coordinator, cook, receptionist, maintenance, and administrative assistant who will not take part in focus groups at this time because their limited experiences with residents would not be meaningfully different than direct service staff.

The following chart provides a quick overview of the different groups of people who will be involved in focus groups or interviews as detailed above and gives us a snapshot of the expected number of participants and time commitment.

Focus Groups	# of participants	Length of Group
People with Disabilities	12-25	2 hrs.
Survivors of DV	12-25	2 hrs.
Survivors of SA	6-10	2 hrs.
Arc Northland Staff	3-8	2 hrs.
Access North Staff	3-8	2 hrs.
Access North Supervisors	2-4	2 hrs.
AICHO Staff	3-8	2 hrs.
DAIP Staff	3-8	2 hrs.
PAVSA Staff	3-8	2 hrs.
PAVSA SANE	3	2 hrs.
PAVSA Volunteers	2-5	2 hrs.
Safe Haven Staff	3-8	2 hrs.
Work Group members	4	2 hrs.
Individual Interviews	# of Interviews	Length of time
Agency Directors	6	1 hr.
Supervisory Staff	5-7	1 hr.
Volunteers SHS/FJC	1-3	1 hr.

Surveys	# of Surveys	Length of time
----------------	---------------------	-----------------------

(6) Board of Directors	45-75	.5 hrs.
------------------------	-------	---------

Facilitation Team:

The facilitation team will consist of a facilitator, note taker, and in some cases a support person as a third member. This team approach will be used for all focus groups and interviews. Those conducting focus groups and interviews will not be from the same organization that is being engaged. The facilitation team will be made up of primarily of work group members who have been involved with the development of the plan and will be responsible for reading through Needs Assessment Plan and Tools as a refresher before beginning focus groups and interviews. A formal training will not take place, however an information session will be held at a regularly scheduled work group meeting. Any back-up facilitator team members from partner agencies will be selected by the work group after approval of needs assessment. These staff will be required to read the plan and tools and be present at the informational session and will be offered additional support or training as requested by the Project Coordinator before we begin to conduct the needs assessment.

Roles and Responsibilities: The following is a description of each role of those conducting focus groups and interviews.

The **facilitator** will be an employee of a partner agency and be aware of Connections’ vision, mission, and needs assessment goals, and will have experience in interviewing techniques and group facilitation.

The facilitator will welcome participants and introduce the other people conducting the meeting. The facilitator will make sure everyone is comfortable, review general housekeeping details, and address safety and confidentiality issues using the script (Appendix K-M), prior to asking the questions and prompts. The facilitator will keep the discussion focused on the questions and will intervene quickly in cases of possible arguments or personal disclosures. The facilitator will be responsible for ensuring that people feel the environment is comfortable and safe, and understand that

they can leave at any time. For all focus groups and interviews, the facilitator will be responsible for keeping track of the time.

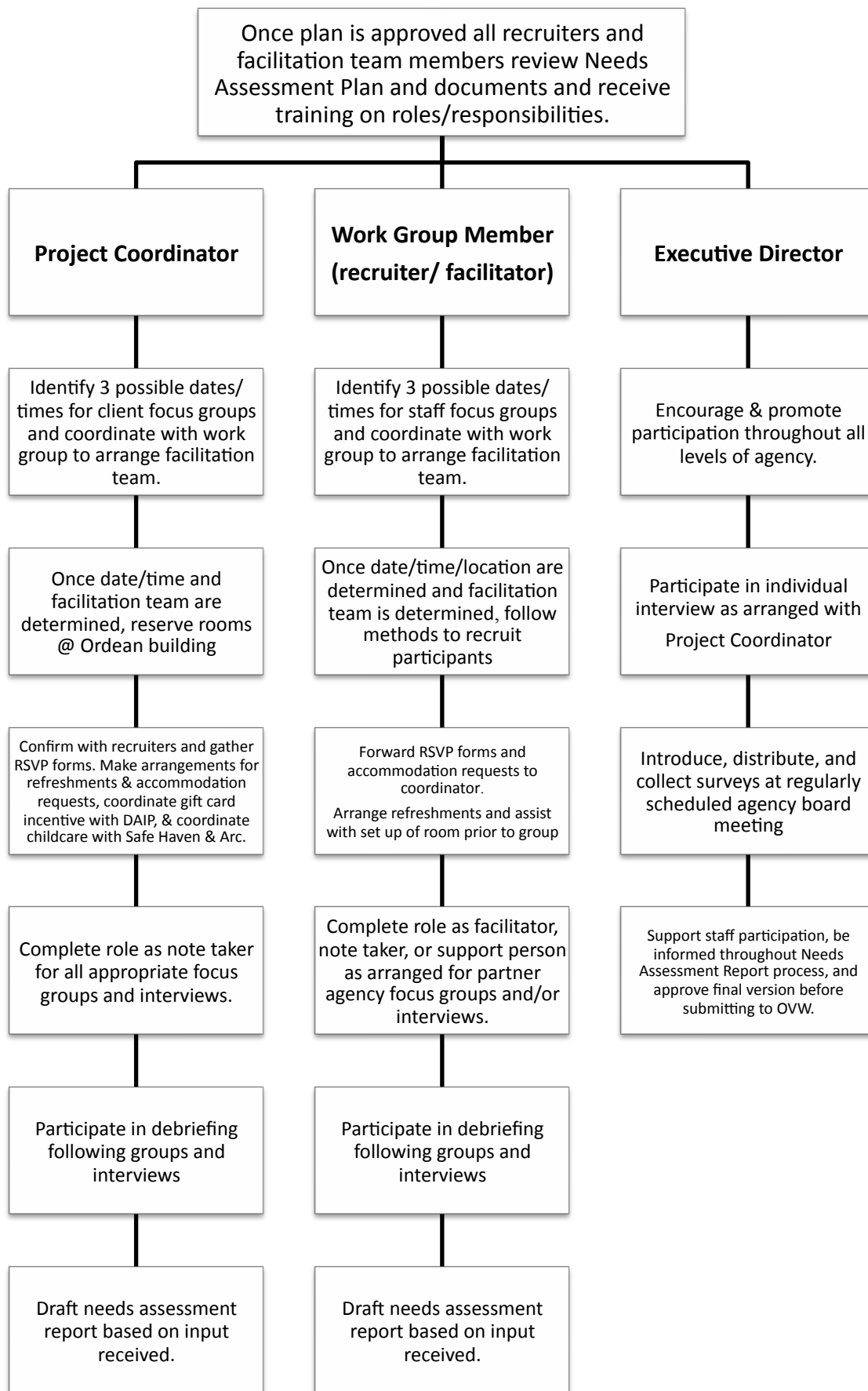
The **note taker** will be responsible for objectively taking notes of the discussion and will not participate in the discussion. The note taker will make every attempt to sit in a part of the room that will be the least distracting for participants when possible. The notes will be taken by hand for the client focus groups/interviews and notes will be typed on a laptop for staff/volunteer focus groups/interviews. The note taker will 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 said be repeated by raising her hand. The note taker will not be linking any information shared to specific participants and will exclude any identifying information other than which agency and type of group they are from (for example, "Staff from DAIP said..."). The note taker will be responsible for assuring that all written information and notes are kept in a safe and confidential place. The project coordinator will be the note taker for as many groups/interviews as possible for consistency and ease of using documented notes to develop needs assessment report. Focus groups/ interviews attended by staff of Access North will not have the project coordinator in the room, and an alternate work group member will be assigned as note taker for these groups.

At the end of each focus group/interview, the facilitator, note taker, support staff if applicable, and project coordinator will conduct a debriefing session using the debriefing form (Appendix CC) to jointly identify significant comments and information related to the goals of the needs assessment. The note taker will be responsible for translating all notes into "note summaries," which will be provided to collaboration team members. In the event of technical difficulties, the notes can be taken by hand and later transcribed onto the computer.

Support Staff (present only in focus groups of people with disabilities, survivors, and disability agency direct service staff) will assist with ensuring the facilitator and note taker have what they need to conduct the meeting, and attend to any comfort and safety requests of participants. They will assist with food and room set-up and will escort them out of the room to

access their PCA staff if requested. The support staff will be available to provide emotional support and/or resources either during or just following the focus group. In addition to having this support available to people with disabilities and survivors, we have decided to have a support staff person available for Disability agency partner's direct service staff who could potentially be triggered by discussing questions related to abuse. There will be a private accessible space for participants to ensure confidentiality and safety. The support staff will have training in crisis management as well as training regarding confidentiality, mandatory reporting, and local resources. We feel confident that our DV/SA agency partners have a built-in support structure within their agencies to receive support and resources if needed, and therefore will not have a support staff for these focus groups.

The following chart illustrates the process we intend to follow as we conduct our needs assessment to help keep each role clear and coordinate a large number of groups and interviews as smoothly as possible.



Recruitment:

The following is an explanation for the method we will use to recruit each group of people we will be engaging through the needs assessment and who will primarily act as the recruiter for each group. We have created a detailed recruitment plan to best prepare to fully inform potential participants and to be proactive in addressing possible safety and access concerns.

For People with Disabilities and Survivors of DV/SA:

Focus group participants will be included regardless of type of disability or their experience of violence or abuse in an effort to recruit a broad range of participants. We will focus on gathering input from people with disabilities, survivors of domestic violence, and survivors of sexual assault separately to gather the diverse input needed. We will not intentionally recruit any person who is known to have a disability and is a survivor to decrease the chance of a mandated report being required. As a safety precaution, public recruitment formats (i.e. flyers, posters, etc.) will not be used to recruit participants. Access North and Arc Northland will recruit people with disabilities in person or by phone through the script found in Appendix B. AICHO, DAIP, and Safe Haven will recruit survivors of domestic violence and PAVSA will recruit survivors of sexual assault also in person or by phone.

We will be recruiting people with disabilities who are their own guardian to participate in these focus groups. The possibility that a guardian could be an abuser or aware of abuse and the risk to each person's safety outweighs the benefit of additional input for our needs assessment. Additionally, maintaining confidentiality would not be possible due to the consent process required when a guardian is involved. We don't anticipate this limitation creating a gap in information, as we will be hearing from people with a range of disabilities through the focus group and individual interviews.

Each partner agency has designated their work group member as the recruiter, who will make personal contact, provide information about the process, and provide assistance as needed with reading the FAQs and completing the RSVP form. The recruiter will inform the project coordinator as participants register in order to monitor group size. Recruiters will review

the passive consent process and confidentiality briefly; and both will be addressed in greater detail within the opening remarks script during the focus group. People with disabilities and survivors will also be informed they will be given a \$15 gift card for Super One Foods to thank them for their participation. Each recruiter will notify the project coordinator by phone or email within one business day after recruit agrees to participate for client focus groups since we will have more than one recruiter for each of these groups. This will allow us to keep accurate track of the number of participants registered each day to not exceed 10 per group. Each recruiter will then submit all RSVP forms to the Project Coordinator within 3 days of receipt to make arrangements for any accommodation requests in advance. We will make every attempt to have RSVP forms submitted at least one week in advance of the scheduled focus group or interview to provide adequate time to arrange accommodations.

For All Staff

The project coordinator will email an overview of the needs assessment to each Executive Director (Appendix A). This message will be forwarded on to agency staff, with an added note to encourage and support participation in the needs assessment. Full collaboration members will share their enthusiasm to gather valuable insight and use this opportunity to create sustainable change within our partner agencies and our collaboration. Staff will be informed that involvement is optional, both focus groups and interviews will be conducted during regular business hours whenever possible and refreshments will be provided in focus groups, and

Direct Service Staff will be recruited for the focus groups by the designated recruiter from their agency. Recruitment will take place either individually or during a regular staff meeting. The recruitment script is found in Appendix C and will also have interested staff complete an RSVP form (Appendix E) to provide an opportunity to request accommodations and arrange for additional follow up prior to the focus group as needed. A list of frequently asked questions and responses will also be provided at this time, as detailed in the recruitment script. The location, date, and time of the focus group will be set by the recruiter in advance of recruitment, with a confirmed facilitator and note taker in place. Volunteers will follow the same process as direct staff.

Supervisory staff will be recruited for individual interviews or a focus group by their agency's recruiter and provided recruitment materials.

Executive directors are active collaboration members and involved with the development of needs assessment materials, participant recruitment, and will commit to an individual interview. The exception to this is Access North's executive director, who is in the main office in Hibbing, MN. Due to the travel distance and time restraints the Duluth Office Director is a full collaboration member and is involved with the needs assessment development. The Executive Director will participate in an individual interview and is able to stay informed through regular updates and contact with the project coordinator and the Duluth Office Director. Although each Executive Director has already committed to participate in the needs assessment and therefore doesn't need to be formally recruited, the project coordinator will be contacting each Director to review process and purpose of the interview and make arrangements to schedule their individual interview.

A survey will be given to each agency's *board of directors* at a regularly scheduled Board meeting. Prior to the board meeting, a recruitment email with an overview of the project (Appendix E) will be provided to all potential participants by the Executive Director.

Consent Process:

This section will explain how and when consent will be addressed for each category of participants and is clearly written out within the recruitment scripts and facilitation scripts found in the appendix. We believe throughout our collaborative work and conducting needs assessment process, that informed consent is a critical responsibility we have to our clients.

For individuals with disabilities and survivors we will be using a passive consent process to respect confidentiality and limit documentation of participants' identities. Passive consent will be addressed during recruitment, and clearly outlined in the facilitator's opening remarks of the focus group. Participants will give their consent, by choosing to stay after the facilitator describes the activities that will be taking place and informing

them of their right to end participation and leave at any time which will not affect any services they may receive from partner agencies. This is clearly identified in the facilitator's script and includes the purpose of the focus group, mandatory reporting, confidentiality, and recording/storing of data.

By staying, participants are agreeing to have their comments anonymously recorded in writing and utilized in the needs assessment report for the development of the collaborations strategic plan.

Agency staff and volunteers who take part in a focus group and/or interview will be informed that participation is optional, and by attending and participating they are giving passive consent.

Incentives:

During focus groups for people with disabilities and survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault, light refreshments will be provided and accommodations for any food/drink requirements will be arranged as needed. Each agency's staff recruiter will arrange refreshments for their agency's staff and volunteer focus groups, the refreshments for all staff groups will be provided with outside funds by each partner agency. The Project Coordinator will plan for refreshments for the client focus groups (including people with disabilities and survivor focus group) which will be purchased with grant funds.

Following the opening remarks of the client focus groups/interviews, each individual participant will be provided a \$15 gift card to Super One Foods which is a grocery store with multiple locations throughout Duluth and easily accessible by public transportation. The gift card incentives will be purchased with OVW Disability Grant funds. Individuals will be informed of this incentive during recruitment and at the beginning of each focus group/interview and given the option to have their recruiter hold on to it for them if they so choose. Individuals will also be told they can discontinue their participation at any time during the focus group/interview, without losing their gift card.

The note taker will keep track of number of participants and gift cards distributed with record of date given. The facilitator will also initial this

number is correct as a witness and to ensure accuracy for auditing purposes.

Confidentiality:

Connections is highly committed to maintaining confidentiality for all participants. This section of the plan provides an overview of the steps we will take to protect privacy of clients and staff. Every effort will be made to keep all information confidential; however, we recognize there are some limits due to mandated reporting guidelines as explained within the Mandated Reporting section of this plan. Whenever possible no identifying information will be used or associated with any specific statement made. Individuals who participate in a focus group will be asked to keep all other participants' identities and the information discussed confidential. Participants will have the choice of sharing their first name or using an alias. Names will not be written in notes from focus groups or interviews; however, any completed forms or written notes will be stored in a locked file cabinet at Access North and made available only to those Connections collaborative members who are actively involved with the needs assessment process and the development of the strategic plan. After the strategic plan is completed and approved, all notes and/or recordings will be destroyed to protect confidentiality.

Connections partner agencies understand and respect that the purpose of this grant is to create lasting systems change and comments made during interviews, focus groups, or collaboration discussions may identify barriers in existing services. These comments are not intended to be offensive in any way and will not be associated with any one person.

Mandated Reporting:

We have developed our needs assessment plan, and the focus group/interview questions to minimize the likelihood of disclosures. The intent of the needs assessment is not to gain information on specific experiences of domestic violence and/or sexual assault; nevertheless this does not mean that disclosures will not occur. According to our partner agencies current policies; AICHO, PAVSA, and Safe Haven Staff are not considered mandated reporters of vulnerable adult abuse. Access North, Arc Northland, DAIP staff are considered mandated reporters of vulnerable

adult abuse. We understand that in most cases, a mandated reporter will be in the room during focus groups and interviews, and will inform all participants in advance in each recruiter's written script, and during the facilitator's script of opening remarks for the group or interview as a reminder. The mandated reporter will follow their own agency's policy for reporting regardless of the location of the group or interview. The mandated reporter will make every attempt to inform and involve the person who disclosed, if doing so does not compromise their safety. In addition the focus group facilitator, note taker, or support staff will also provide resources to access support they may need. We agree that if there is a focus group or individual interview in which a mandated reporter is not present, no report would be required to be made to the common entry point.

Steps taken to limit disclosures:

- Facilitator stating the expectations and purpose of needs assessment focus groups/interviews, including a reminder that the purpose is not to discuss any personal stories of known abuse.
- Participants needing available resources or to speak with someone about their personal experiences will be referred to the support staff.
- Reviewing the reporting requirements for Mandatory Reporting within state law and agency policy any time a mandated reporter will be present during a focus group/interview.
- We will not ask any questions regarding instances of abuse.
- In the event that a disclosure is made that needs to be reported, the reporter will wait until following the group or interview to address this.

In Minnesota, any professional engaged in social services, education, care of vulnerable adults, or occupation regulated under a health related licensing board are mandated to report maltreatment of a vulnerable adult. A vulnerable adult is classified as a person age 18 or older who is a resident of a facility OR receives services from a licensed home care provider or personal care assistance OR regardless of receiving services, possesses a physical, mental, or emotional disability that impairs the person's ability to provide adequately for his/her own care without assistance AND has impaired ability to protect him/herself from maltreatment.

In Minnesota, suspected abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation are forms of maltreatment that must be reported to the local county's common entry point, which will make an assessment and involve appropriate agencies to investigate. If a mandated reporter has reason to believe maltreatment of a vulnerable adult has occurred, they must make a report within 24 hours with information related to identity of vulnerable adult and abuser if possible, nature of maltreatment, any evidence, name and contact of caller, and time/date/location of incident.

Section 6: Safety and Access Considerations:

Safety Considerations:

Connections collaboration members agree that safety of our participants is a priority throughout this process. The following considerations will be made through this process to do all that is possible to keep participants safe before, during, and after participation in our needs assessment.

- Each agency's recruiter will be reaching out to potential participants, without any public/community notices or posting of fliers.
- The focus groups for people with disabilities will be held in a neutral and safe location, not identified as a DV/SA advocacy program, shelter, or a disability advocacy program. The meeting rooms are located in a building that houses several non-profit agencies and used for many community meetings, in addition to being on a main street in well lit area with a separate room next door available for child care if needed.
- The focus groups for domestic violence survivors will be held at the Family Justice Center and DAIP; both locations have protocols and practices in place to keep survivors safe.
- The focus groups for sexual assault survivors will be held at the Building for Women, where PAVSA is located, which has protocols and practices in place to keep survivors safe.
- No outside observers will be allowed to be present in the room during a focus group or individual interview. Should a person require assistance, reasonable accommodations can be requested, for

example: to have their PCA present on-site in another room to have access to their services when needed.

- A participant's decision whether or not to take part in any of the needs assessment activities will not affect any services he/she receives or may receive in the future.
- Participants will be free to discontinue their participation at any time during the process.
- For survivors, people with disabilities, and disability agency direct service staff: if the discussion triggers memories or intense discomfort, an experienced support staff will be available in a safe accessible space separate from the focus group meeting room.
- We will offer the option of an individual interview for anyone who doesn't feel comfortable participating in a group setting.
- We will collect any printed information provided at the end of each focus group/interview to prevent any outside person finding this information that may lead them to knowing about their participation in the focus group.
- Focus groups will be conducted during daylight hours whenever possible in order to maximize safety. Following the group, staff will be made available to escort participants to their means of transportation. Any potential participants who are unable to participate during the day due to work, school, or other reasons may request an individual interview at a later time which may be conducted late afternoon or early evening as arranged with facilitator.

Access Considerations:

Connections is committed to providing fully accessible focus groups and interviews for all staff, volunteers, and clients. The following considerations will be made through this process to do all that is possible to ensure access for participation.

- All staff and volunteer focus groups will be held at their individual agency location, which they are familiar with and will provide easy access to attend.

- All client focus groups will be held at an accessible location which is readily accessible on a bus line, and easy to get to within the building, with appropriate space for participants to move around the room.
- Reasonable accommodations will be provided to all who are participating. The RSVP form for focus groups and interviews will include a request for reasonable accommodations.
- Each agency's recruiter will be responsible for gathering RSVP forms with reasonable accommodation requests and submitting them to the project coordinator no later than one week prior to scheduled focus group or interview whenever possible to provide adequate time for the project coordinator to arrange requested accommodations.
- Recruiters, facilitators, and note takers will follow scripts found in the appendix and use clear communication avoiding the use of acronyms and legal terminology. The same guidelines (avoiding acronyms and legal terminology) apply for printed materials which will be in 14pt Arial font and can be made available in alternative formats if requested.
- Since we will not be allowing PCAs to sit in the same room during the focus group or interview, the support staff person will be available to escort a participant to their PCA if needed.

As an additional consideration for safety and access for people with disabilities and survivors who sign up to attend a focus group, child care and transportation will be provided. Childcare will be coordinated with Arc and/or Safe Haven volunteers at no cost. Transportation will be arranged with assistance from project coordinator and funded with DAIP outside funds. See Appendix F.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Section 7. Training Plan

We have determined there is not a need for formal training materials. Recruiters and facilitation team members are collaboration members who are intimately involved with the development of the needs assessment plan

and tools. The necessary training components are covered by reviewing the Needs Assessment Plan and tools which will be reviewed during an informational meeting prior to conducting the needs assessment.

We will identify a few additional staff within partner agencies after approval of our needs assessment plan that would be available as needed to assist with recruitment and fill in as a replacement facilitation team member. These staff will be expected to read the needs assessment plan and tools in full, attend an informational meeting with the work group and be given an opportunity to ask any questions or receive any additional training as requested.

Expectations for Recruiters and Facilitation Team Members

- Possessing a general understanding of the grant project mission, vision and needs assessment goals.
- Recognizing important considerations regarding safety, accessibility and confidentiality as described in the plan.
- Having a clear understanding of the forms, scripts, and their roles and responsibilities as identified in the needs assessment plan.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)

Section 8. Work Plan:

This timeline guides the key activities of the collaboration and has been revised as our work has progressed to reflect new target dates for all upcoming deliverables. We also acknowledge that each product must be approved by OVW before we are able to advance to our next initiative and that OVW has a 45 day grace period in reviewing and approving each submission.

Key Activity	Timeframe
Collaboration receives OVW Disability grant	October 2010
Attend New Grantee Orientation and Project Directors Meeting	November 2010
Collaboration Charter Retreat/ Vera Site Visit	February 2011
Collaboration Building and Charter Development	February 2011 - June 2011
Deliverable: Collaboration Charter Submitted to OVW	June 2011
Attend Vera/OVW All Site Meeting/Training and Project Directors Meeting	June 2011
Development of needs assessment plan and tools	July 2011- November 2011
Deliverable: Submit needs assessment plan and tools to OVW	December 2011
Conduct Needs Assessment	March 2012 - April 2012
Attend Vera/OVW All site Meeting/Training	March 2012
Write Needs assessment Report	April 2012 -May 2012
Deliverable: Submit Needs Assessment Report to OVW	May 2012
Development of Strategic Plan	May 2012 - June 2012
Deliverable: Submit Strategic Plan to OVW	June 2012
Implement Strategic Plan	July 2012 - September 2013

Connections Needs Assessment Appendix.

A Note about the Appendix: When we implement our needs assessment and use these documents, we will customize the documents for each audience.

<u>Appendix A: Needs Assessment Overview Email Template</u>	29
<u>Appendix B: Recruitment Script People with Disabilities & Survivors</u>	31
<u>Appendix C: Recruitment Script: Direct Service Staff & Volunteers</u>	37
<u>Appendix D: Recruitment Email Template: Individual Interviews</u>	43
<u>Appendix E: Recruitment Email Template: Board Members</u>	45
<u>Appendix F: RSVP Form</u>	47
<u>Appendix G: Meeting Reminder Card</u>	50
<u>Appendix H: “FAQs” People with Disabilities & Survivors</u>	51
<u>Appendix I: “FAQs” Agency Staff, Supervisors, Executive Directors</u>	56
<u>Appendix J: “FAQs” Board Members</u>	61
<u>Appendix K: Facilitator Script: People with Disabilities & Survivors</u>	66
<u>Appendix L: Facilitator Script: Agency Staff and Volunteers</u>	71
<u>Appendix M: Facilitator Scripts: Supervisory Staff, Executive Directors</u>	76
<u>Appendix N: Facilitator Scripts: Board Members</u>	77
<u>Appendix O: Questions for People with Disabilities</u>	81
<u>Appendix P: Questions for Survivors of DV</u>	83
<u>Appendix Q: Questions for Survivors of SA</u>	84
<u>Appendix R: Questions for Disability Direct Service Staff</u>	85
<u>Appendix S: Questions for DV/SA Direct Service Staff</u>	87
<u>Appendix T: Questions for SANE Staff</u>	89
<u>Appendix U : Questions for Work Group Members</u>	91
<u>Appendix V: Questions for Supervisory Staff- Victim Service</u>	93
<u>Appendix W: Questions for Supervisory Staff- Disability Services</u>	95
<u>Appendix X: Questions for Executive Directors- Victim Services</u>	97
<u>Appendix Y: Questions for Executive Directors- Disability Service</u>	99
<u>Appendix Z: Questions for Board Members</u>	101
<u>Appendix AA: Terms as Defined by Connections</u>	104
<u>Appendix BB: List of Local Resources</u>	106
<u>Appendix CC: Debriefing form</u>	107

Appendix A. Needs Assessment Overview Email Template:

The following email will be sent by the Project Coordinator and will be forwarded on to agency staff with a note of support to encourage participation.

Hello Connections Partner Agencies!

The purpose of this email is to inform all levels of our partner agencies of the needs assessment process for Connections, a collaborative project between American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO), Access North Center for Independent living (Access North), Arc Northland, Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP), PAVSA and Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women (Safe Haven). Thank you for your support of this project and for sharing this update with your staff.

My name is Erin Fontaine and I am the Project Coordinator for Connections. As you may know, Connections received a three year grant from the U.S. Office on Violence Against Women to improve services and responses in Duluth for people with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault. This grant provides a unique opportunity for our six organizations to develop a strong and sustainable partnership.

We are now in the second year of the grant and beginning a comprehensive needs assessment to find out what each of the six partners are currently doing well and what we could do better to create safe, accessible, and responsive services for survivors with disabilities.

We are asking a number of different groups of people to participate in the needs assessment, through either a focus group or interview. This will include board members, executive directors, supervisors, and direct service staff members of all partner agencies, in addition to domestic violence and sexual assault victims/survivors, and people with disabilities. The findings from the needs assessment will help us develop the goals for our strategic plan, which will provide the foundation for the service improvements for all partner organizations.

I will follow up with each Executive Director to arrange for an individual interview to gather your valuable input. In addition, each partner agency has assigned a recruiter, who is actively involved with this collaboration, and they will be contacting selected supervisors, direct service staff/advocates, volunteers, and clients to participate in this process. Recruiters are as follows:

Access North: Erin Fontaine, Project Coordinator
AICHO: Jaime Miller, Housing Project Coordinator
Arc Northland: Laura Birnbaum-Singler, Director of Advocacy
DAIP: Linda Riddle, Executive Director
PAVSA: Susan Terry, Criminal Justice Liaison/Victim Advocate
Safe Haven: Susan Utech, Executive Director

Staff will be informed that involvement is optional, refreshments will be provided, and will be conducted during regular business hours. More details will be provided at the time of recruitment.

In the meantime please feel free to contact me or your agency recruiter if you have any questions. Thank you in advance for your support of this collaborative project!

Sincerely,

Erin Fontaine
Connections Project Coordinator
Access North Center for Independent Living
118 E. Superior St.
Duluth, MN 55802
erint@accessnorth.net
218-625-1400 ext. 208

Appendix B. Recruitment Script: People with Disabilities and Survivors

Recruiter Introduction: Hi, my name is (name) and I work for (agency name) which is a **Connections** partner agency.

Overview of the Needs Assessment:

I wanted to take a few moments today to ask for your help with a collaborative grant project. **Connections** is a collaboration between: AICHO, Access North, Arc Northland, DAIP, PAVSA, and Safe Haven

All partner agencies will be conducting needs assessments and we're asking a number of different groups of people to participate, either by being in a focus group or by doing an individual interview. The people we're including in the needs assessment are:

- People with Disabilities who receive services from:
 - Access North or Arc Northland
- Survivors of Domestic Violence or Sexual Assault who are clients of:
 - Safe Haven, PAVSA, DAIP or AICHO
- Board Members, Executive Directors, Supervisors, Direct Service Staff, and Volunteers from all partner agencies.

Once the needs assessment is complete, we will be writing a report on the findings that will be shared with collaboration members, Vera Institute of Justice, our technical assistance provider, and the Office on Violence Against Women, funding provider. After that, we will be developing a strategic plan and implementing strategies at all organizations to make our services safer and more accessible for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault who have disabilities.

Focus Group Invitation:

So my purpose is to invite you to be part of the needs assessment, by participating in a focus group. A focus group is when a group of people get together and answer some questions. The focus group will include a minimum of 3 people and a maximum of 10 people, and will be a group of [people with disabilities OR survivors of domestic violence OR survivors of sexual assault]

We hope to learn what all organizations in the collaborative can do to improve how we serve people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. We will not be asking about any specific experience of violence that you or someone you know has been through. Although you or someone you know may have experienced some kind of abuse in the past, we will not be talking about that during this group.

For People with Disabilities:

We want to learn from you what it is like as a person with a disability to access services in your community. Our goal is to make services at all the collaborative organizations safer, more welcoming, and more accessible. Your input as a person with a disability will be critical in helping us do that. The purpose of meeting with you will be to find out what you think is helpful to you when you're trying to get services in the community.

For survivors:

The purpose of our focus group with you as a survivor will be to find out what you think is helpful to you when you're trying to get services in the community. We're specifically interested in your experience of seeking services or support in your community for survivors. Our goal is to make services at all partner organizations safer, more welcoming, and more accessible. Your input as a survivor will be critical in helping us do that.

For all:

Is this something you think you'd like to be involved with? Would you like me to continue?

If yes, please continue with details.

If no, thank them for their time.

Focus Group / Interview Process Details

A few things you should know are:

- Focus groups will last approximately 2 hours and have 3-10 people present; it's possible you may know someone in the group.
- Being in a focus group is completely up to you.
- If you come to a focus group, we assume you are agreeing to participate. You can change your mind and decide not to participate.

- If you choose to be in a group, you can answer the questions or not answer them.
- There are no consequences to any services you receive whether you choose to be in the group or not.
- We will make every attempt to protect your privacy and confidentiality and any notes from our meeting will be kept private and your responses will not be attached to your name.
- All of the information we collect will be used for a written report.
- You will only be identified by the group you are participating in. For example: “Survivor said...” or “Person with Disability said...”
- Once the project is finished, the notes will be destroyed.

Exceptions to confidentiality: To ensure that you have all of the information about participating in this group, it’s important for you to know that there are some exceptions to confidentiality. While the questions we will be asking you are not intended to prompt any personal or professional stories of violence or abuse, we want you to have all of the information necessary to make an informed decision about participating.

Mandatory Reporting: The facilitator and/or note taker will be a Mandated Reporter of Vulnerable Adult Abuse or maltreatment in the state of Minnesota. A mandated reporter must report maltreatment of a vulnerable adult (*a person age 18 or older who is a resident of a facility OR receives services from a licensed home care provider or personal care assistance OR regardless of receiving services, possesses a physical, mental, or emotional disability that impairs the person’s ability to provide adequately for his/her own care without assistance AND has impaired ability to protect him/herself from maltreatment*) to the local common entry point.

We have developed our needs assessment plan, and the focus group/interview questions to minimize the likelihood of disclosures. The intent of the needs assessment is not to gain information on specific experiences of domestic violence and/or sexual assault; nevertheless this does not mean that disclosures will not occur and if they do, the mandated

reporter will follow their agency's policy for reporting abuse or maltreatment of a vulnerable adult.

If you decide you want to report any abuse or maltreatment and you want help with making a report there will be a support staff that you can talk to in private to help you.

People with disabilities:

Also, if you have your own personal care assistant or other staff person, they may bring you to the focus group, but they can't be in the room with you during the group to protect the privacy of everyone participating in the group. They can wait for you outside of the group and be available for you at any time if you need help outside the room.

Safety

As I said before, being in this focus group is completely up to you. If you feel that being in the focus group will make you feel unsafe or uncomfortable, you can choose not to participate. During the focus group, we will not be asking anyone to share any personal stories they may have of abuse or assault. Again, the focus will be on your experience in trying to get help and services in the community.

If you'd like to take part but don't want to be in a group, you can be in a one-on-one interview instead. We also want you to know that if you would like to talk to someone for emotional support or for any other reason during or after the group, a support staff will be available in a private area.

FAQ

I am now going to hand you information regarding our process. I will collect these papers after we're finished here today and will have them available at the time of the focus group (or interview) as well. The first sheet is the Frequently Asked Questions provides you with answers to many questions you may have. However, if you have any other questions you can ask me today, or you are welcome to contact the Project Coordinator. I'll give you her contact information in a moment. Feel free to take a few minutes to read through this. (*Provide time for review and questions.*)

Registration Again, participation is totally voluntary and you can choose to be in a focus group or individual interview. Do you know if you want to participate? (y/n)

If yes, continue.

If no, thank them for their time.

Thank you. Now I'd like to assist you in getting signed up. Please note, we will ask for your first name on this RSVP form. This form will go directly to the Project Coordinator for the grant, who will keep it locked up at all times. This way we can know you're coming and can make sure you get what you need when you arrive at the meeting. The RSVP forms will be shredded before the meeting, and there will be no record that you were there in order to maintain your confidentiality

If they agree to participate in a focus group: Indicate this on the RSVP form and move to next section.

If they prefer a one-on-one interview: Go over the list of optional dates/times of individual interviews and indicate this on the RSVP form.

If no: Go to concluding remarks.

Meeting Reminder Options (Refer to Meeting Reminder Card)

Please let me know if you would like a reminder for the meeting. If you'd like, you can take this card with you as a reminder of the date/time of the meeting and the Project Coordinator's first name and phone number in case you think of any questions or need to reschedule. The Project Coordinator's voicemail is confidential in case you want to leave a message. Would you like to take a card? If yes: *Complete the date, time, and location directly on the card before handing it to them.*

Accommodations (Review Accommodations section on the RSVP form.)

Please let me know if you need any accommodations to participate, and the project coordinator will work with you to make these arrangements. Just a reminder, your own personal care assistant cannot be in the room with you, but can wait outside.

Incentives

For survivors and people with disabilities only:

As a thank you for participating, we will give you a \$15 gift card to Super One at the beginning of the meeting. If you'd rather not take it with you at that time, a staff person can hold on to it for you and you can make arrangements to pick it up. Light refreshments will be offered during the meeting.

Conclusion

Thank you so much for your time.

Appendix C. Recruitment Script: Agency Direct Service Staff (Including SANE) and Volunteers

Recruiter Introduction:

Hi, my name is (name) and I work for (agency name) which is a **Connections** partner agency.

Overview of the Needs Assessment:

I wanted to take a few moments today to ask for your help with a collaborative grant project. **Connections** is a collaboration between: AICHO, Access North, Arc Northland, DAIP, PAVSA, and Safe Haven

(Recruiter may ask if the person would like a brief overview of any or all of the partner agencies at this time or if they're already familiar with these agencies).

The American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO) offers one of only 26 culturally specific domestic violence shelters nationwide, and a variety of programming including supportive housing to families, individuals and youth who have experienced long-term homelessness, transitional housing to survivors of domestic violence, and financial assistance to people in a housing crisis.

Access North, Center for Independent Living of Northeastern MN provides services to people of all ages with any disability to pursue their goals and have the same choices as all people. We assist with independent living skills, advocacy, peer and group support, and information and referral.

Arc Northland provides advocacy, support and education to people with all disabilities and their families, from birth to end of life.

Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP) coordinates the Duluth criminal justice response to domestic violence including a men's non-violence program, support and education for partners, supervised visits, and exchanges and conducts national trainings based on the domestic violence intervention work we do here in Duluth.

PAVSA (Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault) is dedicated to supporting victims, educating the community, and advocating for change. Our core values include free and accessible victim-centered and victim-driven services. All of our services, including a 24-hour crisis line, hospital advocacy, SANE program, counseling, legal services, and court advocacy are free and confidential for our clients.

Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women provides comprehensive services to victims of domestic violence including a twenty-four hour crisis line, emergency shelter for battered women and their children, legal advocacy, and education and support groups.

These six partner agencies have committed to a long-term multi-disciplinary collaboration. Through this collaboration, each of the partner agencies will gain a greater understanding of the mission, programming, staffing, culture, abilities and limitations of each of the other organizations. This process will assist us to increase safety and accessibility for people with disabilities who have experienced abuse.

All partner agencies will be conducting needs assessments and we're asking a number of different groups of people to participate, either by being in a focus group or by doing an individual interview. The people we're including in the needs assessment are:

- Board members
- Executive directors and supervisory staff
- Direct Service Staff members of all agencies and Volunteers
- People with disabilities who receive services from:
 - Access North or Arc Northland
- Domestic violence or sexual assault survivors who are clients of:
 - Safe Haven, PAVSA, DAIP or AICHO

Once the needs assessment is complete, we will be writing a report on the findings that will be shared with collaboration members, Vera, who provides our technical assistance, and the Office on Violence Against Women, who provides our funding. After that, we will be developing a strategic plan and then implementing strategies at all organizations to make our services safer

and more accessible for survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault with disabilities.

Focus Group Invitation:

So the purpose is to invite you to be part of the needs assessment, by participating in a focus group of your coworkers.

We hope to learn what all agencies in the collaborative can do to improve how we serve people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. We will not be asking about any specific experience you may have had personally.

We want to learn what all agencies are currently doing, and what we can do better in how we respond to survivors with disabilities. We're asking for your help in identifying what you feel is working well and what we could do better for clients with disabilities that have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Our goal is to make our services safer, more welcoming, and more accessible. Your input as a direct service staff (OR volunteer) will be critical in helping us do that.

Is this something you would be willing to take part in?

If yes, please continue with details.

If no, thank them for their time.

Focus Group / Interview Process Details

A few things you should know are:

- Focus groups of 3-10 people will last approximately 2 hours
- This meeting will take place at: [Date/Time/Location].
- Being in the focus group is completely up to you.
- If you come to the focus group, we assume you are agreeing to participate. You can change your mind at any time.
- The Executive Directors of each partner agency value input from all levels of the organization and fully support you participating in a focus groups or interview.

- We will make every attempt to protect your privacy and confidentiality and any notes from our meeting will be kept private and your responses will not be attached to your name.
- All of the information we collect will be used for a written report.
- You will only be identified by the group you are participating in. For example: “Direct Service staff from Arc Northland said...” Once the project is finished, the notes will be destroyed.

Exceptions to confidentiality: To ensure that you have all of the information about participating in this group, it’s important for you to know that there are some exceptions to confidentiality. While the questions we will be asking you are not intended to prompt any personal stories of violence or abuse, we want you to have all of the information necessary to make an informed decision about participating.

Mandatory Reporting: The facilitator and/or note taker will be a mandated reporter of vulnerable adult abuse or maltreatment in the state of Minnesota. A mandated reporter must report maltreatment of a vulnerable adult (*a person age 18 or older who is a resident of a facility OR receives services from a licensed home care provider or personal care assistance OR regardless of receiving services, possesses a physical, mental, or emotional disability that impairs the person’s ability to provide adequately for his/her own care without assistance AND has impaired ability to protect him/herself from maltreatment*) to the local common entry point.

We have developed our needs assessment plan, and the focus group/interview questions to minimize the likelihood of disclosures. The intent of the needs assessment is not to gain information on specific experiences of domestic violence and/or sexual assault; nevertheless this does not mean that disclosures will not occur and if they do, the mandated reporter will follow their agency’s policy for reporting abuse or maltreatment of a vulnerable adult.

Safety and Confidentiality

As I mentioned before, participation in this focus group is completely up to you. Just like participation is voluntary and confidential for you, it’s also

voluntary and confidential for the people you serve. To ensure everyone's privacy is protected, we request that you don't ask those you serve or work with if they choose to participate or not, or about their responses.

FAQ (*Hand out FAQ form*)

I am now handing out a list of Frequently Asked Questions. This form will provide you with answers to some questions you have. You may use it to refer to any questions you may have about this process. You are also welcome to contact the Project Coordinator of this grant if you have additional questions. Her information is listed on the final page of the Frequently Asked Questions. (*Provide time for review and questions*)

Registration (*Hand out the RSVP form*).

On the RSVP form, you see that you can agree to participate in the focus group. Do you know if you want to participate?

If yes, continue.

If no, thank them for their time.

Thank you. Now I'd like to assist you in signing up for a focus group. Please note, we will ask for your first name on this RSVP form. This form will go directly to the Project Coordinator for the grant, who will keep it locked up at all times. This way we can know you're coming and can make sure you get what you need when you arrive at the meeting. The RSVP forms will be shredded before the meeting, and there will be no record that you were there in order to maintain your anonymity.

If yes: Do you feel comfortable participating?

If they agree to participate in a focus group: Indicate this on the RSVP form and move to next section.

Meeting Reminder Options

Please be sure to indicate if you would like a reminder for the meeting.

If yes: *Complete the date, time, and location directly on the card before handing it to them.*

Accommodations

(Review the Accommodations section on the RSVP form.)

Please note if you need any accommodations to participate the project coordinator will work with you to make arrangements.

Conclusion

Thank you so much for your time.

Appendix D. Email Template to arrange for Individual Interviews (Executive Directors and Supervisory Staff)

Dear [name]

As you're aware, Connections received a three year grant from the U.S. Office on Violence Against Women to improve services and responses in Duluth for people with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault. We are now in the second year of the grant and beginning a comprehensive needs assessment to find out what each of the six partners are currently doing well and what we could do better to create safe, accessible, and responsive services for survivors with disabilities.

Because of your position as the (insert job title), we value your unique insights on this project. We would appreciate the opportunity to hear your thoughts through an individual interview. The interview will cover areas such as organizational culture, policies and procedures, organizational challenges, and staff training as they relate to meeting the needs of survivors with disabilities. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience within the next four weeks.

In addition, we would like you to know the following logistics about the interview:

- Interviews will last approximately 1-1 ½ hours.
- There will be someone at each interview typing up all of the comments. We will take all of the information collected and put it into a summary report. You will be identified by the organization and group you work with. For example: "Supervisory Staff from Access North said..."
- All of the information gathered will be kept in either a password protected computer or a locked file at Access North. That information will be used in summary form for the written needs assessment report.
- The findings from the needs assessment will help us develop the goals for our strategic plan, which will provide the foundation for improvements within all six partner agencies.

We have developed our needs assessment plan, and the focus group/interview questions to minimize the likelihood of disclosures. The intent of the needs assessment is not to gain information on specific experiences of domestic violence and/or sexual assault; nevertheless this does not mean that disclosures will not occur and if they do, the mandated reporter will follow their agency's policy for reporting abuse or maltreatment of a vulnerable adult. I have attached an FAQ sheet with more details, or just email me if you have additional questions.

RSVP process:

Please provide three possible dates and times via email that you're available for an interview, and I will confirm the interview time when we have a facilitator and note-taker scheduled.

- To ensure that our process is as accessible as possible for all participants, we will provide reasonable accommodations available to all invitees. If you would like to request any accommodations, please specify in your email back to me.

Your participation is critical to the success of this project. I thank you in advance for your commitment to our work. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Erin Fontaine
Connections Project Coordinator
Access North Center for Independent Living
118 E. Superior St.
Duluth, MN 55802
erint@accessnorth.net
218-625-1400 ext. 208

Appendix E. Recruitment Email Template for Board Members

Dear [name],

The purpose of this email is to invite you to be part of a needs assessment for Connections, the collaboration between American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO), Access North Center for Independent living (Access North), Arc Northland, Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP), PAVSA and Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women (Safe Haven).

As you may have heard, Connections received a three year grant from the Office on Violence Against Women to improve services and responses in Duluth for people with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault. This grant provides a unique opportunity for our six organizations to develop a strong and sustainable partnership.

We are now in the second year of the grant and beginning a comprehensive needs assessment to find out what each of the six partners are currently doing well and what we could do better to create safe, accessible, and responsive services for survivors with disabilities.

We are asking a number of different groups of people (board members, leadership, direct service staff members, volunteers, clients) to participate in the needs assessment, either by being in a focus group, interview, or completing a survey.

The findings from the needs assessment will help us develop the goals for our strategic plan, which will provide the foundation for the service improvements for all partner agencies.

We value your unique insights on this project. We would appreciate the opportunity to hear your thoughts. At the following board meeting on [insert date/time] a survey will be conducted. We will take all of the information we collect and put it into a summary report. You will only be identified by the organization and role you play. For example: "Board member from Safe Haven said..."

All of the information gathered will be kept in either a password protected computer or a locked file at Access North. That information will be used in summary form for the written needs assessment report. The findings from the needs assessment will help us develop the goals for our strategic plan, which will provide the foundation for improvements within all six partner agencies.

I have attached an FAQ sheet with more details, if you have additional questions please email myself or the project coordinator Erin Fontaine erint@accessnorth.net

To ensure that our process is as accessible as possible for all participants, we will provide reasonable accommodations to all invitees by request. If you would like to request any accommodations, please specify in an email back to me or to the project coordinator Erin Fontaine erint@accessnorth.net or 218-625-1400 ext. 208.

Your participation is critical to the success of this project. I thank you in advance for your commitment to our work.

Sincerely,

[Executive Director's name and contact]

Appendix F. RSVP Forms

RSVP form for People with Disabilities OR Survivor of Domestic Violence OR Survivor of Sexual Assault. (2-sided)

Agency: _____ Recruited by: _____

Please check ONE of the following:

- Person with a Disability
- Survivor of Domestic Violence
- Survivor of Sexual Assault

All the information you provide is confidential.
Once you fill out this form, please return it to your recruiter.

First Name Only (or alias if you prefer):

Please check ONE of the following:

_____ I wish to participate in a focus group on:

_____ at _____ at _____.

(date) (time) (location)

_____ I wish to participate, but only in a one-on-one interview.

Date/time/location of one-on-one interview: __/__/__ @ __:__ @ _____.

(Pick a date/time from list provided.)

Reminder / Contact options: (check all that apply)

- _____ I would like to take a Meeting Reminder Card with me.
- _____ I would like a meeting reminder from the person who recruited me.
- _____ I would like to be contacted by the project coordinator to arrange any needed accommodations, childcare, and/or transportation.

----- Please complete back side! -----

Best way to contact me (Phone and/or Email address):

Best time to contact me: _____

Is it safe to leave a message: Yes / No (circle one)

We will do our best to make every accommodation necessary to ensure your full participation.

Please list any accommodation that you would like during your focus group/interview. (For example, an American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter, materials in large print, or a listening device.)

Accommodations Requested: _____

Dietary concerns/food allergies [for focus groups only] Yes / No
Please specify: _____

[For people with disabilities and survivors only:]

Do you need assistance with transportation and/or childcare needs to participate?

Please specify: _____

Please contact the Project Coordinator Erin Fontaine with any questions at erint@accessnorth.net or 218-625-1400 ext. 208

RSVP Form for Staff or Volunteer (1 sided)

Agency: _____ Recruited by: _____

All the information you provide is confidential. Once you fill out this form, please return it to your recruiter.

First Name Only: _____

_____ I agree to participate in a focus group on:

_____ (date/time/location of focus group completed by recruiter)

Best way to contact me (Phone and/or Email address):

We will do our best to make every accommodation necessary to ensure your full participation.

Please list any accommodation that you would like during your focus group/interview. (For example, an American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter, materials in large print, or a listening device.)

Accommodations Requested: _____

Please contact the Project Coordinator Erin Fontaine with any questions at erint@accessnorth.net or 218-625-1400 ext. 208

Appendix G. Meeting Reminder Card

During the recruitment process participants who complete an RSVP form will be asked if they'd like to take a meeting reminder card with them. This information will be written on an index card with a label including project coordinator's contact information.

Meeting Reminder-

Date: _____

Time: _____

CONTACT INFO:

Erin, Project Coordinator

218-625-1400

Appendix H. Frequently Asked Questions for people with disabilities and survivors: *This informational sheet will be provided during the recruitment process and at the time of focus group [or interview] as addressed in each script. The sheet will be collected following review from people with disabilities and survivors to limit risk to safety and confidentiality if the document was found by a possible abuser.*

What is CONNECTIONS?

Connections is a collaboration between American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO), Access North Center for Independent Living of Northeastern Minnesota (Access North), Arc Northland, Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP), PAVSA (Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault), and Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women (Safe Haven) in the local community of Duluth Minnesota. Connections has been created to improve and enhance services for people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

What are the main goals of Connections?

The mission of Connections is to join disability, domestic violence, and sexual assault programs to create a seamless approach to providing safe accessible services to people with disabilities. We will:

- *Listen to and validate the experiences of people with disabilities.
- *Foster relationships among partners and fully utilize their resources and expertise.
- *Remove physical, programmatic, communication, and attitudinal barriers to services.
- *Enhance and promote safe and responsive services.
- *Adopt policies and practices to instill safety and accessibility into each partner agency.
- *Increase knowledge of domestic violence, sexual assault, and disability issues and their intersections among staff, people with disabilities, and the community to create long term social change.

Who are we asking to participate?

A wide variety of clients and staff from all partner agencies will be asked to participate in either a focus group or interview. With all six partner agencies

we will include staff who are in a decision making role and those who would have the most experience working directly with clients.

Why do you need my input?

We are looking for information on safety, accessibility and areas in need of change in all of our organizations. For improvements to be made, it is important to include input from the people receiving services who can talk about what makes a service safe, accessible, and comfortable. That way we can ensure that the changes we make are informed directly from the voices of those we serve.

What are the expectations of my involvement?

Participate in a focus group [or interview] on the scheduled date and time arranged in advance. Participation includes answering questions from your own personal knowledge and experience and providing any ideas you may have on how things could be improved. For focus groups, we ask that you maintain confidentiality of information shared by other participants. If you'd like to participate but are uncomfortable with a group setting you may request an individual interview.

Do I have to answer every question?

You are welcome to answer or skip any question that is asked. You can discontinue participation and leave at any time. We hope you will talk about how we can make changes in our organizations to improve our ability to provide safe, accessible, and welcoming services at all of our organizations.

When and where will the focus groups/interviews be held?

Dates/time options will be available to you at the time you complete an RSVP form if you chose to participate. Location information will also be available at this time.

Who should I contact if I can't come?

Please contact the person who recruited you from your organization or the Project Coordinator (information below) if any conflicts arise. If possible, we will arrange an alternate time and date.

Are responses confidential?

We will make every effort to keep all individual responses confidential by those conducting the meeting and recording notes. All participants are encouraged not to provide personal information that they do not wish to have shared with the group or others. All participants are asked to respect each other's confidentiality. The collaboration will not require signed written consent forms and will not keep written records of participation.

During the meeting, there will be a note taker who will be typing information on a laptop. Names and other personally identifying information will not be used or linked to what is said in any of the written information. Any information typed up will be summarized by group based on themes and not based on individual responses. Once this information has been collected, it will be shared with the collaboration members prior to being put into a report of all needs assessment findings. All RSVP forms and other notes will be secured in a lock file cabinet at Access North and will be destroyed once the needs assessment has been completed.

What is mandatory reporting and how does it apply?

Minnesota is a mandatory reporting state for vulnerable adults and people who are under 18 years old. The facilitator and/or note taker will be mandated reporters. This means that if you talk about a specific instance of abuse or neglect against a minor or vulnerable adult when a mandated reporter is in the meeting, they will be required to report this information to the common entry point if they learn about the abuse/neglect, along with any of your identifying information, such as your name, address, or phone number. If a report does need to be made, those making the report will make every attempt if doing so doesn't pose significant risk to your safety.

What if I want to take part in the needs assessment but don't feel comfortable in a group?

If possible, we prefer that you participate in a focus group setting. However, we respect and understand that that is not always comfortable or possible. In such cases, we are happy to schedule an individual interview with you, which will include only you, the facilitator, and a note taker. Your participation and individual information/responses will be kept confidential (see "Are responses confidential?"). If you would prefer an individual

interview, please speak with your recruiter or the Project Coordinator (see below for contact information).

What should I tell people about this group if they ask?

You can tell them that you are helping a collaboration of local agencies by providing information on how we can provide better services for everyone at the organizations. To ensure that we are respecting everyone's privacy and confidentiality, we ask that you not share with others what anyone talked about during the focus group [or interview] you participated in and that you keep all participation information confidential.

How is this information going to be used?

Connections will be using the information gained from the needs assessment to create a summary report. We will then use this information to develop our strategic plan, which will guide us in creating and implementing ways in which we will make our services and organizations safer, more accessible, and more responsive for people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Once the strategic plan has been developed, all organizations, including staff and leadership, will be involved in implementing the goals from the strategic plan.

Who will get the information?

A summary of each focus groups and interview will be provided to collaboration members at all organizations while we are in the process of collecting information. As stated earlier, identifying information on participants will be kept completely confidential by those conducting meetings. Once the needs assessment is complete, the collaboration will write a summary report. This report will go to our funding source, which is the US Department of Justice Office on Violence against Women, along with Vera Institute of Justice (who provides our collaboration with technical support). The needs assessment report will also be shared with the collaboration members from both organizations. The choice of whom to further share the summary report with at each organization is up to the collaboration. When we begin to make changes in our organizations, we plan to share the changes that we are making with the public, through media outlets such as press releases, newsletters, or social media.

What are the safety considerations for my participation?

We are making every effort to make this process safe and comfortable for everyone. But if you feel uncomfortable or unsafe for any reason, you may leave at any time. Because the nature of this topic can be emotionally triggering, we will have a list of local resources, should you find that you would like additional support.

Additionally, at each focus group, a support staff will be immediately available if you find you are in need of emotional support. The support staff will be in a separate room from the focus group and whatever is discussed will be kept confidential, with the exception of mandatory reporting requirements.

What accommodations are available to support my participation?

If you choose to participate, we ask that you complete an RSVP form. Reasonable accommodations are available by request. Please feel free to contact the Project Coordinator (information below) if you have any questions. We will make every effort to accommodate those participating.

Can my Personal Care Attendant (PCA) come with me?

We will have a separate room or space for them to wait for you however they will not be able to come into the room for the meeting to respect the privacy of all involved, if you need assistance, a support staff can escort you out of the room to reach your PCA.

What will I get in return?

As a thank you for your participation in the focus group [or interview] we will provide you with a \$15 gift card to Super One Foods. We will be handing these out at the beginning of the focus group/interview. If you decide to leave at any point, you can still keep the gift card no matter what. Also, light refreshments will be provided for all focus group participants. We will not be providing refreshments for optional interviews.

Who do I contact if I have any additional questions / concerns?

Project Coordinator:

Erin Fontaine

218.625.1400 ext. 208

Your Recruiter:

Name: _____

Recruiter contact info

Appendix I. Frequently Asked Questions for Staff and Volunteers

This informational sheet will be provided during the recruitment process and at the time of focus group (interview) as addressed in each script.

What is CONNECTIONS?

Connections is a collaboration between American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO), Access North Center for Independent Living of Northeastern Minnesota (Access North), Arc Northland, Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP), PAVSA (Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault), and Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women (Safe Haven) in the local community of Duluth Minnesota. Connection has been created to improve and enhance services for people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Connections received a three-year federal grant from the Office on Violence Against Women, which provides a unique opportunity for our six organizations to develop a strong, long-term partnership and to assess our organizations to determine what we are doing well and how we can improve our current systems to best serve individuals with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

Why are our partner agencies committed to this project?

We envision an informed community where people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault are empowered by a system of inclusive, accessible, and self-determined services, resulting in equal access to safety and justice. The mission of Connections is to join disability, domestic violence, and sexual assault programs to create a seamless approach to providing safe accessible services to people with disabilities. Domestic Violence and/or sexual assault survivors with disabilities will feel safe, in control, valued, heard, and respected. If we are successful in our collaborative efforts, it will benefit all of the organizations, the people we serve, and our community.

What are the main goals of Connections?

The mission of Connections is to join disability, domestic violence, and sexual assault programs to create a seamless approach to providing safe accessible services to people with disabilities. We will:

*Listen to and validate the experiences of people with disabilities.

- *Foster relationships among partners and fully utilize their resources and expertise.
- *Remove physical, programmatic, communication, and attitudinal barriers to services.
- *Enhance and promote safe and responsive services.
- *Adopt policies and practices to instill safety and accessibility into each partner agency.
- *Increase knowledge of domestic violence, sexual assault, and disability issues and their intersections among staff, people with disabilities, and the community to create long term social change.

Who has been doing the work on this project?

Our collaboration is made up of a work group of representatives from each organization, which has been meeting weekly for over a year and a full collaboration that includes leadership from each partner agency, have been meeting monthly.

- Representatives from Access North: Erin Fontaine, Project Coordinator and Roberta Cich, Duluth Office Director.
- Representatives from AICHO: Jaime Miller, Homeless and Housing Project Coordinator and Sherry Sanchez-Tibbetts, Executive Director.
- Representatives from Arc Northland: Laura Birnbaum-Singler, Director of Advocacy and Lars Kuehnow, Executive Director.
- Representative from DAIP: Linda Riddle, Executive Director.
- Representatives from PAVSA: Susan Terry, Criminal Justice Liaison and Victim Advocate and Candice Harshner, Executive Director.
- Representative from Safe Haven: Susan Utech, Executive Director.

Who are we asking to participate?

A wide variety of clients and staff from all partner agencies will be asked to participate in either a focus group or individual/group interview. With six partner agencies we are unable to have enough focus groups and interviews to reach every staff person, therefore we have decided to gather input from a variety of people throughout all levels of each organization; particularly those who are in a decision making role and those who would have the most experience working directly with clients.

Why do you need my input?

We are looking for information on safety, accessibility and areas in need of change in all of our organizations. In order to make improvements, it is important that we hear from staff in all levels of each organization.

For executive directors and supervisory staff:

Your unique perspective as leadership at a partner agency is crucial to understand how this project fits into the strategic direction of your organization.

What are the expectations of my involvement?

Participate in a focus group or interview on a date and time arranged with Connections. Participation includes answering questions from your own personal knowledge and experience and providing any ideas you may have on how things could be improved. For focus groups, we ask that you maintain confidentiality of information shared by other participants. If you'd like to participate but are uncomfortable with a group setting you may request an individual interview.

When and where will the focus groups/interviews be held?

Dates/time options will be available to you at the time you complete an RSVP form if you chose to participate. Location information will also be available at this time.

Who should I contact if I can't come?

Please contact the person who recruited you from your organization or the Project Coordinator (information below) if any conflicts arise. If possible, we will arrange an alternate time and date.

Are responses confidential?

We will make every effort to keep all individual responses confidential by those conducting the meeting and recording notes. All participants are encouraged not to provide personal information that they do not wish to have shared with the group or others. All participants are asked to respect each other's confidentiality. The collaboration will not require signed written consent forms and will not keep written records of participation.

During the meeting, there will be a note taker who will be typing information on a laptop. Names and other personally identifying information will not be used or linked to what is said in any of the written information. Any information typed up will be summarized by group based on themes and not based on individual responses. Once this information has been collected, it will be shared with the collaboration members prior to being put into a report of all needs assessment findings. All RSVP forms and other notes will be secured in a lock file cabinet at Access North and will be destroyed once the needs assessment has been completed.

What is mandatory reporting and how does it apply?

Minnesota is a mandatory reporting state for vulnerable adults and people who are under 18 years old. The facilitator and/or note taker will be a mandated reporter. This means that if you talk about a specific instance of abuse or neglect against a minor or vulnerable adult when a mandated reporter is in the meeting, they will be required to report this information to the common entry point if they learn about the abuse/neglect, along with any of your identifying information, such as your name, address, or phone number. If a report does need to be made, those making the report will make every attempt if doing so doesn't pose significant risk to your safety.

How is this information going to be used?

Connections will be using the information gained from the needs assessment to create a summary report. We will then use this information to develop our strategic plan, which will guide us in creating and implementing ways in which we will make our services and organizations safer, more accessible, and more responsive for people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Once the strategic plan has been developed, all organizations, including staff and leadership, will be involved in implementing the goals from the strategic plan.

Who will get the information?

A summary of each focus groups and interview will be provided to collaboration members at all organizations while we are in the process of collecting information. As stated earlier, identifying information on participants will be kept completely confidential by those conducting meetings. Once the needs assessment is complete, the collaboration will

write a summary report. This report will go to our funding source, which is the US Department of Justice Office on Violence against Women, along with Vera Institute of Justice (who provides our collaboration with technical support). The needs assessment report will also be shared with the collaboration members from both organizations. The choice of whom to further share the summary report with at each organization is up to the collaboration. When we begin to make changes in our organizations, we plan to share the changes that we are making with the public, through media outlets such as press releases, newsletters, or social media.

Will you be referring to the agencies by name in the final report?

In the final report, which will be for internal use in planning and also will be shared with the Office on Violence Against Women, we will be referring to each organization by name. The needs assessment is a pro-active process designed to help both organizations make the changes necessary to provide seamless services to people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. In order to effect such changes, the results will need to be linked to the appropriate organization.

What are the safety considerations for my participation?

We are making every effort to make this process safe and comfortable for everyone. But if you feel uncomfortable or unsafe for any reason, you may leave at any time. Because the nature of this topic can be emotionally triggering, we will have a list of local resources, should you find that you would like additional support.

What accommodations are available to support my participation?

If you choose to participate, we ask that you [complete an RSVP form /reply to this email]. Reasonable accommodations are available by request. Please feel free to contact the Project Coordinator (information below) if you have any questions. We will make every effort to accommodate those participating.

Who do I contact if I have any additional questions / concerns?

Project Coordinator:

Erin Fontaine

218.625.1400 ext. 208

Your Recruiter:

Name: _____

Recruiter contact info

Appendix J. Frequently Asked Questions for Board Members

This informational sheet will be an attachment to the Recruitment email.

What is CONNECTIONS?

Connections is a collaboration between American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO), Access North Center for Independent Living of Northeastern Minnesota (Access North), Arc Northland, Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP), PAVSA (Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault), and Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women (Safe Haven) in the local community of Duluth Minnesota. Connection has been created to improve and enhance services for people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Connections received a three-year federal grant from the Office on Violence Against Women, which provides a unique opportunity for our six organizations to develop a strong, long-term partnership and to assess our organizations to determine what we are doing well and how we can improve our current systems to best serve individuals with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

Why are these organizations committed to this project?

We envision an informed community where people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault are empowered by a system of inclusive, accessible, and self-determined services, resulting in equal access to safety and justice. The mission of Connections is to join disability, domestic violence, and sexual assault programs to create a seamless approach to providing safe accessible services to people with disabilities. Domestic Violence and/or sexual assault survivors with disabilities will feel safe, in control, valued, heard, and respected. If we are successful in our collaborative efforts, it will benefit all of the organizations, the people we serve, and our community.

What are the main goals of Connections?

The mission of Connections is to join disability, domestic violence, and sexual assault programs to create a seamless approach to providing safe accessible services to people with disabilities. We will:

*Listen to and validate the experiences of people with disabilities.

- *Foster relationships among partners and fully utilize their resources and expertise.
- *Remove physical, programmatic, communication, and attitudinal barriers to services.
- *Enhance and promote safe and responsive services.
- *Adopt policies and practices to instill safety and accessibility into each partner agency.
- *Increase knowledge of domestic violence, sexual assault, and disability issues and their intersections among staff, people with disabilities, and the community to create long term social change.

Who has been doing the work on this project?

Our collaboration is made up of a work group of representatives from each organization, which has been meeting weekly for over a year and a full collaboration that includes leadership from each partner agency, have been meeting monthly.

- Representatives from Access North: Erin Fontaine, Project Coordinator and Roberta Cich, Duluth Office Director.
- Representatives from AICHO: Jaime Miller, Homeless and Housing Project Coordinator and Sherry Sanchez-Tibbetts, Executive Director.
- Representatives from Arc Northland: Laura Birnbaum-Singler, Director of Advocacy and Lars Kuehnow, Executive Director.
- Representative from DAIP: Linda Riddle, Executive Director.
- Representatives from PAVSA: Susan Terry, Criminal Justice Liaison and Victim Advocate and Candice Harshner, Executive Director.
- Representative from Safe Haven: Susan Utech, Executive Director.

Why do a needs assessment?

We hope to gain knowledge about strengths and areas for improvement regarding the current response systems and services for individuals with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

Who are we asking to participate?

A wide variety of clients and staff from all partner agencies will be asked to participate in either a focus group or individual/group interview. With six partner agencies we are unable to have enough focus groups and

interviews to reach every staff person, therefore we have decided to gather input from a variety of people throughout all levels of each organization; particularly those who are in a decision making role and those who would have the most experience working directly with clients.

Why do you need my input?

For improvements to be made, it is imperative that we hear your feedback and ideas. It is only through your commitment to our work that we will be successful in our endeavors to improve services for people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

What are the expectations of my involvement?

Participate in a survey that will take approximately 20 minutes at the beginning of your next committee meeting. Participation includes answering questions from your own personal knowledge and experience of your organization and providing any ideas you may have on how things could be improved. During this meeting we will ask for your formal support of our project through the making of a motion within the Board.

How is this information going to be used?

Connections will be using the information gained from the needs assessment to create a summary report. We will then use this information to develop our strategic plan, which will guide us in creating and implementing ways in which we will make our services and organizations safer, more accessible, and more responsive for people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Once the strategic plan has been developed, all organizations, including staff and leadership, will be involved in implementing the goals from the strategic plan.

Who will get the information?

A summary of each focus groups and interview will be provided to collaboration members at all organizations while we are in the process of collecting information. As stated earlier, identifying information on participants will be kept completely confidential by those conducting meetings. Once the needs assessment is complete, the collaboration will write a summary report. This report will go to our funding source, which is the US Department of Justice Office on Violence against Women, along with

Vera Institute of Justice (who provides our collaboration with technical support). The needs assessment report will also be shared with the collaboration members from both organizations. The choice of whom to further share the summary report with at each organization is up to the collaboration. When we begin to make changes in our organizations, we plan to share the changes that we are making with the public, through media outlets such as press releases, newsletters, or social media.

Will you be referring to the agencies by name in the final report?

In the final report, which will be for internal use in planning and also will be shared with the Office on Violence Against Women, we will be referring to each organization by name. The needs assessment is a pro-active process designed to help both organizations make the changes necessary to provide seamless services to people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. In order to effect such changes, the results will need to be linked to the appropriate organization.

What are the safety considerations for my participation?

We are making every effort to make this process safe and comfortable for everyone. But if you feel uncomfortable or unsafe for any reason, you may leave at any time. Because the nature of this topic can be emotionally triggering, we will have a list of local resources, should you find that you would like additional support.

What accommodations are available to support my participation?

Reasonable accommodations are available by request. Please feel free to contact the Project Coordinator (information below) if you have any questions. We will make every effort to accommodate those participating.

How do I participate?

You will receive a survey to complete at the next scheduled board meeting. If you cannot be present and would still like to participate, please contact your recruiter to make arrangements.

Who do I contact if I have any additional questions / concerns?

Project Coordinator: Your Recruiter:

Erin Fontaine
218.625.1400 ext. 208
erint@accessnorth.net

Name: _____
Recruiter contact info:

Appendix K. Facilitator Script for People with Disabilities and Survivors

Check-In Process Prior to participants entering the room, the Project Coordinator [or note taker] will greet each participant and ask for their first name in order to make any accommodations they have requested. The Project Coordinator [or note taker] will then direct them to the room where the focus group will be held and where the food is.

The facilitator will greet participants as they enter the room and thank them for coming. The facilitator will provide each participant with their \$15 Super One gift card and will keep track of how many are distributed.

Introductions and Overview

Hi and welcome. My name is [facilitator's name], and I'll be the leading our conversation today. Thank you so much for coming.

The purpose of our conversation today is to find out from you what you think is helpful or not helpful when you're trying to get services in your community. We're specifically interested in what you think from your experience as a [person with a disability OR survivor of domestic violence OR as a survivor of sexual assault]. I'll now hand out a couple of information sheets, including a list of frequently asked questions and definitions of some terms we will be using today that may not be familiar to you. I'll collect these when we are finished

I'd like to provide you with a brief overview of who we are and why we're here today. As mentioned during your recruitment, Connections is a collaboration involving the following six partners:

- American Indian Community Housing Organization, AICHO
- Access North, Center for Independent Living of Northeastern MN
- Arc Northland
- Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, DAIP
- Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault, PAVSA
- Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women

These agencies have come together to look at how we are each currently serving people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

We are conducting a needs assessment in order to learn what each agency is currently doing and what we can do better in how we respond to survivors with disabilities. We are holding focus groups and interviews with executive directors, supervisory staff, direct service staff and volunteers at these partner agencies, as well as people with disabilities who receive services from a disability service partner, and survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault who have received services from a victim service partner agency. With your input, we'll create a plan for how to improve our services for survivors with disabilities. Our goal is to make services at our partner agencies safer, more welcoming, and more accessible. We're asking for your help in identifying what you feel is working well and what we could do better for people who use our services.

As I said, my name is [insert name]. I'll be the facilitator and will be asking you the questions. I'd also like to introduce the others who are helping with the group today.

This is [insert name], who is here as a "support staff" to provide overall help in case any of us need anything during the focus group. Don't hesitate to ask for any assistance you need, such as leaving the room or getting more food. Even though we will be focusing on services and not talking about specific instances of domestic violence and/or sexual assault, we know that these discussions can be difficult for anyone. As a result, the support staff is here for any of you who would like to talk after the group today. [Insert name] will be happy to provide a list of local resources available for you, should you want further support after this meeting.

This is [insert name], who will be the note taker. [Insert name] will be taking written notes about what is said during the group discussion. Although [insert name] will be writing down what people are saying, [insert name] will not be recording anyone's name or linking anyone to what they say.

Housekeeping

Don't hesitate to ask us for any assistance you need.

If at any point during our conversation today you decide you'd like to leave, feel free to leave the room. The restrooms are located [insert location information here]. As a courtesy to everyone, if you have a cell phone with you, please make sure that it is turned off or in silent mode.

For focus groups: Please feel free to help yourself to more refreshments at any time. The focus group will last approximately 2 hours. [*For interviews:* The interview will last approximately 1 hour.]

Consent, Mandatory Reporting, Confidentiality, & Safety

I'd like to review some important information about consent, mandatory reporting and confidentiality. If you have questions, please ask.

1. We will be asking for your ideas and opinions. Because we are not conducting formal research, you will not need to sign a consent form for participating. We are assuming that you are freely choosing to volunteer your time and participate since you came here today. You may leave at any time if you change your mind about being here or if you simply decide you want to leave.
2. I'll be asking a variety of questions. You may choose to answer or not answer any of the questions.
3. We will not be asking you to share any information about any forms of abuse that you or someone you know may have personally experienced. In fact, we prefer that you not share those stories during this [focus group OR interview]. Rather, we will be asking you about what works and doesn't work for you when seeking services in your community as a [person with a disability OR survivor]. However, if you feel you'd like to talk to someone about any form of abuse that has impacted you, as a reminder, we have a support staff, [name], who is available to talk to at any time. She will also have a list of local resources available for you to take with you.

4. The people working on this project will make every effort to keep the information that is collected confidential. What you say will be recorded and linked to the type of group you are in, but it will not be linked to you individually. For example, “a person with a disability said...” or “a survivor said ...” Even if we quote something you say we will not include your name. No names will be used in anything that [name of note taker] is taking down or in any written reports. Also, there will be no consequences for what you say here.
5. We need to inform you that there are laws requiring certain professionals to report suspected abuse or maltreatment of a minor or vulnerable adult. [Name] is a mandated reporter, because of their employment with [Agency Name]. If you were to share a specific incident of abuse or maltreatment in this focus group [or interview], the mandated reporter would be required to report this information to the common entry point, which is St Louis County Health and Human Services, as well as any identifying information, such as your name, address, or phone number. If a report needs to be made, [Name of reporter] will make every attempt to inform and involve the person who disclosed, if doing so does not compromise their safety.
6. The information collected from all the group discussions and interviews will be put into a final report. This report will go to our collaboration, the Office on Violence Against Women, our funding source, and Vera, our technical support for the grant.
7. *For focus groups only:* We ask that you respect the privacy of others. Please do not talk about anything that is said in our conversation after you leave today. We want everyone to feel free to share their ideas and comments. With that, we cannot ensure that your peers here will keep what is said confidential after you leave here. Therefore, we encourage all of you to be mindful of what you choose to share.

8. *For focus groups only:* We ask that you respect what each person has to say even though you might not agree with it. We also ask that you allow a person to finish speaking before you speak and to be respectful of everyone here. Finally we ask that you take turns and allow everyone to speak who wants to.

What questions do you have before we get started?

Again, we assume that you are freely choosing to participate by being here today. As a reminder, you may leave at any time if you change your mind about being here or if you simply decide you want to leave. We are about to begin the questions so if you'd like to discontinue before we get started, you are welcome to leave now with no consequences.

Questions

I'll be asking you some questions which will help guide the conversation. There is no right or wrong answers.

You may choose to answer or not answer any particular question. I'll be sure to pause in between each question to make sure that anyone who wants to speak has a chance.

[Proceed with focus group or interview questions with prompts]

Concluding Statement

Thank you so much for your time today and for your help in answering these questions. If you would like any additional information, please ask myself, or the note taker, *(or support staff if applicable)* before you leave today and we will be glad to help.

Appendix L. Facilitator Script for Direct Service Staff and Volunteers

Check-In Process Prior to participants entering the room, the Project Coordinator [or note taker] will greet each participant and ask for their first name in order to make any accommodations they have requested. The Project Coordinator [or note taker] will then direct them to the room where the focus group will be held.

Entering the Room The facilitator will greet participants as they enter the room and thank them for coming.

Introductions and Overview

Hi and welcome. My name is [insert name], and I'll be the leading our conversation today. Thank you so much for coming.

The purpose of our conversation today is to find out from you what strengths and barriers exist at your agency, and what suggestions you may have for us to improve services for people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Before we get started, I'd like to hand out a list of FAQ and definitions of a few of the terms that will be come up in the questions we ask today.

For all: I'd like to provide you with a brief overview of who we are and why we're here today. As mentioned during your recruitment, Connections is a collaboration involving the following six partners:

- American Indian Community Housing Organization, AICHO
- Access North, Center for Independent Living of Northeastern MN
- Arc Northland
- Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, DAIP
- Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault, PAVSA
- Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women

These agencies have come together to look at how we are each currently serving people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

We are conducting a needs assessment in order to learn what each agency is currently doing and what we can do better in how we respond to survivors with disabilities. We are holding focus groups and interviews with executive directors, supervisory staff, direct service staff and volunteers at these partner agencies, as well as people with disabilities who receive services from a disability service partner, and survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault who have received services from a victim service partner agency. With your input, we'll create a plan for how to improve our services for survivors with disabilities. Our goal is to make services at our partner agencies safer, more welcoming, and more accessible. We're asking for your help in identifying what you feel is working well and what we could do better for people who use our services.

As I said, my name is [insert name]. I'll be the facilitator and will be asking you the questions. I'd also like to introduce the others who are helping with the group today.

This is [insert name], who will be the note taker. [Insert name] will be taking notes on the laptop about what is said during the group discussion. Although [insert name] will be typing what people are saying, [insert name] will not be recording anyone's name or linking anyone to what they say.

For disability direct service only:

This is [insert name], who is here as a "support staff" and will be available in a safe accessible space separate from the focus group meeting room in case any of our discussions trigger memories or intense discomfort. Even though we will be focusing on how we can make our services more safe and accessible for survivors with disabilities rather than talking about specific instances of domestic violence and/or sexual assault, we know that these discussions can be difficult for anyone. As a result, the support staff is here for any of you who would like to talk after the group today. [Insert name] will be happy to provide a list of local resources available for you, should you want further support after this meeting.

Housekeeping

Don't hesitate to ask us for any assistance you need.

If at any point during our conversation today you decide you'd like to leave, feel free to leave the room. The restrooms are located [insert location information here]. As a courtesy to everyone, if you have a cell phone with you, please make sure that it is turned off or in silent mode.

This focus group will last approximately 2 hours.

Consent, Mandatory Reporting, Confidentiality, & Safety

I'd like to review some important information about consent, mandatory reporting and confidentiality. If you have questions, please ask.

1. We will be asking for your ideas and opinions. You will not need to sign a consent form for participating, as we are using a passive consent process for confidentiality reasons. We are assuming that you are freely choosing to volunteer your time and participate since you came here today. You may leave at any time if you change your mind about being here or if you simply decide you want to leave.
2. I'll be asking a variety of questions. You may choose to answer or not answer any of the questions.
3. We will not be asking you to share any information about any forms of abuse that you or someone you know may have personally experienced. In fact, we prefer that you not share those stories during this [focus group OR interview]. Rather, we will be asking you about strengths and barriers to providing services to survivors with disabilities at your agency.
4. The people working on this project will make every effort to keep the information that is collected confidential. What you say will be recorded and linked to the type of group you are in, but it will not be linked to you individually. For example, "a direct support staff person from..." Even if we quote something you say we will not include your name. No names will be used in anything that [name of note taker] is taking down or in

any written reports. Also, there will be no consequences for what you say here.

5. We need to inform you that in Minnesota there are laws requiring certain professionals to report suspected abuse or maltreatment of a minor or vulnerable adult. [Name] is a mandated reporter, because of their employment with [Agency Name]. If you were to share a specific incident of abuse or maltreatment in this focus group [or interview] and there is a mandated reporter in the room, they are required to report this information to the common entry point, which is St Louis County Health and Human Services, as well as any identifying information, such as your name, address, or phone number. If a report needs to be made, [Name of reporter] will make every attempt to inform and involve the person who disclosed, if doing so does not compromise their safety.
6. The information collected from all the group discussions and interviews will be put into a final report. This report will go to our collaboration, the Office on Violence Against Women, our funding source, and Vera, our technical support for the grant.
7. *For focus groups only:* We ask that you respect the privacy of others. Please do not talk about anything that is said in our conversation after you leave today. We want everyone to feel free to share their ideas and comments. With that, we cannot ensure that your peers here will keep what is said confidential after you leave here. Therefore, we encourage all of you to be mindful of what you choose to share.
8. *For focus groups only:* We ask that you respect what each person has to say even though you might not agree with it. We also ask that you allow a person to finish speaking before you speak and to be respectful of everyone here. Finally we ask that you take turns and allow everyone to speak who wants to.

What questions do you have before we get started?

Questions

I'll be asking you some questions which will help guide the conversation. There is no right or wrong answers.

You may choose to answer or not answer any particular question. I'll be sure to pause in between each question to make sure that anyone who wants to speak has a chance.

[Proceed with focus group or interview questions with prompts]

Concluding Statement

Thank you so much for your time today and for your help in answering these questions. If you would like any additional information, please ask myself, or the note taker, *(or support staff if applicable)* before you leave today and we will be glad to help.

Appendix M. Facilitator Script: Supervisory Staff & Executive Directors

Check-In Process

Prior to the start of the interview, the Project Coordinator will greet the participant(s) and link each individual with any accommodations they have requested, if necessary.

Introduction and Overview

Hi and thank you so much for meeting with us today. My name is [insert facilitator name] and this is [insert note taker name], and we're both here representing Connections. I'm [insert facilitator's job title and organization] and will facilitate the discussion today, and [note taker name] will be the note taker. As you know, Connections received a grant from of the U.S. Office on Violence Against Women to help us improve our services for people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or domestic violence and/or sexual assault. This interview last approximately 1- 1 ½ hours [or focus group will last approximately 1 ½ - 2 hours]. I'll now hand out FAQ about Connections and this needs assessment process, as well as basic definitions of several terms that will be used throughout the questions we'll be asking today.

Our collaborative partners are AICHO, Access North, Arc Northland, DAIP, PAVSA and Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women.

(Facilitator will ask if the person would like a brief overview of any or all of the partner agencies at this time or if they're already familiar with these agencies).

American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO) offers a one of only 26 culturally specific domestic violence shelters nationwide, and a variety of programming including supportive housing to families, individuals and youth who have experienced long-term homelessness, transitional housing to survivors of domestic violence, and financial assistance to people in a housing crisis.

Access North, Center for Independent Living of Northeastern MN provides services to people of all ages with any disability to pursue their goals and

have the same choices as all people. We assist with independent living skills, advocacy, peer and group support, and information and referral.

Arc Northland provides advocacy, support and education to people with all disabilities and their families, from birth to end of life.

Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP) coordinates the Duluth criminal justice response to domestic violence including a men's non-violence program, support and education for partners, supervised visits and exchanges and conducts national trainings based on the domestic violence intervention work we do here in Duluth.

PAVSA (Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault) is dedicated to supporting victims, educating the community, and advocating for change. Our core values include free and accessible victim-centered and victim-driven services. All of our services, including a 24-hour crisis line, hospital advocacy, SANE program, counseling, legal services, and court advocacy are free and confidential for our clients.

Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women provides comprehensive services to victims of domestic violence including a twenty-four hour crisis line, emergency shelter for battered women and their children, legal advocacy, and education and support groups.

The purpose of this interview (or focus group) is to learn how to best serve domestic violence and/or sexual assault survivors with disabilities. We'll be conducting interviews and focus groups at all six agencies with all levels of direct service staff, supervisory staff, executive directors, and board members. We will also be talking with people with disabilities and survivors. With the information that we get from all of our groups, our agencies together will create a strategic plan that will identify what all organizations need to do in terms of systems change, such as training, policies, and procedures, to make services at our agencies safer, more welcoming, and also more accessible.

Consent, Mandatory Reporting, Confidentiality, Safety

I'd like to review some important information about consent, mandatory reporting and confidentiality. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to stop me and ask.

- I will not be asking you to share any information about any forms of violence or abuse that you or someone you know may have personally experienced. In fact, we prefer that you not share those stories.
- The people working on this project will make every effort to keep the information that is collected confidential. What I mean by that is that what you say will be recorded and linked to the type of group you are in, but it will not be linked to you individually. For example, DAIP's supervisory staff said ..."
- As a reminder, mandatory reporting of abuse or neglect of a minor or vulnerable adult is an exception to confidentiality.
- The information collected from all the group discussions and interviews will be put into a final report. This report will go to our collaboration, the Office on Violence Against Women, our funding source, and Vera, our technical support for the grant.

What questions do you have before we get started?

(Provide time for Question and Proceed with questions.)

Concluding Statement

Thank you so much for your time today and for your help in answering our questions. If you would like any additional information, please ask one of us before you leave today and we will be glad to help.

Appendix N. Facilitator Script for Board Members

Introduction & Overview given by Executive Director [or project coordinator]

Thank you so much for your willingness to provide input through this survey. As you know, our agency is a partner in a three year collaborative disability grant project, was awarded by the U.S. Office on Violence against Women to help us improve our services for people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. I'll now pass out an FAQ handout that answers common questions about Connections and this needs assessment process as well as a terms sheet that will provide you definitions for some terms that come up within the survey questions today.

The partners in this project now known as **Connections**, are:

- American Indian Community Housing Organization, AICHO
- Access North, Center for Independent Living of Northeastern MN
- Arc Northland
- Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, DAIP
- Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault, PAVSA
- Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women

As board members, your support and unique insights are critical to the success of this project. This survey today is part of the broader needs assessment that we're doing to find out what is working and not working at each agency, with the ultimate goal of learning how to best serve survivors with disabilities. We'll be conducting focus groups and interviews at all partner agencies with executive directors, supervisory staff, direct service staff, volunteers, and clients of partner agencies.

With the information that we get from all of these groups, **Connections** will create a strategic plan that will identify what each partner agency needs to do in terms of systems change, such as training, policies, and procedures, to make services safer, more welcoming, and more accessible.

Confidentiality is very important needs particular attention is confidentiality. Participation is strictly voluntary. No names or other identifying information will be used so please do not write your name on the survey.

We ask that all participants respect each other's confidentiality and please refrain from using names and sharing answers. You will not be required to sign any consent forms as we are using a passive consent process for confidentiality reasons. You may withdraw from participation at any time during this process. The information you provided will only be used for the purpose of this needs assessment. The results of these surveys will be compiled in a needs assessment report which will be shared with **Connections** partner agencies, Vera Institute of Justice (our technical assistance provider), the Office on Violence Against Women (our funder for this grant program), and other possible stakeholders.

Are there any questions?

(Distribute Surveys and provide time to complete)

Concluding Statement

Thank you so much for your time today and for your help in answering these questions. If you would like any additional information, please ask me before you leave today and we will be glad to help.

Appendix O. Focus group questions for People with Disabilities

1. How do you get information about services you may need?

*Do you ask other people? Who? (friends, family, service providers)

*Do you look on your own? Where? (internet, community programs, bulletin boards, other)

*When you have received resources and information, how was this shared with you? (printed material, verbally, other)

*How do you prefer to receive information about available services?

2. Think about a time when you went into a community agency for services.

a. If you felt that the agency really understood you and your disability what was that like?

*What did the staff do?

*What makes you feel that you can trust this staff person?

*If they referred you to other services, were they also responsive to you as a person with a disability?

*How was the referral made?

b. If you felt that the agency did not understand you and your disability what was that like?

*What made you feel that they did not understand you?

*What didn't you like about what the person did to help?

*What do you feel they could have done to help you feel welcomed and understood?

c. If the agency made you feel safe, what was that like?

*What made you feel safe? (building/space? staff?) Explain.

Was it the way they ran things? (intake, reception, other) Explain

d. If the agency made you feel unsafe, what was that like

* What made you feel unsafe? (building or space? staff?) Explain.

Was it the way they ran things? (intake, reception, other) Explain.

3. What suggestions do you have for improving services for people with disabilities in our community?

*How could service providers be more accessible to your needs?

How could they help you feel safe?

*What would you like direct service staff to know about serving survivors with disabilities?

4. Is there anything else you want us to know?

Appendix P. Focus group Questions for Survivors of DV

1. How do you get information about services you may need?

*Do you ask other people? Who? (Friends, family, service providers, other)
Do you look on your own? Where? (Internet, at community programs, on bulletin boards, other)

*When you have received resources and information, how was this shared with you? (printed material, verbally, other)

*How do you prefer to receive information about available services? (printed material, verbally, other)

2. Think about a time you went into a community agency for services.

a. If the agency made you feel safe, what was that like?

*What made you feel safe? (building/space? staff?) Explain.

Was it the way they ran things? (intake, reception, other) Explain

b. If the agency made you feel unsafe, what was that like

*What made you feel unsafe? (building or space? staff?) Explain.

Was it the way they ran things? (intake, reception, other) Explain.

3. Think about a time when you have told a service provider something personal.

*What makes you feel comfortable to share personal information?

*What makes you feel you can trust this person?

4. What makes you decide not to share personal information?

*What do they do (or not do) that makes you feel uncomfortable?

*What do they do (or not do) that makes you not trust them?

5. What suggestions do you have for improving services for survivors in our community?

*How could service agencies help you feel more safe?

*How could service agencies help you to feel welcomed?

*What should direct service staff know about domestic violence in general and about safety concerns / risks?

6. Is there anything else you want us to know?

Appendix Q. Focus group Questions for Survivors of Sexual Assault

1. How do you get information about services you may need?

*Do you ask other people? Who? (Friends, family, service providers, other)
Do you look on your own? Where? (Internet, at community programs, on bulletin boards, other)

*When you have received resources and information, how was this shared with you? (printed material, verbally, other)

*How do you prefer to receive information about available services? (printed material, verbally, other)

2. Think about a time you went into a community agency for services.

a. If the agency made you feel safe, what was that like?

*What made you feel safe? (building/space? staff?) Explain.

Was it the way they ran things? (intake, reception, other) Explain

b. If the agency made you feel unsafe, what was that like

* What made you feel unsafe? (building or space? Staff?) Explain.

Was it the way they ran things? (intake, reception, other) Explain.

3. Think about a time when you have told a service provider something personal.

*What makes you feel comfortable to share personal information?

*What makes you feel you can trust this person?

4. What makes you decide not to share personal information?

*What do they do (or not do) that makes you feel uncomfortable?

*What do they do (or not do) that makes you not trust them?

5. What suggestions do you have for improving services for survivors in our community?

*How could service agencies help you feel more safe?

*How could service agencies help you to feel welcomed?

*What should direct service staff know about domestic violence in general and about safety concerns / risks?

6. Is there anything else you want us to know?

Appendix R. Questions for Disability Direct Service Staff

1. Think about a time when you believed you might be working with an individual with disabilities who was experiencing domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

*How did you find out if they had experienced DV/SA?

*How did you know what you should do in this situation? (policy, procedure, training, previous experience, other)

*What things were in place within your agency to help you? (Supervisor or staff support, resources, policies and procedures, community partnerships, trainings, other)

*What made you feel comfortable (or uncomfortable) working with the client/consumer?

2. What policies and procedures does your agency have, to help you in responding to individuals with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault?

*Are these policies and procedures formal or informal?

*How do your policies and procedures guide you in helping the person?

*How did you learn about these? (read manual, verbal, orientation, training)

*What additional information should be address in policies and procedures?

3. What agency practices exist, that encourage disclosures of domestic violence / sexual assault by individuals with disabilities? (questions at intake, questions throughout, other)

*How does your agency communicate to staff a willingness to receive disclosures of violence? How does your agency communicate this to clients/consumers?

*What practices, if any, may discourage disclosures? (mandated reporting, confidentiality, other)

4. What obstacles exist at your agency that makes it difficult for staff to provide safe and accessible support to individuals with disabilities who experience domestic violence and/or sexual assault? (staff bias or attitudes, lack of collaboration with other agencies, lack of training, other)

*Is there anything within your organization that makes it unsafe for people with disabilities to disclose DV/SA? (confidentiality, mandated reporting, lack of safety planning, other)

5. What could your agency do better in responding to people with disabilities who have experienced DV/SA? (more training for staff, additional resources, policies and procedures, other)

6. What formal or informal relationships exist between Connections partner agencies that you've been involved with?

*In your experience, what contributes to the success of these partnerships?

*How might these relationships be strengthened and sustained?

7. In your experience, what do you feel is important for victim advocates to know and understand about disabilities and accommodations when serving people with disabilities who have experienced abuse?

8. What strengths does your organization have regarding cultural competency, specifically in serving/supporting Native women who may be a survivor with disabilities? What about weaknesses?

9. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding this topic?

Appendix S. Questions for DV/SA Victim Service Staff and Volunteers

1. Think about a time when you believed you might be working with a survivor with disabilities.

*How did you find out if they had a disability? (intake, discussion, other)

*How did you know what you should do in this situation? (policy, procedure, training, previous experience, other)

*What things were in place within your agency to help you? (supervisor or staff support, resources, policies and procedures, community partnerships, trainings, other)

*What made you feel comfortable (or uncomfortable) working with this survivor?

2. What policies and procedures does your agency have, to help you in responding to survivors with disabilities?

*Are these policies and procedures formal or informal?

*How do your policies and procedures guide you in helping the person?

*How did you learn about these? (read manual, verbal, orientation, training)

*What additional information should be address in policies and procedures?

3. What agency practices exist, that encourage disclosures of disability? (questions at intake, questions throughout, other)

*How does your agency communicate to staff a willingness to receive disclosures of disabilities? How does your agency communicate this to clients/consumers?

*What practices, if any, may discourage disclosures? (mandated reporting, confidentiality, other)

4. What obstacles exist at your agency that make it difficult for staff to provide safe and accessible support to individuals with disabilities who experience domestic violence and/or sexual assault? (staff bias or attitudes, lack of collaboration with other agencies, lack of training, other)

*Is there anything within your organization that makes it unsafe for a survivor to disclose disability? (confidentiality, mandated reporting, other)

5. What could your agency do better in responding to survivors with disabilities? (more training for staff, additional resources, policies and procedures, other)

6. What formal or informal relationships exist between Connections partner agencies that you've been involved with?

*In your experience, what contributes to the success of these partnerships?

*How might these relationships be strengthened and sustained?

7. In your experience, what do you feel is important for disability advocates to know and understand about domestic abuse and/or sexual assault and safety risks for survivors with disabilities?

8. What strengths does your organization have regarding cultural competency, specifically in serving/supporting Native women who may be a survivor with disabilities? What about weaknesses?

9. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding this topic?

Appendix T. Focus Group Questions for SANE Staff

1. Think about a time you believed you might be working with a survivor with a disability.

*How did you know what you should do in this situation? (policy/ procedure, training, previous experience, other)

*How was consent gained for exam? (did survivor actively consent?)

*Has there been a guardian involved? If so, how has this changed the consent process?

*What barriers have you faced with gaining consent from survivor and/or their guardian?

2. Think about the forms, procedures and overall SANE program structure.

*In what ways are these accessible to a survivor with a disability? (alternate formats for forms? options for alternative means of communication? option for pause in exam if needed?)

*What could make it more accessible? How?

3. Have you been asked by a survivor to provide a reasonable accommodation (change to rules, policies, procedures or environments that enable a person with a disability equal opportunity to access services)?

*What formal or informal policies/procedures are available to guide you?

*Were you able to implement the requested accommodation? If so, what did the process look like? If not, what challenges did you face?

*Has there been a time you thought an accommodation might be needed or helpful that the survivor did not ask for? What did you do in that situation?

4. What type of additional support or back-up, if any, did you need while assisting a survivor with a disability during an exam?

*How was that person helpful? If not, were they able to redirect you to someone who could help?

5. What training have you had that assisted you in working with a survivor with a disability?

*What additional training opportunities do you wish were available for working with survivors with disabilities?

*What barriers to training exist?

6. What additional tools or information would be helpful to you that aren't available or accessible to you right now?
7. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding this topic?

Appendix U. Focused Discussion Questions for Work Group Members

1. Think about a time when a person with a disability who was a survivor has attempted to access services at your agency.

*What skills has your agency given you to identify if this person has a disability? or if a person is a survivor of DV/SA?

*Did your supervisor inform you of what to do and support you through the process? How so?

*From your experience is there consistency in response and assistance for a survivor with disabilities with different direct service staff?

*In what ways might your agency increase sustainability in providing safe and accessible services?

2. What policies and procedures does your agency have, to help you in responding to survivors with disabilities?

*Are these policies and procedures formal or informal?

*How do your policies and procedures guide you in helping the person?

*How did you learn about these? (read manual, verbal, orientation, training)

*What additional information should be address in policies and procedures?

3. What agency practices exist, that encourage disclosures of disability or disclosures of DV/SA? (questions at intake, questions throughout, other)

*How does your agency communicate to staff a willingness to receive disclosures? How does your agency communicate this to clients/consumers?

*What practices, if any, may discourage disclosures? (mandated reporting, confidentiality, other)

4. What obstacles exist at your agency that makes it difficult for staff to provide safe and accessible support to individuals with disabilities who experience domestic violence and/or sexual assault? (staff bias or attitudes, lack of collaboration with other agencies, lack of training, other)

*Is there anything within your organization that makes it unsafe for a survivor to disclose disability? (confidentiality, mandated reporting, other)

5. What could your agency do better in responding to survivors with disabilities? (more training for staff, additional resources, policies and procedures, other)

6. What obstacles exist for Connections, as a local collaborative, that make it difficult to provide safe and accessible supports?

*What changes could be made for a sustainable approach to providing safe and accessible supports?

7. In your experience, what do you feel is important for advocates and direct service staff to know and understand about the intersection of disability and DV/SA?

8. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding this topic?

Appendix V: Questions for Supervisory Staff – Victim Services

1. What issues or unique challenges do your staff come to you with in regards to assisting survivors with disabilities?

*When a staff person is experiencing challenges with being able to provide services/supports to a person with a disability what existing barriers make it difficult to provide the support the staff needs? (ie. gaps in training, lack of resources, communication or physical barriers)

*What type of support or assistance have you been asked to provide to staff who are responding to survivors who disclose a disability?

2. What existing policies or procedures are in place specifically to address the needs of a survivor with disabilities while accessing services?

*Do your staff come to you with a lot of questions regarding the policies and procedures that are in place?

*Are you able to provide clear guidance and support with the existing policies and procedures regarding providing accommodations?

*What, if any, training opportunities related to disabilities, accessibility, communication, accommodations, have your staff asked for?

*What challenges have you faced with offering and/or providing such training?

3. What changes would need to take place in order for you to better support staff in addressing the needs of survivors with disabilities?

*What new policies or policy modifications do you feel may help?

*What training would you like to be available for supervisors and direct service staff in responding to disclosures of disabilities and providing needed accommodations?

4. In your position within your agency, in what way do you influence organizational change?

*Are supervisors able to directly influence change? If yes, how so?

*What motivates change at your agency? *Who initiates it?

*Is your organizational culture receptive to making changes that would better support staff in providing more accessible, safe, and responsive services for individuals with disabilities who have experienced DV/SA? In what ways have you seen change happen?

5. What formal or informal relationships exist between **Connections** partner agencies that you've been involved with?

*In your experience, what contributes to the success of these partnerships?

*How might these relationships be strengthened and sustained?

6. Is there anything you'd like to add or further comment on?

Appendix W: Questions for Supervisory Staff- Disability Services

1. What issues or unique challenges do your staff come to you with in regards to assisting people with disabilities experiencing DV/SA?

*When a staff person is experiencing challenges with being able to provide services/supports to a person with a disability experiencing abuse, what existing barriers make it difficult to provide the support the staff needs? (ie. gaps in training, lack of resources, confidentiality, mandated reporting, safety risks)

*What type of support or assistance have you been asked to provide to staff who are responding to survivors who disclose a disability?

2. What existing policies or procedures are in place specifically to address the needs of people with disabilities experiencing DV/SA while accessing services?

*Do your staff come to you with a lot of questions regarding the policies and procedures that are in place?

*Are you able to provide clear guidance and support with the existing policies and procedures regarding consumer safety, mandated reporting, confidentiality?

*What, if any, training opportunities related to DV/SA, handling disclosures, safety risks or warning signs of abuse have your staff asked for?

*What challenges have you faced with offering and/or providing such training?

3. What changes would need to take place in order for you to better support staff in addressing the needs of survivors with disabilities?

*What new policies or policy modifications do you feel may help?

*What training would you like to be available for supervisors and direct service staff in responding to disclosures of abuse and providing safe services?

4. In your position within your agency, in what way do you influence organizational change?

*Are supervisors able to directly influence change? If yes, how so?

*What motivates change at your agency? *Who initiates it?

*Is your organizational culture receptive to making changes that would better support staff in providing more accessible, safe, and responsive services for individuals with disabilities who have experienced DV/SA? In what ways have you seen change happen?

5. What formal or informal relationships exist between **Connections** partner agencies that you've been involved with?

*In your experience, what contributes to the success of these partnerships?

*How might these relationships be strengthened and sustained?

6. Is there anything you'd like to add or further comment on?

Appendix X: Interview Questions for Executive Directors- Victim Services

1. Does your organizational culture recognize the issue of domestic violence and sexual assault against people with disabilities?

*If yes, in what ways has this issue been identified and how has it been addressed?

*In what ways would you like to be able to address further?

2. What policies and procedures do you have in place that tell staff how to ask about and provide assistance with accommodations?

*How do staff learn about these policies and procedures?

*What training is provided?

*How does your agency support staff to provide services to people with disabilities?

3. What challenges exist at your agency in supporting staff in their efforts to assist survivors with disabilities?

*What policies and procedures present obstacles?

*What resources are challenging?

a. Financial? Training? Staffing? Other?

4. What could your agency do better to support staff in assisting survivors with disabilities?

*What new policies or policy modifications would help?

*What types of training should be available to better support the staff in providing accommodations? If so, how often and for whom?

*What resources should be available to better support the staff in providing accommodations?

5. How does organizational change occur at your agency?

*What is the process? What is the decision-making hierarchy?

*What motivates change?

*How are modifications made in the budget to enable change?

*Is your organizational culture receptive to making changes that would better support staff in providing more accessible, safe, and responsive services for people with disabilities who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault? In what ways?

6. To what degree do you see this Connections collaboration, as consistent with your current mission and agency's initiatives?

*In what ways is it consistent?

*Where, if any, are the inconsistencies?

*How could these inconsistencies be addressed?

7. What formal or informal relationships exist between Connections partner agencies that you're aware of?

*What contributes to the success of these partnerships?

*How might these relationships be strengthened and sustained?

*How are these relationships different from other collaborating or networking relationships?

8. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding the Connections collaboration?

Appendix Y: Interview Questions Executive Directors- Disability Services

1. Does your organizational culture recognize the issue of domestic violence and sexual assault against people with disabilities?

*If yes, in what ways has this issue been identified and how has it been addressed?

*In what ways would you like to be able to address further?

2. What policies and procedures do you have in place that tell staff how to respond to disclosures of abuse and address safety for people with disabilities who have experienced DV/SA?

*How do staff learn about these policies and procedures?

*What training is provided?

*How does your agency support staff to provide services to survivors of DV/SA?

3. What challenges exist at your agency in supporting staff in their efforts to assist people with disabilities who have experienced DV/SA?

*What policies and procedures present obstacles?

*What resources are challenging?

a. Financial? Training? Staffing? Other?

4. What could your agency do better to support staff in assisting people with disabilities experiencing DV/SA?

*What new policies or policy modifications would help?

*What types of training should be available to better support the staff in handling disclosures and addressing safety? If so, how often and for whom?

*What resources should be available to better support staff with this?

5. How does organizational change occur at your agency?

*What is the process? What is the decision-making hierarchy?

*What motivates change?

*How are modifications made in the budget to enable change?

*Is your organizational culture receptive to making changes that would better support staff in providing more accessible, safe, and

responsive services for people with disabilities who have experienced DV/SA? In what ways?

6. To what degree do you see this Connections collaboration, as consistent with your current mission and agency's initiatives?

*In what ways is it consistent?

*Where, if any, are the inconsistencies?

*How could these inconsistencies be addressed?

7. What formal or informal relationships exist between Connections partner agencies that you're aware of?

*What contributes to the success of these partnerships?

*How might these relationships be strengthened and sustained?

*How are these relationships different from other collaborating or networking relationships?

8. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding the Connections collaboration?

Appendix Z: Survey questions for Board Members

The purpose of **Connections** is to bring about organizational change at our six partner agencies: *American Indian Community Housing Organization (AICHO), Access North Center for Independent Living, Arc Northland, Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP), PAVSA (Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault) and Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women*

The mission of Connections is to join disability, domestic violence, and sexual assault programs to create a seamless approach to providing safe accessible services to people with disabilities.

[insert applicable partner agency’s mission here]

- 1. To what degree do you think this project to address the intersection of disability and domestic violence and/or sexual assault is consistent with [partner agency name]’s mission?
 - A. Completely consistent
 - B. Somewhat consistent
 - C. Not consistent at all

Please explain why you feel this way: _____

- 2. To what degree do you think this project aligns with [partner agency name]’s programs?
 - A. Completely aligns
 - B. Somewhat aligns
 - C. Does not align at all

Which programs do you feel it aligns well with? _____

3. To what degree would you be willing to support change at [partner agency name] to address the intersection of disability and domestic violence/sexual assault?

- A. Definitely would
- B. Likely would
- C. Not sure
- D. Likely would not
- E. Definitely would not
- F. Need more information

Please identify which changes you would support (i.e. mission, policies, funding, strategic planning, etc.) and why _____

4. To what extent do you see any challenges for [partner agency name] in addressing the intersection of disability and domestic violence / sexual assault?

- A. Significant
- B. Moderate
- C. Minimal
- D. None

What barriers do you see? _____

5. What challenges, if any, would you see for our agency in supporting the collaborative work of **Connections**, at the intersection of disability and domestic violence/sexual assault?

Please list challenges and explain why: _____

6. Please share any additional feedback you have.

Appendix AA: *These terms as defined for the purposes of this needs assessment process, will be available for participants of focus groups, interviews, and surveys to explain the context and provide a basic definition for terms that may not be familiar to all participants. Recruiters and facilitators will also have this list of terms available to be able to use in response to a specific question asking what we mean when we say “Survivor” for example.*

Victim or Survivor: describes someone who has lived through an experience of domestic violence or sexual assault committed against them. Victim and Survivor are terms sometimes used interchangeably, however the connotation for each word differs and each individual person you meet may identify as a victim, a survivor, or may not feel comfortable with either term.

Domestic Violence (DV): the willful intimidation, assault, battery, sexual assault or other abusive behavior perpetrated by one family member, household member, or intimate partner against another. Partners may be married or not married; heterosexual, gay, or lesbian; living together, separated or dating.

Sexual Assault (SA): any sexual activity involving a person who does not or cannot consent.

Disability: The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) defines a person with a disability as someone who: 1. has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, include caring for one's self, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, performing manual tasks, and learning; 2. has a history or record of such an impairment, or 3. is regarded as having such an impairment.

Reasonable Accommodation (RA): change to rules, policies, procedures or environments that enable a person with a disability equal opportunity to access programs and services. Reasonable accommodations are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Personal Care Assistant (PCA): A person who assists another person with essential activities of daily living including but not limited to: cooking, cleaning, dressing, bathing and transfers.

Vulnerable Adult (VA): Any person, 18 years of age or older who: is a resident or inpatient of a facility, receives services from a licensed facility or a licensed home care provider; OR regardless if they are receiving services or reside in a facility, they possess a mental or physical disability that impairs the individuals' ability to adequately provide for their own care.

Organizational Culture: the attitudes and values within the organization as a whole regarding work environment / conditions, services provided, and individuals who receive services.

Cultural Competency: an ability to understand and interact effectively with people of different cultures, through awareness of cultural differences and patterns of oppression in addition to recognition of the impact a person's own cultural beliefs has on interactions with others.

Appendix BB: Resources

Support staff will have the following items available during the time of focus groups to provided local resources for people with disabilities, survivors, and disability service agencies direct staff at the request of resources and supports following the focus group.

- **24-hour crisis line phone numbers at PAVSA & Safe Haven**
- **List of current support groups offered through PAVSA & Safe Haven**
- **Brief overview and direct contact at each partner agency:**

PAVSA is dedicated to supporting survivors of sexual assault. All of our services, including a 24-hour crisis line, hospital advocacy, SANE program, counseling, legal services, and court advocacy are free and confidential for our clients.
Susan Terry 726-1442

Safe Haven Shelter for Battered Women provides services to victims of domestic violence including a 24-hour crisis line, emergency shelter for women and their children, legal advocacy, education and support groups at the shelter and Family Justice Center. Heather Hartwig 218-623-1000

Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP) provides advocacy, support groups and a supervised visitation center to victims of domestic violence, as well as an intervention team, training, and systems advocacy.
Alyxis Feltus 218-722-2781 x108

AICHO offers a culturally specific domestic violence shelter and transitional housing to survivors of domestic violence, as well as financial assistance to people in a housing crisis, and supportive housing to people who have experienced long-term homelessness. Jaime Miller 218-722-7225

Access North provides services to people of all ages with any disability to pursue their goals and have the same choices as all people. We assist with independent living skills, advocacy, peer and group support, and information and referral.
Erin Fontaine 218-625-1400 x208

Arc Northland provides advocacy, support and education to people with all disabilities and their families, birth to end of life.

Laura Birnbaum-Singler 218-726-4725

Appendix CC: Debriefing Form

Immediately following the focus groups Facilitator, Note taker, support staff if applicable, [and project coordinator] will take part in a debriefing session, using the debriefing form below as a guide.

Group:

Date:

Time:

Location:

Facilitator:

Note taker:

Support staff:

of Participants:

Make brief notes (phrases, sentence fragments, any memorable quotes) about key points. Note issues which led to an animated group response (chain reaction) or conflict/tension experienced.

Memorable Quotes:

Chain reaction responses:

Key Themes identified:

Sense of Conflict or Tension:

Record your impressions and reactions to the group discussion.
What was surprising to you? Not surprising?

What was new information for you?

What were the two or three most valuable things you've learned in this focus group?

Identify what went well; what went wrong, what can be changed to make future groups more successful:

This meeting will also be used to debrief and provide insight into what is working and what is not working, so that changes can be made if needed. Note taker will type up completed notes and submit to project coordinator (in most cases, the note taker and project coordinator will be the same person). Connections Work Group will meet to put together a final report on the focus groups, which will later be incorporated into the needs assessment report, and the strategic plan.