

The Arc of Bristol County & New Hope, Inc.

emPower Bristol County

Collaboration Charter

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Introduction

About emPower Bristol County

The Arc and New Hope will form a multidisciplinary collaboration, emPower Bristol County, to better plan improved services for a mutual population: people with Intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who are experiencing sexual and/or domestic violence. Through a collaborative team of key participants from both organizations, we will assess the needs of our organizations and the people we serve and develop a detailed strategic plan to most effectively respond to and serve persons with disabilities experiencing sexual and/or domestic violence (SDV).

From our collaboration, we will inform potential changes in both organizations to better identify, respond to, and provide safety for individuals with disabilities experiencing abuse or violence. The project will also focus on ways to reduce instances of sexual abuse of people with IDD. Our efforts will strengthen two dynamic and highly effective organizations; improve our capacity to serve the greater Attleboro/Taunton communities and plan to improve needed services to individuals with disabilities who are experiencing abuse and violence.

As part of our development of this collaboration charter, emPower Bristol County sought guidance from a number of other collaborations' organizing documents available on EndAbusePWD.org. We have drawn significantly from the following collaboration documents: Accessing Safety in Hennepin County (The Arc of Greater Twin Cities and The Sexual Violence Center), Intersections (Imagine! and Moving to End Sexual Assault), and The MASS Collaboration (Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, Boston Center for Independent Living and the Massachusetts Bay transit Authority).

History of Interagency Collaboration

The Arc of Bristol County and New Hope, Inc. have been associated with each other through mutual involvement in community organizations in the Taunton/Attleboro area. While programmatic collaboration had often been discussed, the realities of budgetary constraints have often precluded joint ventures. The Arc of Bristol County and New Hope have operated under a memorandum of understanding since March of 2016 as part of the application process for grant funding through the Office of Violence against Women.

Collaboration Members

The Arc of Bristol County

Since 1959, The Arc of Bristol County has been serving the needs of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, helping people to realize their potential and overcome barriers to their full participation in the greater Attleboro/Taunton community. Founded by families who refused to have their children put into institutions, The Arc provided needed supports so families could be whole and all citizens with disabilities could be involved members of their community.

The Arc's Vision: People of all abilities are empowered to succeed by making their own choices.

The Arc's mission is to foster community partnerships, create a pathway for growth and innovation by offering exceptional support and services to people with all abilities through the attraction, development and retention of superior talent who passionately demonstrate best practices.

Scope of Services: The Arc of Bristol County currently has 264 employees, serves over 2,000 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, has eight offices in Southeastern New England located in: Attleboro (3 offices), Fall River, Middleborough, New Bedford and Taunton Massachusetts, and Smithfield, Rhode Island.

The Arc of Bristol County's Services include: Acquired Brain Injury Program, Adult Day Health, Adult Family Care, Agency with Choice, Autism Now Center, Community Directions, Day Habilitation Services, Family Support Center, Guardianship and Representative Payee, Individual and Residential Support Services, Kids on the Block Educational Puppet Performances, Project Kids Connect, Project Rec-Connect, Special Education Empowerment Program, and Trust Management. The Arc of Bristol County has received CARF accreditation through 2019.

New Hope, Inc.

New Hope was founded in 1979 by Edith Palmer, an Attleboro, Massachusetts native who sought to provide assistance to women living in abusive environments. It started with a 24-hour crisis hotline, answered by Edith and other volunteers, from calls forwarded by the Plainville Police Department. Over time, and with increased community support, New Hope expanded from emergency services to prevention and education, understanding that escape from violence is only the first step; to truly break the cycle survivors must be provided tools and opportunities toward regaining their self-sufficiency.

New Hope's Vision: Every person has the right to live a life free of violence and exploitation.

New Hope's Mission: New Hope works throughout Massachusetts to build an anti-violence movement to end sexual and domestic violence. We seek to create communities free from violence, where individuals and families are able to achieve their full human potential. As an organization dedicated to social justice, New Hope encompasses a way of seeing, naming, understanding, and acting aimed at addressing inequality and oppression across society.

Scope of Services: Today New Hope operates in 54 cities / towns across Massachusetts to provide "full-spectrum care" to survivors of domestic and sexual violence. New Hope differentiates itself from the field of domestic violence prevention agencies both in philosophy – by recognizing the interconnection between sexual assault and domestic violence – and in practice, by providing both survivor communities with programming for each step in their recovery, regardless of race, age, income level, gender or sexual orientation.

New Hope specializes in providing trauma-informed care with an emphasis on client empowerment, helping individuals reclaim the control and power they may have lost at the hands of abuse. New Hope's spectrum of care includes **Prevention Education; Crisis Intervention; Shelter; Advocacy; Counseling; Transitional Living Assistance; Family Reunification and Intimate Partner Violence Intervention Education.**

Rationale for collaboration

The Arc and New Hope each serve an overlapping population: survivors of sexual and domestic violence (SDV) with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). While each organization covers a different aspect of service provision for this group, both organizations recognize the opportunity for growth and program development through collaboration with one another.

It is the goal of each founding organization to use the grant-funded period to investigate and implement agency-wide changes that will support the success of the collaboration. Additionally, each agency is dedicated to increasing the overall safety of and access to services for survivors of SDV with IDD.

Several other factors informed the decision to collaborate: the statistically high risk of people with IDD for experiencing SDV; the opportunity to examine and expand each agency's services through OVW funding; overlapping service areas (specifically within Bristol County, with main multiple site locations being in close proximity to each other); and the longstanding desire to integrate our capacity to better serve survivors with IDD.

Vision

emPower Bristol County envisions a world where people with intellectual and developmental disabilities live their lives in safety with dignity and respect, including freedom from sexual and domestic violence.

Mission

emPower Bristol County will create an innovative system of supports and services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities impacted by sexual and domestic violence through a dynamic, open, and supportive partnership dedicated to:

- Transforming cultures through education and awareness in our agencies
- Evaluating and strengthening agency response;
- Building our collaborative and individual capacities for service provision that combines best practices and creative implementation with a survivor strengths-based approach;
- Offering seamless, integrative, and accessible supports and services that promote safety, dignity, respect, and autonomy.

Foundational Principles

Two foundational principles weave through all of emPower Bristol County's work: **social justice and professionalism.**

For emPower BC, social justice is an inherent part of each of the founding organizations practice. **Social justice**, as we practice it, recognizes the systemic inequities in service provision and access and we strive to implement changes to our organizations and in our communities to address this inherent power imbalance. Additionally, social justice means removing our own individual needs from focus to center the stories, experiences, and injustices committed against those with less societal power. In our specific organizational cases, we work most closely with people with disabilities and people affected by domestic and sexual assault to provide services that are relevant, humble, and accessible. Simply put, our social justice frameworks means that we work to ensure the full realization of human rights for not just the people we serve, but society as a whole.

emPower BC holds itself to a level of professionalism based on survivor empowerment and organizational respect for the experiences of those using our services. **This includes** providing the services that not just meet, but exceed the needs of our clients, focused on their individual strengths and goals. Professionalism also includes our promise to continue to develop our skills and knowledge so that we can improve our services to adhere to best practices, not only the industry standards. For emPower BC, professionalism is the dedication to constant improvement and quality service.

In addition to our foundational principles of social justice and professionalism, emPower Bristol County has identified the following additional values that will guide our work throughout the collaboration:

Values

Autonomy

emPower BC believes that all people have the right to be fully respected and to experience the dignity to make decisions about their own lives and personal safety. This includes the right to accurate and accessible information, resources to aid in decision making and safety planning. We further believe that all people have a right to access to a supportive team of professionals from whom to seek guidance; while still maintaining true autonomy to make decisions about their own lives. We specifically wanted to define the following related values:

Human Rights: Our values around human rights have been influenced by international, national, and local organizations. At the international level, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights names 30 rights inherent to all people that should be protected, regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (UN General Assembly, 1948). National statements from The Arc and nationwide SDV coalitions tie human rights directly into service provision as part an overall social justice approach to service provision. At the local level, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts specifically identifies the work of SDV and Disability service agencies as being responsible for upholding the dignity and safety of those we serve. (For the reference documents, see [Appendix 2: Relevant MA Specific Legislation](#))

We recognize the need to uphold these rights, especially for people with IDD—who may be members of multiple, intersecting identities that require additional protections—as well as the idea that every right has corresponding responsibilities;

- **Right to Risk:** Specific to our work with people with IDD, we additionally recognize that all people have the right to reasonable risks. This means, although there may be a chance for failure or potential harm, our services are designed to provide the information needed to take the risk and the willingness to support people in growing from the risky experience. Additionally, we recognize the right for people to fail, meaning emPower BC believes that all people should have the right to make mistakes and be supported in using those missteps as learning opportunities—**free** from judgement and without it being indicative of their worth as a human being.
- **Supported Decision Making:** It is our job as workers dedicated to social justice to support people using our services to make the best decisions for their lives based on a full understanding of their options, potential consequences of different actions, and the spectrum of support services available;
- **Empowerment:** by identifying rights, risks, and responsibilities, we encourage and support those using our services to plan their lives according to their own priorities and needs while providing the necessary knowledge, and tools to do so using strengths -based, person -centered approaches.

Interconnectedness

Real change does not happen in a vacuum. emPower BC recognizes the need to build our capacity as well as inspire organizational change in each of our agencies. We pledge to encourage teamwork and to grow the current scope of services of our agencies and increase awareness of the factors that contribute to increased risk of victimization for people with IDD through education.

- **Federal, State, and Local government** include the overseeing agencies that each founding organization may work with as well as those that affect the lives of those we serve. Some examples of these agencies are the MA Department of Developmental Disabilities, Department of Public Health, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, The Federal Office of Violence against Women and our local mayors, boards, and government representatives.
- **Community Partners** are groups outside of the founding agencies. This includes police departments, first responders, medical and behavioral health professionals, and other aligned service provision agencies.
- **Advocacy Groups** refer to both self-advocates and allied groups that work to support survivors of sexual and domestic violence and people with IDD as well as other groups that work towards increasing access and reducing violence.
- **Agencies**, meaning the collaboration founders, need to evaluate and enhance their services to make them accessible and adaptive to the needs of survivors with IDD.
- **Departments**, the program segments within the founding agencies, each have a unique role to play in providing services but need to work in a seamless fashion to ensure the best care for our clients.

Representation

emPower BC places paramount importance on the inclusion of all people accessing our services in the planning and evaluation of the services we provide. Borrowing from the self-advocacy mantra, “Nothing about us without us” and the tenets of the Empowerment Model identifying survivors as the experts in their own safety, we recognize that services for survivors with IDD must center the experiences and voices of survivors with IDD to be relevant to the needs of the population.

- **Survivor/Person Centered:** All services should focus on the empowerment of those using them. The Survivor/Person Centered model shifts services from the lens of what providers think is best for the person to focus on what the person identifies as the most important parts of their care.
- **Diversity:** Beyond the idea of completing a demographics checklist, for emPower BC, diversity means seeking those with experience that will help inform our work from a variety of intersecting backgrounds, experiences, cultures, and views. This is not limited to racial, ethnic, religious, and gender categories but includes survivor status, ages, system involvement, educational experience, etc.

- **TRUE Inclusion:** In hand with prescriptive diversity expectations, tokenism usually occurs. emPower BC fosters an environment where survivors of SDV and people with IDD will be involved in our plan development and implementation and their input will inform our decisions. We will provide necessary accommodations to ensure this value is met.

Safety

As providers to groups at high risk for violence and victimization, and in line with our previously defined values, emPower BC places paramount importance on the safety of survivors using our services. As such, we hold the following values to promote both the physical and emotional safety of those accessing emPower BC and the founding organizations:

- **Confidentiality:** emPower BC acknowledges that confidentiality is a legally governed right as outlined by various regulations and governing agencies (e.g. MA DPH, HIPPA) and that services we provide must abide by the state mandated confidentiality regulations as applied to medical, mental health and community Agencies. emPower BC stresses the importance of balancing these regulations and those regarding [Mandated Reporting](#) with our values around autonomy
- **Trauma-Informed Care:** is an approach to engaging people with histories of trauma that recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledge the role that trauma has played in their lives. emPower BC recognizes that it is our responsibility to provide trauma -informed care that attends to survivors' emotional and physical safety and identifies and strengthens survivors' current skills to build resiliency

Assumptions

Through the combined expertise of the founding agencies, as well as the decades of experience represented within the collaboration team, and supported by research and best practices in the topics of SDV and IDD supports, emPower BC holds certain beliefs.

People with IDD are at a higher risk for experiencing sexual and domestic violence.

Research shows rates of sexual assault of people with IDD is twice as high for men and up to three times as high for women when compared to the typical population (DPP C, 2011). Additionally, likely due to increased vulnerability and lack of education and awareness of people with IDD, those who support them and the systems they engage with, most assaults are perpetrated by family members and caregivers (UWOSH, 2008). Only 9% of SDV perpetrated against people with IDD is done so by people who would qualify as strangers.

People with IDD are sexual beings, with the same range of needs, wants, and desires as everyone else.

In their paper, "Sexuality of 15/16 -Year-Old Girls and Boys With and Without Modest Disabilities," Elinor Brunnberg, M. Lindén Boström and Mats Berglund used the Swedish Life and Health: Young People 2005 and 2007 survey to support the theory that young people with disabilities are engaging in sexual intercourse. The survey was voluntary and self-reporting, meaning that the students were answering the questions and data was culled without corroboration. The collected data was from approximately three thousand students in what would equate to their junior year of high school and asked them to complete a survey regarding their sexual debut, living environment, use of drugs or alcohol and attitude towards school. When the data was interpreted by the authors, it showed not only that people with disabilities were engaging in sexual intercourse, but were more likely to have had sexual intercourse than their typical peers.

Survivors of SDV are telling the truth about their experiences and have the right to be validated and receive respectful services that support their dignity and autonomy.

Studies list the rate of false or unfounded reports of sexual assault to be between 2 -10%, which is within the same parameters as false reporting rates for all violent crimes. It is important to note that the reports identified as unfounded may have been so, not because they were false or an assault did not occur, but rather due to insufficient evidence to bring charges, delayed reporting, inconsistencies in witness statements, and survivors deciding to stop the reporting process (NSVRC, 2012).

Proactive, preventative education is an effective tool to reduce incidences of abuse and assault and is preferable to reactive measures.

Research has shown that primary prevention (education that takes place before an adverse event occurs) is successful in increasing awareness of the signs of abuse across demographics (WHO, 2007). Because people with IDD have increased vulnerability to SDV due, in part, to a lack of formal education in healthy relationships, personal autonomy, and the signs of abuse, proactively addressing these topics is paramount to reducing rates of SDV in the IDD population.

Assaults perpetrated against people with IDD are more likely to be disclosed, but less likely to be reported to the police and prosecuted.

An estimated 62% of assaults against a person with a disability are disclosed to family, professional caregivers, and other staff members (as opposed to a 25% disclosure rate in

the typical population). However, while the typical population will report approximately 16% of assaults to the police, people with disabilities only make a formal report 3% of the time (NCDSV, DPPC, 2011).

Survivors with IDD can experience trauma and heal from it.

It is a common misconception that people with IDD do not experience trauma from abuse or assault. Much like the assumption that people with IDD are not sexual beings, this myth both underestimates the capacity and insults people with IDD, especially survivors of SDV and other traumatic incidents. Additionally, trauma responses are more likely to be misdiagnosed as behavioral issues or other mental health conditions (Esralew, NADD).

A growing body of literature and research shows the inclusion of trauma informed care for survivors with IDD, and training for their families and support networks. emPower BC combines our shared knowledge of best practices in the disability services and SDV industries to acknowledge that all people can experience and heal from trauma.

Everyone has rights.

Many documents outline the various rights a person has. For citizens of the United States, the Constitution and Bill of Rights outline a number of protections we are guaranteed. The United Nations has outlined several different variations on human rights: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, etc.

Informed by each of these documents, and more, emPower BC has selected a specific list of rights applicable to the purpose of the collaboration.

Everyone has the right:

- To live free from abuse.
- To live in the least restrictive environment.
- To accessible, adaptive services to help heal from trauma.
- To make informed choices about their behavior and have those decisions respected.
- To fail, to make mistakes, and to have the opportunity to learn from those mistakes.
- To be active members in their communities free of fear.
- To equitable access to education and tools to aid in decision making

Definitions

Collaboration Language

Collaboration Team: This is the core group responsible for developing and approving deliverables, overseeing changes at the founding organizations, and adhering to the parameters set forth in the award from OWV. This team consists of:

- **Project Director (s):** an employee of each of the collaboration agencies that is responsible to uphold the interests of emPowerBC during the grant period. Cannot also fill the role of Organizational Representative. At the time of writing, these members are:
 - **The Arc:** Darlene James
 - **New Hope, Inc.:** Erin Basler
- **Organizational Representative (s):** an employee of each of the collaboration agencies who is responsible for voicing concerns and barriers with the best interests of the agency in mind. Cannot also fill the role of Project Director. At the time of writing, these members are:
 - **The Arc:** John Neill
 - **New Hope, Inc.:** Marie Palermo
- **Executive Leadership:** For the collaboration team, in addition to the dedicated grant and agency employees, the executive level leaders at each organization have opted to sit on the collaboration team to the fullest extent their schedules allow. Executive Leadership will actively participate in consensus and decision making activities, including those relevant to grant deliverables. Executive Leadership will also be included in voting to approve all grant deliverables. Executive Leadership may serve in the capacity of Organizational Representative. At the time of writing, these members are:
 - **The Arc:** Michael Andrade , President, CEO
 - **New Hope, Inc.:** Marcia Szymanski , Executive Director

Deliverables: Planning documents required by the conditions of the grant. These include:

- **Collaboration Charter:** outlines the agreements, commitments, and values that guide emPower BC in making decisions and moving forward with our collaboration.
- **Needs Assessment Plan:** defines the steps emPower BC will take to find gaps and barriers in service provision for each agency.
- **Needs Assessment Findings:** highlights the key findings in terms of organizational needs, gaps in services, and strengths in working with survivors with IDD.
- **Strategic Plan:** The roadmap of which projects what the collaboration will focus on during the implantation phase, how we plan to accomplish them, and which markers we will use to determine our success.

Fiscal Agent/Grantee/ Sub Grantee: In this collaboration, The Arc of Bristol County serves as the Grantee and the Fiscal Agent. New Hope Inc. is the Sub grantee.

VERA: The VERA Institute of Justice; Technical Assistance Provider

OVW: The Office of Violence against Women; the funder of this grant project.

Acronyms

DPPC	The Disabled Persons Protection Commission: An agency in Massachusetts that collects reports of abuse against all people with disabilities aged 18 -59.
EOHHS	The Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services. This office oversees both the MA DPH and MA DDS.
IDD	Intellectual and Developmental Disability: defined in the DSM V as three or more deficits in the conceptual, social, and practical domains that impact adaptive functioning and develop during childhood or adolescence.
MA DDS	Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services: A government organization housed within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services in Massachusetts that oversees service provision for all disability agencies.
MA DPH	Massachusetts Department of Public Health: A government organization housed within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services in Massachusetts that oversees Rape Crisis Centers (like New Hope) across the Commonwealth.
OVW	The Office of Violence against Women is the federal grantor of this project.
SDV	Sexual and Domestic Violence: Broadly, this is any violence based in a home or relationship setting.

Our Language

Autonomy	Autonomy is the ability to make decisions about one's life free from coercion and external control or influence. When we talk about autonomy, we are referring specifically to the right to make decisions given accessible information about all of one's options and with the timeline and goals one defines for one self.
Community Partners	Community Partners are groups outside of the founding agencies that work in allied fields, agencies, or as advocates for the collaboration. Many Community Partners' work is interdependent with that of New Hope and The Arc of Bristol County.
Diversity	Diversity means seeking those with experience that will help inform our work from a variety of intersecting backgrounds, experiences, cultures, and views. This is not limited to racial, ethnic, religious, and gender categories but includes survivor status, ages, system involvement,

educational experience and more.

Domestic Violence

The OVW defines domestic violence “a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.” (OVW, n.d.)

We expand this definition to include violence perpetrated by service providers, caregivers, and cohabitants (regardless of relationship) against service users with disabilities.

Empowerment

Empowerment encourages and supports survivors to plan their lives according to their own priorities and needs while providing the necessary knowledge, and tools to do so using strengths-based, person-centered approaches.

Human Rights

According to the United Nations, Human Rights are, “rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.” (OHCHR, 1948).

Models of Disability

Currently, there are two distinct ways to look at disability, services, and accommodations in the US: the medical model of disability and the social model of disability. These are lenses through which society may view one’s abilities and limiting factors.

Medical Model

Focuses on the deficits a person has, as compared to the typical population. The World Health Organization uses the medical model of disability when it defines disability as “an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. An impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life Situations.” (WHO, n.d.).

Social Model

While there is some debate in academic circles about the benefit of the social model of disability (versus the Medical Model) (Shakespeare, 2002), we adhere to the main tenets of the theory which identifies people with disabilities as an

oppressed group and recognize that many of the deficits defined through the medical model of disability can be mitigated through systemic change and dedication to adaptation and accessibility.

Paternalism

Paternalism is a system under which an authority undertakes to supply needs or regulate conduct of those under its control in matters affecting them as individuals as well as in their relations to authority and to each other (Miriam -Webster). Paternalist services provide the services and supports the system believes are needed, but removes autonomy, freedom of choice, and personal responsibility.

Person /Survivor Centered

The Survivor/Person Centered model shifts services from the lens of what providers think is best for the person to focus on what the person identifies as necessary to their safety, care, and ability to heal and ideally, thrive.

Right to Risk

Affirming the right to risk means can people make decisions or participate in activities that entail a reasonable amount of risk. Examples of potential risk are taking public transportation, finding partners and going on dates, leaving an abusive partner, moving into one's own apartment, trying a new hobby or sport, etc. Generally, when we talk about the right to risk, we are referring to the protective stance that can occur in human services work where service workers deny opportunities in the interest of reducing potential harm.

Safety

Ideally, safety would mean the expectation of freedom from violence. However, in the face of staggering statistics about violence and abuse against people with IDD, we add to the definition of safety access to trusted, reliable supports that ensure security and well -being.

Emotional Safety

Emotional Safety is a sense of security and well -being found internally by being able to trust that one's environment and relationships are built on a foundation of caring support for all involved.

Physical Safety

Physical safety is freedom from harm, threats of harm, coercion, and other manipulation that affects one's physical well -being.

Sexual Violence

Any type of sexual contact or behavior (or the threat of contact) that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient. Falling under the definition of sexual assault are sexual activities as forced sexual intercourse, forcible sodomy, child molestation, incest, fondling, and attempted rape. (Department of Justice, 2017)

Strengths -based Approach

A strengths -based approach refers to policies, practice methods, and strategies that identify and draw upon the strengths of survivors, their support systems, and communities. Strengths -based practice is a response to the deficit approach, which emphasizes problems and pathology, to a positive partnership with the survivor and their support systems. The approach acknowledges each network’s unique set of strengths and challenges, and engages survivors as partners in developing and implementing services. (National Technical Assistance and Evaluation Center for Systems of Care, 2008)

Trauma -Informed

Trauma -Informed Care is an approach to engaging people with histories of trauma that recognize the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledge the role that trauma has played in their lives.

True Inclusion

True inclusion invites representatives from all parties impacted by decision making to participate fully in the development of plans and avoids tokenizing participants by ensuring everyone has equal power in decision making.

Promises and Roles

As part of the emPower Bristol County Collaboration, The Arc of Bristol County, New Hope, Inc. and their representatives promise to complete the work necessary to ensure that each of the founding organizations has a roadmap that outlines the changes that will increase their organizational capacities to support survivors with IDD.

To meet this goal, emPower BC will:

- Follow our Collaboration Charter to guide our work;
- Complete all required deliverables, actively participate in all phases of the grant project, including collaboration building, needs assessment, strategic planning, and implementation. Will also implement changes as determined by the collaboration team;
- Assess each organization using the appropriate set of VERA performance indicators;
- Dedicate approximately eight hours per month to collaboration work to include activities that support collaboration and capacity building;
- Maintain compliance with all requirements as outlined in our grant award letter from OVW, including all required and additional communication with Vera and OVW.

As partnered agencies of emPower Bristol County Collaboration, The Arc of Bristol County and New Hope, Inc. each promise the following:

The Arc of Bristol County will:

- Enact organizational change as determined by the emPower BC needs assessment and strategic plan, including those that may have policy and budgetary implications;
- Fulfill the role of fiscal administration of the project budget;
- Establish and maintain required fiscal commitment required to enact organizational changes determined by the grant requirements and established deliverables of emPower BC. This includes establishing additional staff if so required to meet any needs identified as a result of the needs assessment process;
- Participate fully in all steps of project development and implementation including technical assistance from VERA. This includes ongoing communication with VERA Liaison, attending in-person meetings hosted by OVW and Vera, webinar participation, and any other activities that support the success of the grant;
- Commit to Conflict Resolution Process) as agreed to by collaboration team, and outlined in this charter; (See Conflict Resolution Section)
- Commit to provide continuing education and ongoing policy review and updates as appropriate to the assessments and outcomes of the grant;
- Commit staff time and organizational resources as needed to the collaboration to ensure its success, which includes, but is not limited to replacing any team member who leaves their position within the organization, or any other factors that may lead to their displacement from the collaboration's team;
- Commit to and consistently implement a mutually agreed upon Communication Plan;(See Communication Plan Section)
- With input from the Team, submit requests for extensions to OVW;
- Delivery of information to The Arc Board of Directors regarding the grant, its funding, and any potential changes to the agency budget;
- Contribute expertise about providing services to people with IDD.

New Hope, Inc. will:

- Commit to enact organizational change as determined by the emPower BC needs assessment and strategic plan;
- Establish and maintain required fiscal commitment required to enact organizational changes determined by the grant requirements and established deliverables of empower BC. This includes establishing additional staff if so required to meet any needs identified as a result of the n needs assessment process;
- Participate fully in all steps of project development and implementation including technical assistance from VERA. This includes ongoing communication with VERA Liaison, webinar participation, and any other aactivities that support the success of the grant;
- Commit to Conflict Resolution Process as agreed to by collaboration team, and outlined in this charter; (See Conflict Resolution Section)
- Commit to provide continuing education and ongoing policy review and updates as appropriate to the assessments and outcomes of the grant;
- Commit staff time and organizational resources as needed to the collaboration to ensure its success, which includes, but is not limited to replacing any team member who leaves their position within the organization, or any other factors that may lead to their displacement from the collaboration's team;
- Commit to and consistently implement a mutually agreed upon Communication Plan;(See Communication Plan Section)
- Act as the primary liaison with programs of New Hope, Inc., its board, service users, employees, and other community stakeholders;
- Contribute expertise about providing services to survivors of SDV.

The emPower Bristol County Collaboration Team includes Project Directors (2), Agency Representatives (2), and Executive Agency Leadership (2).

These team members commit to the following:

The Project Directors (one from each collaboration agency)

- Champion the emPower BC Collaboration in each of their agencies;
- Provide summaries of Collaboration activities within their home organizations as needed ;
- Build and maintain positive relationships within both their home and partner organization ;
- Lead the emPower BC Collaboration through the development phase and oversee the implementation phase of the work plan;
- Draft and finalize deliverables based on team input, concepts and decisions;
- Find or create and maintain a library of necessary resources for successful completion of the grant or change implementation in each organization;
- Conduct the VERA organizational capacity indicator assessment;
- Coordinate necessary interagency cross -training;
- Co-facilitate collaboration meetings, work groups, and assessment interviews;
- Guide and resolve conflict within the collaboration using the outlined conflict resolution guidelines;
- Utilize chain of command for conflicts that require executive intervention;
- Co-facilitate collaboration team meetings a minimum of 2 (two) times per month. each meeting a minimum of 3 (three) hours;

- Communicate with Co -Director on an ongoing basis, meet a minimum of 1 one time per week;
- Communicate any and all information to the team that may have a significant impact on the collaboration's work and will communicate such in a timely and meaningful time line to the full Collaborative Team;
- Successfully manage the timeline of deliverables as outlined in the Work Plan;
- Act as the primary liaison to VERA and OVW (Project Director from the Arc of Bristol County);
- Fully participate in all VERA technical assistance as required and appropriate. This includes participation in VERA sponsored webinars;
- Submit all reports to OVW. (Project Director from the Arc of Bristol County).

Agency Representatives:

- Attend collaboration meetings as scheduled (twice a month for 3 hours) and complete any outside tasks assigned by the collaboration team;
- Fulfill their assigned roles on the team;
 - At the time of writing, the core team consists of one project director from each agency, a staff representative from each agency, and the Executive Directors from each organization (participating as available);
- Provide summaries of Collaboration activities within their home organizations on a regular basis during leadership team and board meetings;
- Champion the emPower BC Collaboration within each of their agencies;
- Update the collaboration team regarding big changes at their home organization;
- Participate in in -person meetings including but not limited to technical assistance meetings as well as attend grant related webinars;
- Engage fully in the all aspects and stages of the grant process, including development of all deliverables;
- Provide new Collaboration Team Members with clear expectations and commitments of their role on the team, as well as the vision, mission and philosophies of grant. New members are advised of meeting commitments and work group activities. Introductions will also be provided; including agency role, expertise brought to table, etc.

Executive Agency Leadership:

- Executive Leadership will actively participate in consensus and decision making activities including those relevant to grant deliverables;
- Executive Leadership approves all grant deliverables;
- Executive Leadership may serve in the capacity of Organizational Representative;
- Holds final decision making authority for own agency when collaboration team requires executive level Intervention or decision making. This includes but is not limited to conflict resolution. Works with other collaborative executive leader on matters affecting full collaboration team;
- Seeks own Agency Board of Directors input on matters that require such;
- Lead agency Executive Leader will consult directly with VERA/OVW as needed to ensure best interest of collaboration team.

Decision Making Authority

Decisions made by emPower BC will embody our collective dedication to our established vision, mission, and values.

emPower BC is committed to a Decision Making Process that values the contributions of all of its members at all levels of participation and authority.

It is recognized that the variety and purpose of decisions made are considerable and that meaningful outcomes are reliant on following commitments of purpose:

- Maintaining project values and outcomes;
- Thoughtful consideration of changes to substantive and conceptual elements of collaborative agreements;
- Design and submission of quality deliverables in a timely fashion;
- Responsible Fiscal decisions;
- Meeting schedule and formal commitments;
- Review of other proposals and decisions presented with intent to sustain the collaboration and its mutual work and goals .

Our Decision Making Process is outlined below with consideration of these levels of decision making authority:

- Collaboration Level
- Organizational Level
- Lead Agency Level
- Project Director Level

Decision Making Process

Administrative Decisions: We recognize that not all decisions require the full collaboration to develop a consensus and may be made by the following entities.

Project Directors:

- Agency Project Directors draft and edit deliverables based on the collaboration team's collective thinking and feedback. Deliverables are arrived at based on collaboration's decision making process as identified in this charter document.
- Consultation with OVW/Vera Technical Assistance
- Coordinating and facilitating collaboration meetings:
 - Creating agendas with Team Member input.
 - Scheduling meetings with Team Member input.
 - Preparing materials for meetings.
 - Assigning tasks to Team Members.
- Utilization of conflict resolution and as mentioned, its decision -making process.
- Reflect on and evaluate the group process, performance and the performance of Team Members.
- Submit deliverables to Vera after approval by Team Members; and to OVW after approval by both Team Members and Executive Leadership.
- Represent collaboration to other grantees in situations such as the project director listserv and conference calls, and all grantee meetings.
- Submit required reporting and progress documents.

Organizational Level; Executive Leadership of the Founding Organizations

- Propose changes in policy and budget to each agency's Board of Directors
- Approve proposed changes to policy and budget with Board of Directors approval as needed
- Hiring and retention of agency employees
- Approving and signing MOUs
- Reviewing and approving policies and project budgets for their own organizations
- Approving how to implement the strategic plan within their organizations
- Prioritizing fiscal decisions as put forth in the strategic plan

Lead Agency Level; The Arc of Bristol County (Grantee/Fiscal Agent)

- Hiring and retention of its employees working on the OVW grant
- Preparation and submission of budget reports
- Termination of the collaboration with New Hope, Inc. if substantial difficulties or disagreements occur that impact the ability of The Arc to successfully meet the requirements of the grant that cannot be resolved
- Work with the Team to determine allocation of discretionary grant funds and provide final approval of project budget
- Submit fiscal reports to OVW

Organizational Level; New Hope, Inc. (Sub-grantee)

- Billing the Grantee (the Arc) in accordance with the budget and deadlines defined by the Grantor.
- Providing needed components of reports to The Arc with ample time to be included in reporting documents.
- Hiring and retention of its employees working on the OVW grant
- Delivery of information about the grant, its funding, and changes to the budget to the New Hope Board of Directors.
- New Hope may withdraw from the contract with The Arc if substantial difficulties or disagreements cannot be resolved.

Collaborative Decisions, which require the consensus of the Collaboration Team, are vital to the success of emPower BC and its work.

Collaborative Level; Collaboration Team Members:

- Set the direction of the collaboration's work including its vision, mission and philosophies.
- Work with the fiscal manager to determine how to allocate discretionary grant funds.
- Determine the ideal qualities of Team Members and Project Directors for the success of the project and provide input to Executive Leadership regarding selection of new Team Members and Project Directors. Determine and request changes to the collaboration work process including setting priorities and timelines, determining the schedule and length of meetings etc.
- Initiate decision-making and conflict resolution process.
- Review and request changes to agenda and minutes.
- Reflect on and evaluate the group process, the Project Directors' performance and their performance.
- Determine when to consult internal and external stakeholders, including Vera and OVW in regards to the development of deliverables.

- If determined appropriate by the Team, initiate contact with Vera or OVW following guidelines set in our [External Communication](#) plan.
- Approve deliverables prior to sending to Vera and OVW.
- Represent the collaboration to other grantees in situations such as all-grantee meetings.

Consensus Decision Making

emPower BC and its founding organizations value working together collaboratively and will use consensus decision making as our method for determining the course of the project. The Project Directors will be responsible for facilitating consensus development within the collaboration team.

In line with our values, our consensus model acknowledges:

- Every voice matters. It is our responsibility to ensure that all parties contribute when making decisions that affect our agencies and service users.
- We make decisions in the interest of fulfilling our mission. We recognize, through the process of needs assessment and strategic planning, we may identify needed changes that will impact each of the founding organizations financially and structurally. While many of these decisions will require approval from organizational Boards of Directors, the collaboration team will put forth plans that are mutually agreed upon and serve our mission.
- Consensus decision-making does not mean that all members agree with all the details of the decision or that individuals have changed their own ideas and perspectives; it means that every member has reached a mutual understanding, agrees to support a decision, and commits to taking action on the decision for the benefit of the collaboration and project.

For our purposes, we have defined the five-point scale for easy measurement of our consensus process and defined some guiding questions to move consensus building forward when stuck.

Instructions for using this scale:

- Consensus is reached if all six voting members (Project Directors, Organizational Representatives and Executive Leadership from each founding agency) submit a 4 or 5 approval response.
- People who are submitting a 4 will be given the opportunity to offer potential changes or solutions that would move their vote to a 5.
- If any member of the team submits a response lower than a four, the team will investigate concerns based on the clarifying questions designated below.
- If discussion becomes unproductive or a consensus cannot be reached; the team will set aside the discussion for the duration of the current meeting. At the end of the meeting, action items (e.g. finding more relevant information or researching alternative solutions developed by others) will be assigned to the appropriate team members along with deadlines for providing that information to other team members in advance of the next meeting.
- All decisions must receive a full consensus of the Collaboration Team to be placed into action.

Scale Measure		Clarifying questions to move forward consensus
5	Yes—Let's do it!	<input type="checkbox"/> What do you like about the proposed decision?
4	Ok—It's good enough.	<input type="checkbox"/> What aspects do you like about the proposed decision? <input type="checkbox"/> Why do you believe this is the best decision for the collaboration? <input type="checkbox"/> What hesitations do you have? <input type="checkbox"/> What would need to change for you to be able to agree?
3	Maybe —I have questions.	<input type="checkbox"/> What parts do you like? <input type="checkbox"/> What parts don't you like? <input type="checkbox"/> What hesitations do you have? <input type="checkbox"/> What information do you need? <input type="checkbox"/> What would need to change for you to agree?
2	Wait—Can we change it?	<input type="checkbox"/> What aspects do you like /dislike about the proposed decision? <input type="checkbox"/> What would need to change for you to be able to agree? <input type="checkbox"/> What further information do you need? <input type="checkbox"/> What facts could make a difference?
1	Let's do something else.	<input type="checkbox"/> What are your specific concerns? <input type="checkbox"/> Can you tell us why you feel this way? <input type="checkbox"/> How can we address your concerns? <input type="checkbox"/> What choices/decisions would you suggest? <input type="checkbox"/> Is there anything you do like?

Conflict and Resolution

In line with our values around autonomy and consensus, empower BC believes conflict can produce conversation, ideas, and new points of view. We aim to keep the conflict that arises within our collaboration positive and productive. As such, we have outlined the following expectations and practices for resolving conflict:

Expectations

- Conflict within the collaboration will be met with the assumption that it is instrumental to our consensus process and brought forward with the intent of helping us achieve our mission and vision;
- When conflict arises throughout the collaboration process, while feelings will be recognized and validated, decisions will be made based on facts and the best interest of emPower BC and its founding agencies;
- In managing conflict, all parties will maintain honesty and respect and support the dignity of all involved.

Resolution

When Conflict occurs that cannot be managed by individuals or has affected the group dynamic, the following steps will apply:

- If a conflict occurs between two individuals within the collaboration, the Program Directors will work with the involved parties to mediate the conflict and strategize a resolution. As appropriate, the Project Directors will engage the collaboration team for feedback on proposed resolution strategy. If the full collaboration team (which includes Executive Leadership) is unable to resolve conflict, the Project Director will seek guidance from Vera. If still unresolved, guidance will be sought from OVW.
- If the conflict is happening within the overall group, the Project Directors and collaboration team will:
 - Acknowledge the conflict within the group;
 - Solicit information and input from participants about the cause of the conflict and proposed solutions for resolution;
 - The Project Directors will discuss the conflict and develop a plan to mitigate the conflict within the group;
 - If the Project Directors are unable to solve the conflict, they may enlist other members of the collaboration team to work on a plan of action;
 - If the full collaboration team is unable to resolve conflict, the Project Directors will seek guidance from Vera and /or OVW.
- If a conflict is based in decision making or around a concept within the Collaboration team, emPower BC will follow our Consensus Decision Making. In the event our consensus model is not successful in mitigating conflict, the collaboration team will determine what further information is needed to relieve the conflict, designate a person or people to find the necessary information, and revisit the conflict at the next collaboration meeting.
- The general escalation plan for resolving conflict is:
 - 1-1: Individuals involved in the conflict will attempt to resolve the conflict together;
 - PD involvement: Project Directors will assist with conflict resolution;
 - Executive level: If conflict cannot be resolved by the Project Directors or is between the Project Directors, assistance will be requested from the Executives at each of the founding organizations;
 - In the event conflict cannot be resolved by members of the collaboration, assistance will be sought first from Vera Technical Assistance, followed by OVW.

Communication Plan

emPower BC recognizes that for the collaboration to work best together, clear guidelines and expectations for communicating with one another, with our agencies, with outside parties, and with the media is imperative for the integrity of our project. To ensure effective and timely communication, emPower BC defines the following communication guidelines:

Internal Communication

Within the emPower BC Team

- Collaboration members will uphold and maintain direct and transparent communication with one another.
- Individual collaboration members will keep the collaboration abreast of anything occurring within individual organizations that could impact the collaboration's work. Some examples include staffing changes of key decision makers, policy changes related to the project, or crisis communication.
- When making major decisions within the collaboration that could impact each organization or would require information from each organization that **individual** collaboration team members do not have, individual members will seek information from executive committee members to provide to the collaboration. These discussions may take place during monthly collaboration meetings that the executive committee has committed to attend.

Meetings

- Project Directors and Agency Representatives will convene at least twice per month for four hours with Executive Leadership joining as their schedule permits. Upon their determination or that of the other collaboration members that their presence is necessary, the Project Directors will be responsible to make alternate arrangements that are suitable to the entire collaboration team.
- Whenever executive leadership is not in attendance, they will be advised of agenda in advance (as feasible) and updated by the appropriate Project Director no more than forty- eight hours after the meeting has been held.
- Project Directors, Organizational Representatives, and the Executive Leadership must be present for all major decisions including the direction of the collaboration's work, important discussions that affect major decision making, and finalizing products to be sent to Vera and the Office on Violence against Women.
- Meetings between the Project Directors will occur for 4 hours a month outside of collaboration team meetings.
- Additional collaboration meetings will be scheduled, as needed, during more intensive stages of the collaboration.
- Agendas include: items to be discussed/reviewed, location/date/time of meeting, and any other necessary information, which will be sent to collaboration team members at least seventy -two hours in advance of meeting date.
- All meetings are scheduled in advance. Meetings are scheduled with full team present (including Executive Leadership) to determine meeting dates and times that are conducive to all schedules. It is understood, that other executive duties or meeting conflicts may arise, resulting in one or both Executives having to excusing themselves from these scheduled meetings. In these cases, protocol is identified in this charter document will be implemented to seek advance input, provide

updates, schedule additional meeting time, and/or reschedule as most appropriate in honoring the best interest of the collaboration's work and identified timelines and outcomes.

- Bi-weekly agendas will include space for team-building, recognition of individual and/or group strengths, and review of current work process to evaluate any collaboration needs.
- During collaboration meetings, Project Directors will be responsible for structured note taking and putting notes in the form of weekly minutes.
- Project Directors will distribute minutes via email after each Collaboration Team meeting.
- Prior to the next- scheduled meeting, collaboration members are responsible for reviewing and coming prepared to discuss/approve weekly minutes and action items.
- There may be times when we choose not to meet due to specific times/alternative commitments in individual organizations, individual time-off, etc.
 - Should one or more team members be unable to attend a scheduled meeting, the collaboration may choose not to meet. The Project Directors will be responsible for communicating the anticipated absences in a timely manner to the full team, allowing for a collective decision to be made regarding cancellations or confirmations. The Program Directors will be responsible for notifying all team members of the decision, including rescheduled dates and times if applicable. Every effort will be made by all team members to provide ample notification of anticipated absences whenever feasible. This notification will be provided to one or both Project Directors, so that a decision about holding the meeting can be made in the most timely manner.
 - If there are deadlines that may be compromised due to a canceled meeting, the next meeting may be held longer in duration than normal to compensate for the missed time.
 - If the collaboration team members choose to meet without all team members present, no major decisions will be made that could impact the collaboration's direction. Also, nothing will be finalized until the collaboration as a whole can convene.
 - Individuals that cannot be present may choose to conference call into meetings, as needed.
 - During weeks when standing meetings do not take place, the Collaboration Team will make an effort as needed to meet either in person or via Conference call to reach consensus. As a last resort, emails are accepted for decisions needing to be approved on an urgent basis that cannot wait until the following scheduled meeting or until the full team can arrange a face to face team meeting.
- The Project Directors will convene meetings with individual collaboration members as needed. If meetings occur between individuals, they will notify the collaboration team members.
- If informal discussions related to the collaboration take place between individual members outside of collaboration meetings, any decisions (based on decision making authority) that impact the collaboration will be communicated to the collaboration team.

Emails

- If communication (including minor decisions and updates) is necessary outside of collaboration meetings, email communication is acceptable from Project Directors and other collaboration members.
- Emails that pertain to the entire collaboration will be addressed to all members. If an email only pertains to certain members of the collaboration and not the collaboration as a whole, the email author has the discretion not to send the email to the entire collaboration. If an email impacts any individual, that individual will be included in the email.
- The author of email will be clear with the needs of email request and/or timelines, such as when the collaboration needs to weigh-in on a decision, by when a response is needed, etc.
 - The author will make best effort to give two business days' notice to Collaboration members if a decision is needed. If two business days are not possible, author will use best judgment in making the decision.
 - If a response is not provided by the designated due date, collaboration members are forfeiting their ability to provide feedback and decision, and author may move forward using best judgment.
 - Those sending emails are to put timelines on when they need a response prior to the next meeting.
 - If a response is not provided, the author will move forward with decision making.

For scheduling personal time off

- Collaboration team members will provide dates of proposed time off to the rest of the collaboration for review whenever possible.
- Collaboration members can provide feedback and suggestions but are not responsible for providing final approval/denial.
- Individual members planning time off are to use best judgment and schedule time off at times that will not severely affect major events for the collaboration whenever possible.

With Collaboration Agencies

Each appointed collaboration team member within the collaboration is expected to notify and update each agency's governing members as follows:

- Provide monthly summaries of the collaboration's work and progress.
- Provide time sensitive updates (as necessary and as determined by the collaborative team) on grant progress and decisions.
- Provide notification of any decisions that could create a major impact on each/either organization, including financial, programmatic, policy, publicity or the community.
- Communicate all collaboration decisions that will impact each organization and/or the direction of project to ensure each organization is capable of completing the collaboration's work, to include, but not limited to staffing and all other fiscal implications (costs) of implementing and maintaining the grant's objectives and work.
- Work with governing members to ensure "by -in" of the work and necessary commitments of staff and other resources. Will also work with these members to establish and provide timely updates and communication throughout each agency.

With Working Group Members

In accordance with this charter, communication with members of emPower BC working groups will adhere to the same principles of openness and timeliness as outlined for Internal [Communication](#) conversations. Members of working groups will be held to the same standards of professionalism, confidentiality, and timeliness as Collaboration Team members.

External Communication

With the Vera Institute for Justice:

- The Project Directors is the appointed contact person for both incoming and outgoing communication.
 - All collaboration team members are approved to contact Vera directly, with the understanding that member is transparent about the need, seeks information from collaboration first (if possible), and that seeking support from Vera is the appropriate solution.
- Communication with Vera will include, but is not limited to requesting technical assistance, scheduling meetings and site visits, regularly scheduled telephone meetings updates, telephone and in -person support, and requesting assistance with conflict resolution.
- Communication can be made in the form of phone calls and emails as determined by the person making contact and can be as frequent as necessary to ensure thorough and consistent communication.
- The Project Directors will meet with Vera via conference call at least every other week, as scheduled by the Project Directors and Vera Senior Program Associate.
- Site visits will take place as determined between the collaboration and Vera.
- The Collaboration Team will reach consensus regarding which of emPower BC's deliverables will be available on the EndAbusePWD.org website.

With the Office on Violence Against Women:

- The Project Directors are the appointed contact persons for both incoming and outgoing communication.
 - If other members of the collaboration wish to communicate with OVW directly, they are to notify and utilize the Project Directors for all needs.
 - In the Project Directors' absences, they may designate another collaboration team member or supervisor as the point of contact.
- Communication with OVW will include, but is not limited to sending products/documents for final approval, budget modifications and updates, Grant Adjustment Modifications, semi -annual reports, quarterly reports, changes to the collaboration (staffing, partnership, direction, etc.), and for technical assistance.

With the local community and Media

emPower BC is dedicated to portraying and reinforcing the vision, mission, and values of the collaboration. It is important that all communication accurately and consistently express the collaboration's intangible attributes, such as its name, work, purpose, and way it is perceived by the community it aims to support. Communication includes, but is not limited to, newsletter articles, brochures, advertisements, press releases, crisis communication, event information, mass emails, website content, and presentations.

The aim of all communication is to provide the community with a consistent message of integrity regarding the work and mission of the collaboration. It is critical that over the

course of the grant period, all communications accurately represent the specific work and scope of resource the collaborating agencies can and cannot offer. It is critical that community members are clear as to when Empower Bristol will be better positioned to serve survivors with disabilities. It will be the collaboration (and its media outreach person's) responsibility to be clear that we will not be fully prepared to do so, at least until the end of the grant period.

The following provides guidelines and expectations for all external communication directed toward the media or for the purpose of public communication (such as presentations and announcements at meetings and training programs).

- Each founding organization has identified an in-house staff member who will serve as the media outreach point person:
 - **The Arc:** Klete Squires, Director of Development
 - **New Hope, Inc. :** Gabrielle Alan, Development & Marketing Director
 - **In addition to the media outreach person,** the Project Directors may be involved in external communications either with or without the point person as most appropriate to the situation at hand and as jointly determined by those referenced above.
- The collaboration has created [Talking Points](#) which provide the following information:
 - General framework and guidelines for all media and public communication: The talking points for communicating about emPower BC, The Arc of Bristol County, or New Hope, Inc. reflect our expectation that all individuals will communicate from the approved talking points. If further information is requested, the individual will refer the request to the Project **Directors**.
- Any time there is a communication event, request, or crisis, the point person from the contacted agency will solicit feedback from the Project Directors immediately to ensure consistent and timely communication within and outside of the collaboration parties.
- **Proactive Communication:** Used when our collaboration is sending outgoing communication to the media or public to highlight our work.
 - There are point persons at each organization that manage the organization's media and public communications, which the Project Directors will contact as needed.
 - The point persons will only provide information from the talking points.
 - The point persons will seek guidance and approval from the Project Directors and then as appropriate with the point person at other organization if Providing information outside of the approved talking points.
 - Prior to being sent, all press releases and media communication must receive final approval from the Project Directors. Project Directors will provide approval after consultation with the collaboration team to include Executive Leadership.
 - In the event that we create a formal press release, we will contact OVW and gain insight and approval prior to submission
- **Reactive Communication:** Used when our collaboration receives requests for communication about our work from the media or public.
 - There are identified point persons at each organization that manage their organization's media communication.
 - If the media or public contacts someone other than the point persons at either organization for information regarding emPower BC, all

individuals will be expected to refer requests directly to the point persons. (Each organization has its own internal process for directing communication requests to the appointed contact(s). Therefore, if any person within each organization receives a request, they will refer the request to the appointed contact, who will then refer the request to the point persons.

- The organizational point persons will provide information to the media or public from the talking points.
- If the communication request is for information outside of the approved talking points, the point persons will confer with the Project Director at their organization to be brought to the collaboration team for a decision. The Program Director(s) and point person(s) will make a determination on a case by case basis on the urgency of providing the requested information. In those cases when waiting for next scheduled team meeting is not in the best interest of the agency or the specific work of the grant, the protocol for bringing the team together for decision making (outside of standing meetings) will be implemented.
- **Crisis Communication:** Used when a crisis has occurred that relates to emPower BC, The Arc of Bristol County, or New Hope, Inc.
 - Each founding organization has a crisis communication plan and a designated crisis communication point person. If a crisis occurs, all communication requests that come to each organization will be directed to the crisis communication point person within that organization as already designated.
 - Each point person will have a copy of the talking points about the collaboration's work and can speak from this as needed without additional approval.
 - Each point person may refer further questions about the collaboration's work to the Project Directors as the next point of contact for anything related to the collaboration.
 - If the organization's communication point person receives information on a crisis related to the other organization, they will immediately notify the Project Directors, who will be responsible for notifying the point persons at the other organization as well as all collaboration team members.
 - The Project Directors will continue with phone calls until a live person is reached to communicate the crisis information.

Confidentiality

EmPower BC is committed to preserving the confidentiality policies of each organization and therefore the dignity and safety of the clients served. We recognize that working collaboratively to meet the goals of the grant, specifically to identify service gaps and needs within each organization, creates a need for members to share potentially sensitive information about their organization with one another. Therefore, a succinct confidentiality protocol is necessary to outline what can and cannot be shared between collaboration team members and from collaboration team members to their organizations, while honoring each organization's requirements regarding client confidentiality. To ensure we all hold to our confidentiality agreements, we commit to continually reminding one another of our expectations of one another, as well as to give specific reminders when sharing information that we expect to remain within the collaboration.

Confidential information allowed to be communicated among the collaboration members (such as through formal meetings or daily communication, and work group activities):

- Sensitive information about the individuals' organizations that would be requested to remain confidential. This information will be identified as such at onset of discussion, clearly stating that such information will remain exclusively within the collaboration team and its members unless specifically permitted to be shared at a later date.
- Documents and products prior to approval by the collaboration team members (such as meeting minutes, products from deliverables, etc.).
- Personal information about collaboration team members that members choose to share with one another.
- Examples of incidents that are of public domain from each organization that will not disclose any identifying information of clients (see below) for the purpose of learning about previous response efforts and important considerations.
 - Aggregate data (for example, totals/not individual information)
 - Non-identifying client -level information (for example, age vs. date of birth)
 - Case information can be reviewed only as it relates directly to the work of the grant and only in an overview context with all personal identifiers; such as names, addresses, and date of birth being redacted from all related dialogue and documents presented during collaboration team meetings.

Information that cannot be shared within the collaboration due to confidentiality requirements

- Personnel matters or issues regarding any collaboration team members, work group members, focus groups, or any other employees from each organization.
- Confidential information about our organizations that has not been approved for public knowledge or at a minimum specifically authorized by Executive Leadership to be shared with collaboration.
- Identifying client information, including but not limited to:
 - Name(s) of clients, victims, perpetrators, family members, and staff
 - Addresses
 - Contact information
 - Social security number
 - Date of birth
 - Racial, ethnic, or religious identity
 - Appearance

- Where they work
- Who their guardians/parents are
- What services they receive
- Outside service providers
- Case details
- Information regarding a person's disability
- Any other combined information that would identify an individual or in any way violated HIPPA regulations

The collaboration recognizes and takes very seriously, the potential impact and risk to the personal safety of this population, when confidential information is shared without knowledge or permission of the person receiving services.

The collaboration will not share confidential information of this nature outside the parameters of agency policy and mandated reporting regulations. As appropriate, proper effort will be made to encourage the individual to self-report, or participate directly in any reports made to authorities. All appropriate support will be offered in each case. As stated in the mandatory reporting section of this charter, individuals considering disclosure will be pre-advised of all agency reporting requirements, therefore allowing them to make a well informed decision about disclosure.

Information to be communicated by collaboration team members to both organizations

When communicating with our individual organizations: We agree to and are permitted to share the following information with our individual organizations via email, verbally, and in meeting minutes and quarterly updates. All information will be released to the organizations upon consensus of the collaboration team.

- Information about our organizations that would impact the collaboration's work, such as organizational challenges, issues, internal operations, funding changes, and staffing changes among governing members and other key decision makers and program staff ,
- Progress updates with organization staff to keep them updated on the collaboration's work and to maintain organizational engagement.
- Documents and products in the development phase with consensus from the collaboration team members.
- Documents and products once the collaboration team members reach consensus or approve the documents, such as meeting minutes, monthly updates, and products from deliverables.
- Finalized products prior to sending to OVW.
- Information about our organizations that have been requested to remain confidential by collaboration members, such as organizational challenges, issues, internal operations, and staffing.
- Interpersonal conflicts within the collaboration members without consensus from The collaboration.

Mandated Reporting

The Arc and New Hope each have their own specific policies regarding confidentiality and mandated reporting based on the requirements of Massachusetts Law and Guidelines. These guidelines identify three groups for whom staff and affiliates of the agencies must adhere to mandated reporting policies. These groups are minor children (M.G.L. c. 119 § 51A), people with disabilities (M.G.L. c. 19C, § 10), patients living in nursing homes or managed care (M.G.L. c. 111, § 72G), and adults age 60 and older (as defined in MGL c. 19A §15).

We recognize that aligning our values regarding autonomy and inclusion and meeting our reporting requirements may sometimes seem at odds. To this end, we have defined the following strategies to support autonomy and empowerment for people with IDD who may disclose abuse or assault:

- We will notify people that we are mandated reporters early in conversation, using plain language. (E.g. I can keep anything you say between us, unless it involves you being hurt or hurting someone else.)
When a mandatory report is required, we will involve the survivor in reporting to the relevant regulator agency. This can involve facilitating a self-report or making a report with involvement from the survivor.
- While mandatory reporting supersedes our privilege, we acknowledge that when making accommodations for a survivor that involves the presence of a designated trusted person (to be chosen by the survivor); the staff member must inform all parties that privilege granted to SDV workers may be compromised. The forthcoming guide from The Building Partnerships for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities Initiative (a collaboration between the Massachusetts Office of Victims Assistance and disability service providers) offers guidance around this topic, but the privileges defined in 20J and 20K (Appendix 2: Relevant MA Specific Legislation) may not apply when there is a 3rd. party present during confidential sessions.

Needs Assessment Considerations

Although the needs assessment does not directly inquire about a client's history of abuse, there is the potential for a disclosure to take place during this phase of the project. Therefore, agreements and planning are necessary to prepare for the response **of such disclosures.**

- If a disclosure is made, emPower BC will follow Massachusetts Mandatory Reporting policies,
- A discussion will be held during the needs assessment preparation phase as to what the appropriate process is for conducting the needs assessment to ensure careful consideration of mandatory reporting and confidentiality requirements of each organization.
- Information on MA Mandatory Reporting Statutes is included in Appendix 2: Relevant MA Specific Legislation

Work Plan

emPower Bristol County projects the following timeline for completion of its deliverables with a target implementation date of May 1, 2018.

Event	Target start date	Completed by
Collaboration Charter	March 2017	July 7, 2017
Approval by OVW	July 2017	
Complete Performance Indicators	April 2017	
Statement of Focus	August 2017	
Approval by OVW		
Develop Needs Assessment Plan	June 1, 2017	September 8, 2017
Approval by OVW	September 2017	
Conduct Needs Assessment	Upon OVW Approval	October 31, 2017
Complete Performance Indicators	September 2017	
Develop Findings Report	November 1, 2017	December 15, 2017
Approval by OVW	January 2018	
Develop Strategic Plan	February 1, 2018	March 15, 2018
Approval by OVW	April 2018	
Implementation	May 2018	October 2019

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Appendix 1: Media and Public Communication Talking Points

- The Arc of Bristol County and New Hope, Inc. have been awarded a three- year, \$500,000 grant from the US Department of Justice, Office of Violence against Women to address sexual and domestic violence against people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.
- The funds through OVW will be used to build collaboration, emPower Bristol County, which will conduct a needs assessment within each agency and among the people we serve to determine where there are gaps in SDV services for people with IDD and to then implement a strategic plan to address those gaps in a sustainable manner .
- The grant will allow emPower BC to enhance the services each agency currently offers to meet the needs of survivor s with IDD. We also intend to increase awareness of the high -risk level of people with IDD for violence.
- Quote from Joe Kennedy about the collaboration: “As a former prosecutor focused on domestic violence cases, I have seen firsthand how critical it is that survivors get the support they need to recover from trauma and move forward. For those with IDD, accessing these resources can be a particular challenge. These federal dollars and the collaboration they support will help us ensure that no one suffering from the horror of domestic violence is left to fend for themselves.”
- It is estimated that between 70% to 90% of people with ID will experience sexual exploitation, abuse or assault in their lifetime (DPPC, 2011).
 - Of those who experience assault, 49% will be victimized more than 10 times (DPPC, 2011).
- When looking at the perpetrators of abuse, 91% of perpetrators fall into the categories of friend, family or caregiver (UWOSH, 2008).

Appendix 2: Relevant MA Specific Legislation and Policies

M.G.L. 19C: Authority of the Disabled Persons Protection Commission

M.G.L. 119 51A: Mandatory Reporting of abuse against a Child

M.G.L 209 A: Abuse Prevention

M.G.L 258E: Harassment Protection

M.G.L 265: Crimes against the Person

§13A: Assault and Battery

§13B: Indecent Assault and Battery on a Minor

§13F: Indecent Assault and battery on a person with an intellectual disability

§13H: Indecent assault and battery on a person fourteen or older

§15B: Strangulation or suffocation; penalty; batterer's intervention program

§22: Rape, generally; weapons; punishment; eligibility for furlough, education, training or employment programs

§24C: Victim's Name; confidentiality

§43: Stalking; punishment

§43A: Criminal harassment; punishment

§50: Trafficking of persons for forced service

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§4.00: Records

§5.00 Standards to Promote Dignity

§7.00 Standards for All Services and Supports

§9.00 Investigations and Reporting Responsibilities

§10.00 Research