

Deaf Gain Collaborative Strategic Plan November 2017



This project is supported by Grant No. 2015-FW-AX-K004 awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

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Overview of the Deaf Gain Collaborative

Introduction:

Deaf people have long been viewed - by people with the ability to hear - as having “hearing loss.” This label is reinforced by the medical community, which perceives hearing loss or hearing impairment as a condition that warrants medical intervention. Therefore, in an effort to create a paradigm shift that is holistic and cultural in nature, the Deaf community has adopted “Deaf Gain” as a term that advanced the notion that being Deaf has its advantages (or gains) in terms of its rich heritage, culture, and language. This collaboration will benefit from the richness of the Deaf community and the beginning of a long-term relationship with the Deaf community. Accordingly, we have decided to name this collaboration *Deaf Gain Collaborative: Where Connection Begin*.

Vision, Mission & Values:

The Deaf Gain Collaborative’s vision is to transform our community to become culturally and linguistically competent in addressing the needs of Deaf survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. This will pave the way for the development and implementation of inclusive and barrier-free solutions.

In pursuit of this vision, our mission is to develop a network of agencies that proactively address the barriers to providing linguistically and culturally competent services to Deaf survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. This mission includes the following goals:

- Creating organizational cultures that are sensitive to the unique intersectionality of domestic violence and sexual violence with survivors from the Deaf community.
- Building individual agency’s capacity and infrastructure to respond in a timely manner to the cultural and linguistic needs of Deaf survivors, which includes an in-depth understanding and familiarity with effective modes of communication and culturally-relevant considerations impacting the provision of crisis intervention, safety planning, advocacy, counseling, and educational services.
- Institutionalizing these changes throughout all agencies with the development and implementation of interagency referrals.
- Deepening and strengthening the relationship of the three partner agencies within the Deaf Gain Collaborative to foster an ongoing commitment to best practices guided by input from the Deaf community.

Our goals will be accomplished by embracing, among others, the following practices:

- Provide ongoing education and training to all service providers through the development and dissemination of intensive and ongoing training programs.
- Establish agency-wide policies and protocols based on cultural and linguistic competency that covers all potential points of contact for Deaf survivors.
- Establish fiscal practices that ensure the availability of resources to support the language access and inclusion of Deaf survivors in the agency’s programs and services.

- Assess the physical accessibility of agency's facilities and develop a plan to effectively accommodate Deaf survivors.
- Designate cultural broker(s) to facilitate cultural differences and increase each agency's cultural competency.
- Share educational resources and culturally competent community resources tailored to the needs of each individual Deaf survivor.

As we formed the charter, we came up with the values that are so important to the Deaf Gain Collaborative and the important work we are doing. These values were carefully chosen - each member identified their own individual values as well as their agency's values. These values are reflected on the cover page of this Strategic Plan:

Access/ibility

We believe that accessibility of our facilities and services is a fundamental right, which means that anything offered and available to a hearing individual is also offered and available to a Deaf individual. This includes the absence of physical/environmental barriers, the ability to communicate and be understood, attitudes of acceptance and respect, the absence of discrimination, the availability of necessary accommodations, and committed financial resources.

Bilingual and Cultural Competency

We believe in continually building our collective cultural competency within our collaboration and ultimately within our agencies. Since culture and language are fused together, we strive to be bilingual (American Sign Language/English) in our collaboration.

Collaboration

We believe a successful interdependent collaboration that holds each other accountable in a transparent fashion will pave the way for desired systemic changes within our agencies. The end result is to significantly increase our organizations' capacities to meet the needs of survivors in the Deaf community.

Community Driven

We believe in the inherent value of the experiences of Deaf survivors and other members of the Deaf community. In our work together, we will explore existing practices, system issues, and accessibility. The input derived from the community's stories and experiences will be at the forefront of our minds when we plan and implement the systemic changes. Furthermore, we are mindful of the fact that we must be survivor-centered and that survivors are experts on their own situation.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality - a normative practice honored in the DV/SV field - must be honored with the awareness that confidentiality violations carry a significantly increased risk to Deaf

survivors given the close knit nature of the Deaf community. We will also safeguard the personal disclosures of the collaboration members.

Empathy

We believe that empathy comes from understanding how trauma affects people in different ways.

Empowerment

The individuals we support will be empowered by knowing they are understood, that there are options other than isolation and abuse, and by having their voices heard and listened to.

Safety

Safety is a fundamental value. Everyone has the right to live their lives free from fear, danger, harm, violence, control, and abuse. Many Deaf survivors would likely share common safety considerations which include but are not limited to the following: accessible facilities, on-demand access to communication in his/her preferred method, access to qualified and skilled interpreters, working with culturally competent service providers, freedom from social and/or linguistic isolation, and frequent assurance and practice of a heightened level of confidentiality.

Self-Care

We recognize and honor the need in each one of us to practice self-care and maintain work-life balance to minimize vicarious trauma. We recognize that each one of us has different ways to do this and support their requests.

Transparency

We will act in the best interest of the collaboration, and those we serve, with the highest levels of professionalism and integrity. As such, we will be transparent in our work together. Everyone should feel equally engaged, informed and free to share their expertise with anyone within this group; this imperative also extends to our consultants, service providers, and survivors. Furthermore, missteps should be acknowledged and used as experiences from which to learn and grow. Accordingly, our conversations shall be rooted in respect and trust.

Formation & Staffing:

Three agencies make up the Deaf Gain Collaborative: Willow Domestic Violence Center (Willow), RESTORE Sexual Assault Services (RESTORE) and IGNITE (formerly Advocacy Services for Abused Deaf Victims (ASADV)). This work is funded through the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Disability Program. The Deaf Gain Collaborative was formed in order to better serve the needs of Deaf survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Below you will find the roles of each agency and the services we provide.

Willow Domestic Violence Center

Willow is the Monroe County service provider, licensed by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services that provides residential and nonresidential support services to survivors of domestic violence and their children. Willow provides crisis intervention and a wide range of support services to women, children and men who are survivors of domestic violence. Willow has several core programs to support the needs of survivors: a 24-hour Hotline, Emergency Shelter, Children's Program, Counseling Center, Court Advocacy Program and Education & Training Program. Each of these programs will be assessed and made Deaf-friendly in order to effectively serve Deaf survivors. Currently, sign language interpreters are routinely offered and arranged for the small number of Deaf survivors seeking Willow services.

Willow's trained advocates answer the agency's hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide safety planning, information and support with the following two goals:

- Enabling the client to make informed choices concerning safety, medical, legal and counseling needs
- Offering advocacy and information about their rights.

After nearly forty years at a previous location, Willow designed and built a 35,000 square foot, state of the art, 49 bed facility that opened in December 2016. The new facility provides enhanced safety and expanded range of services while maintaining client's individuality and dignity.

The Court Advocacy Program (CAP), located in the Monroe County Hall of Justice, provides advocacy services for survivors navigating the legal system and provides assistance, guidance, and support in obtaining Order of Protections (OPs). This office partners with the Legal Aid Society of Rochester, Monroe County Probation and court staff to ensure seamless services for clients. CAP occasionally work with Deaf survivors and anticipates improving its ability to serve Deaf survivors as a result of the Deaf Gain Collaborative's work.

Willow's Counseling Center offers support groups and one-on-one counseling sessions for survivors of domestic violence. Counseling sessions are offered in person, via phone, text, and/or instant messages, depending on the safety, accessibility and choice of client. In addition, the counseling center offers specific workshops on topics relevant to survivors (financial, medical, legal and safety) several times every month.

Extensive community education programs are in place to educate the community about domestic violence and healthy relationships which includes RIT/NTID where there is a high number of Deaf students.

The HEAL Clinic at Strong Memorial Hospital provides a safe place for survivors to receive support and care when in the hospital. The HEAL clinic hosts a multidisciplinary team, including a full time Willow Advocate, to assist clients with medical, mental

health, advocacy and petition support. Petitions are conducted on the premises for electronic submission to the courts. In addition, clients have the opportunity to see the judge via Skype if they are not able to physically go to court. Furthermore, Strong Memorial Hospital has a team of sign language interpreters on staff with 24/7 coverage as well as the Deaf Wellness Center, a counseling center dedicated to the Deaf community with therapists who are often Deaf and are all fluent in American Sign Language.

In addition to the core services listed above, Willow maintains numerous partnerships with community service providers including the YWCA of Monroe County, the Humane Society at Lollypop Farms, the Society for Protection and Care of Children, and Mount Hope Counseling Center, among many others, to provide direct services to survivors.

RESTORE

RESTORE, which is the Department of Health certified sexual assault program in Monroe County, leads the community's response to sexual assault through advocacy and education by providing safety, support and validation that changes the lives of all those affected. RESTORE provides crisis intervention and support services 24 hours a day, seven days a week to women, children and men who are survivors of sexual assault as well as their families. RESTORE is both funded and trained through the Department of Health.

Trained advocates provide information, support and referrals, enabling clients to make informed choices concerning medical, legal and counseling needs (individual and group), while offering advocacy and information about their rights. Counselors also offer short-term counseling sessions, legal/court and medical accompaniment and assistance with the Office of Victim Services. RESTORE also provides community education and professional training programs on the various topics related to sexual assault. Currently, sign language interpreters are routinely offered and arranged for the small number of Deaf survivors seeking any of RESTORE's services.

In providing direct support to survivors, RESTORE collaborates with the following:

- Bivona Child Advocacy Center to provide services for children and their families who have been either physically or sexually abused.
- Most colleges and universities in Monroe County to provide an advocate and educator to work on their campuses.
- All law enforcement departments and agencies in Monroe County to provide legal advocacy and sexual assault trainings in addition to partnering with the law enforcement victim advocates.
- All hospitals in Monroe County to provide medical advocacy and accompaniment to victims of sexual assault when they go to the hospital emergency room due to a sexual assault.

Through service on a number of community committees, RESTORE is positioned to disseminate information and best practices from the Deaf Gain Collaborative's work.

IGNITE

IGNITE provides support to the Deaf community and to Deaf, DeafBlind and hard of hearing individuals, families, and children who are survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse. They also support the needs of other members of the Deaf community including Children of Deaf Adults (CODAs) and other signers.

IGNITE offers a safe and supportive environment of advocacy, education and services. Their advocacy work includes medical, law enforcement, legal and court settings. They accompany survivors and provide support throughout each of the respective processes.

In addition to advocacy, they offer empowerment and counseling services through empowerment sessions, individual counseling, group counseling/support groups, individual art therapy and Art Circles. IGNITE also supports survivors through safety planning and crisis intervention. Their connections with the community come primarily through referrals and as well as their education and outreach programs including social media channels.

It is important to note that IGNITE went through a rebranding process this year. The agency name changed from Advocacy Services for Abused Deaf Victims (ASADV) to IGNITE in order to blend in today's trend.

While we are starting the third year of the grant's lifecycle, there have been several changes in staffing. For Willow, Susan Demers-McLetchie came on board in September 2017 as the Inclusion Project Manager. Susan is culturally Deaf and hails from an all-Deaf family. She holds a Master's degree in human resource development from Rochester Institute of Technology and a Bachelor's degree in accounting from Gallaudet University. Susan manages the Deaf Gain Collaborative and will lead the partnership into its strategic planning and implementation phases. She is bilingual, a long time Deaf community advocate and has held various leadership roles over the years. Susan uses American Sign Language (ASL) as her primary method of communication. Susan replaced Rupert Dupler, also culturally Deaf who left the agency due to relocation. Rupert was with the Deaf Gain Collaborative for approximately 2/3 of the grant cycle and led the collaborative through Charter and Needs Assessment phases.

Janine Lucas, Director of Grants Administration and Evaluation, who is hearing and a 12-year veteran at Willow is now supervising the Inclusion Project Manager and has been a partner in the Collaborative since April 2017. Janine holds a Master of Public Administration in Health Care Management and a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology, both from the State University of New York at Brockport. Janine assumed the role in the partnership formerly held by Jeff Pier, Director of Program & Services, who recently left Willow.

Last but not least, Jaime Saunders, Willow's President/CEO, is leaving in January after five successful years to become the President and CEO of the United Way of Rochester. The Board of Directors and Jaime have started the search process to select a candidate with high qualifications and experience to lead Willow in the years to come and we do not anticipate any impact on operations.

For IGNITE, Brittany Ellenbecker, who just relocated to Rochester, started her role as an advocate with IGNITE in the spring of 2017 along with Jackie Pransky, also an advocate who has been with IGNITE for a year. Both advocates are culturally Deaf, bilingual and communicate in ASL. Brittany holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education from Gallaudet University. Prior to IGNITE, Brittany worked in the field of domestic violence with Emerge and the city of Tucson (AZ) which was supported by a grant prior. Jackie received a Bachelor's Degree in clinical psychology from Rochester Institute of Technology and was employed as a Deaf health research assistant before starting with IGNITE.

Erin Esposito, who is Deaf and retiring from the Executive Director role with IGNITE, is still with the agency part time supporting the Deaf Gain Collaborative and focusing on IGNITE grants. IGNITE is going through executive leadership changes at the time of writing.

There are two members from RESTORE in this collaborative: Michelle Cammarata, an Advocate and Mary Jo Marino, Manager of Education & Outreach, both of whom are hearing. Michelle is a graduate of SUNY Brockport with a Bachelor of Science degree in Health Science with a concentration in Community Health Education. Michelle also has her certification Alcohol and Substance Abuse Studies and is a certified Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor. Mary Jo holds a Master of Arts in Counselor Education from St. Bonaventure University and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from St. John Fisher College. Both Michelle and Mary Jo have been with the Deaf Gain Collaborative since its infancy.

While unexpected changes happened over the last year which delayed the timeline, we are very well positioned to build on our solid foundation. We view the changes as opportunities to strengthen this collaborative project. Moreover, we are committed to making this valuable and much-needed project work with the unique talents and perspectives that we bring to the table.

Our collaboration has decided that any decision that impacts the collaboration's overall vision, values, or direction must be made through consensus. We follow the decision-making process and authority that was developed in the Charter.

Vera Institute's Immersion Training

IGNITE's own Jackie Pransky and Amber Lingenfelter, representing Willow Domestic Violence Center, attended Vera Institute's immersion training on the implementation phase in Kansas City from June 20-21, 2017. They visited two domestic violence agencies in Kansas City and brought rich information from the Immersion Training back to Rochester for us to work with.

Our Collaborative Meetings

The Deaf Gain Collaborative has met on a weekly basis since the beginning of the grant award (October 2015). As mentioned under the Formation & Staffing above, the collaborative consists of six individuals (2 Willow staff, 2 RESTORE staff and 2 IGNITE staff) in addition to ASL/English interpreters. Three of the partners are Deaf and three are hearing which balances the group nicely bringing in diverse perspectives.

The Inclusion Project Manager leads and facilitates any and all collaboration meetings. It is customary within this collaboration for each agency to share its updates at the beginning of each meeting. Each member of the full collaboration has been trained on how to work effectively with sign language interpreters and continue to build cultural competency in this area. Meetings are not held if there are no representatives from a respective agency present. We continue to work independently outside of meetings on issues related to this project and continue to communicate with each other as needed on a regular basis.

Deaf Gain Collaborative's Needs Assessment

Needs Assessment Process & Methodology

This collaboration proceeded with steps outlined in the Needs Assessment Plan, approved by the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW), to identify gaps and barriers in programs and services among the three partner agencies.

In order for the needs assessment process to be successful, we identified the stakeholders who we need to gather information from.

We conducted focus groups and individual interviews to gather qualitative information pertaining to services, barriers faced, environment and safety. This collaboration considered confidentiality and safety of the participants of paramount importance.

For the individual interviews, the collaboration shared in the responsibility for those roles and was, in almost every case, provided by representatives from a different agency or by independent contractors unaffiliated with any of the agencies who we trained. This practice ensures the comfort of the participants.

Conducting a focus group was a team consisting of the following individuals: a facilitator, a recorder and a support person (e.g., advocate or counselor). We attempted to gather the groups based on their roles such as administrative level employees, hotline employees, board members, interpreters and community members. Each focus group took between 1.5 to two hours.

For the Needs Assessment, there were 103 people interviewed altogether. They consisted of Deaf community members, survivors, executive leadership, management/supervisors, staff/

volunteers, board of directors and interpreters. Interviews were done in various methods including 1:1, focus groups and online surveys. (Below is the breakdown table under the Needs Assessment Measures).

The Inclusion Project Manager scheduled the interviews, managed the online survey account, managed the rollout and provided an in-depth data analysis report to be included in the Needs Assessment Report.

Needs Assessment Measures

Survey, focus group and individual questions varied depending on the target audience. Survey participation was always anonymous and voluntarily.

Due to confidentiality and safety concerns, focus groups and individual interviews for the Deaf community weren't offered. Instead, we chose online surveys for the Deaf community because of the small and close knit nature of the community necessitating an anonymous mechanism to provide feedback. We recognize the limitations of surveys for collecting meaningful qualitative information but believe the information will still be valuable. The questions were kept very broad to avoid disclosures and triggers. This was advertised through Facebook. Nine members of the Deaf community completed the survey.

However; we offered individual interviews to survivors who were clients of IGNITE and RESTORE and six survivors participated between these two agencies. Survivors were asked about their experience with our services and whether they experienced barriers. Due to safety and confidentiality concerns, IGNITE's clients were interviewed by a team of independent contractors from the Deaf community. The selected independent contractors were determined by this collaboration to have the ability to work with a wide variety of people, a sense of professionalism and the ability to maintain strict confidentiality. We tried to balance the need of keeping the pool diverse while keeping the logistics manageable. Finally, none of the consultants were mandated reporters.

The survivors from Willow who were interviewed utilized Willow's services including Shelter, Permanent Housing and the Counseling Center. Sixteen individuals took part in the interview. The Board of Directors of all agencies were offered an online survey and 22 participated. Questions included whether provision of accessible and responsive services for Deaf survivors was considered a high priority, what role they had in supporting the agency, and to what extent are they familiar with how Willow/RESTORE/IGNITE serves Deaf survivors.

For staff/volunteers and management/supervisors, we asked them about their comfort level in working with Deaf survivors and their knowledge of Deaf culture. We also asked them about

working with interpreters and lastly, what situations they encountered that needed improvement.

The collaboration took the unusual step and solicited the input of sign language interpreters who work for all three agencies as independent contractors. We felt interpreters are stakeholders, have an important role in communication, and are a part of the team therefore it was imperative to include their feedback. The quality of service for Deaf survivors also depend on the quality of interpreters and they are part of the wraparound among Deaf survivors. Seven interpreters participated.

Questions for the interpreters focused on their ability and comfort level with interpreting in various settings, their interpreting trainings, what would help them become better interpreters, their level of interest in taking TIQI training, techniques or approaches they use to deal with vicarious trauma, how the interpreters observe the three agencies working together, and lastly, their challenges as interpreters interpreting in Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault settings.

To illustrate the breakdown of participants, a table is provided below:

GROUP	AGENCY	AUDIENCE	PLEGDED MINIMUM TOTAL	COMPLETED
Deaf Community	IGNITE	General Deaf Community (Facebook)	Online Survey	9
Survivors	WILLOW	DV Shelter, Apartment, and Counseling Center Survivors	11	16
	IGNITE	DV/SA Survivors	6	4
	RESTORE	SA Survivors	2	2
Executive Leadership	WILLOW	Executive Leadership	5	5
	RESTORE	Executive Leadership	3	2
	IGNITE	Executive Director	1	1
Management / Supervisors	WILLOW	Management	6	7
	IGNITE	Former Director of Programs and Services	1	1
Staff/ Volunteers	WILLOW	Community Program/	15	17

		Residential Services		
	IGNITE	Staff	0	3
	RESTORE	Staff/Volunteers	6	7
Board of Directors	WILLOW	Current Board of Directors Members	Online survey	14
	IGNITE	Current/Former Board of Director Members	2	2
	RESTORE	Task Force	Online survey	6
	RESTORE	Task Force	3	0
Interpreters	-	Independent Contractors	3	7

Those groups with numbers below their pledged minimum totals were due to scheduling issues and/or inability to recruit after three attempts. This collaboration also encountered numerous challenges in recruiting from select participant groups. Reasons varied from confidentiality and safety issues to weather-related cancellations.

Needs Assessment Findings

As a result of our Needs Assessment, there were seven significant key findings. The seven key findings are listed below.

Key Finding #1:

There is a significant, but diverse, deficiency in general accessibility for Deaf survivors in all three agencies.

Key Finding #2:

There is a general lack of capacity of service providers in the two agencies partnering with IGNITE who are qualified to work with survivors from the Deaf community.

Key Finding #3:

While advantageous, the current informal co-advocacy model is not happening frequently enough, or consistently, at this time which negatively impacts the survivor's experience.

Key Finding #4:

There is an overarching lack of capacity around cultural and linguistic competency.

Key Finding #5:

Policies and procedures are inadequate to address the needs of Deaf survivors in all three agencies.

Key Finding #6:

While Trauma Informed Qualified Interpreters (TIQIs) are extremely important in working with Deaf survivors, there is a significant dearth in the number and availability of TIQIs in Monroe County.

Key Finding #7:

Deaf survivors did not feel that agencies' services are well known in the Deaf community.

Needs Assessment Conclusion

Based on the data collection and key findings outlined above, significant concerns are listed below as well as our commitment to provide a solution:

- Lack of accessibility, including both communication issues and building access, clearly created frustration among many in the community. Barriers need to be removed.
- There were many comments regarding culturally and linguistically incompetent staff. Training is needed for staff members in all agencies.
- We recognize that our current informal co-advocacy approach needs adjustments according to key finding #3. Changes need to be made in order to ensure that survivors are at ease.
- Reasonable accommodation policies and procedures, related to Deaf survivors, are lacking across all agencies. Interpreter service protocols do not exist. Several policies and procedures need to be established to eliminate barriers.
- There is an inadequate supply of TIQI interpreters in Monroe County. Lack of qualifications among interpreters greatly impacts Deaf survivors. We need to increase TIQI competent interpreters in our pool of interpreters.
- Many people in the Deaf community are not familiar with Willow Domestic Violence Center, RESTORE Sexual Assault Services and IGNITE. We need to promote our services to the Deaf community.

These needs assessment outcomes became our framework for the strategic planning process.

Deaf Gain Collaborative Strategic Plan

Introduction

The 2017 Monroe County Domestic Violence Report to the Community shows that in 2016, rates of domestic violence in Monroe County remain higher than the New York state average, 1.5 times the statewide rate as a matter of fact. In the City of Rochester, the rates are

extremely high, 2.8 times the statewide rates. Monroe County 9-1-1 received 48,970 calls related to domestic disputes.

The latest Willow Domestic Violence Center Annual Report (2016-2017 services) shows that Willow received 5,110 hotline calls. Three hundred eighty four individuals received emergency shelter. Willow Counseling Center served 446 clients. The Court Advocacy Program assisted over 2,000 individuals with orders of protection and 13,228 individuals participated in Willow Prevention Education Programs.

In 2016, RESTORE received 2,000 hotline calls and provided services to 1,600 adult and children affected by sexual assault. RESTORE provided educational workshops, covering rape awareness and prevention, date/acquaintance rape, sexual harassment, safe/unsafe touch, and how to handle disclosure, to 9,000 students and professionals. RESTORE estimates that 75% of their clients are minorities.

IGNITE serves approximately 60-70 Deaf survivors a year of whom over 50% have experienced sexual assault such as child abuse or other sexual assault experienced as an adult. In addition to IGNITE's services mentioned earlier in this document, IGNITE also acts as a bridge between survivors and agencies which is important to Deaf survivors. Deaf survivors trust IGNITE and IGNITE helps connect Deaf survivors to appropriate agencies for further services such as Willow's emergency shelter.

It is widely known that Rochester has the highest Deaf and hard of hearing populations per capita in the United States. Using the data from the American Community Survey, National Technical Institute of the Deaf researchers estimate 19,438 Deaf and hard of hearing individuals under the age of 65 are living in the Rochester area. Other data shows the metro region of Rochester is home to approximately 43,000 Deaf and hard of hearing people. Additionally, according to research, Deaf people experience domestic violence and sexual violence at rates that are at least twice those reported by hearing counterparts.

While statistics show a large number Deaf individuals living in the Rochester area, we recognize that very few have reached out to seek domestic violence and sexual assault services which shows that the Deaf community is underserved and in dire need of services. As per the records of RESTORE and Willow, less than one percent of their clients are Deaf.

In this strategic plan, we are addressing issues identified in the Needs Assessment Report. The partners held a Strategic Plan Retreat earlier this year to assist us in the next steps.

Strategic Planning Meeting with Vera Institute

During our Strategic Plan Retreat, held on October 11, 2017, all partners met with Jannette Brickman and Sandra Harrell, from Vera Institute of Justice. It was originally planned to be an in-person training, held at Willow Domestic Violence Center, but due to unforeseen circumstances, meeting online was the last minute alternative plan. However, the retreat was

highly productive and very beneficial for all of us. We learned how to decide on the key activities and clearly build the steps underneath them.

We discussed key initiatives and activities. While all seven key findings are important, we had to prioritize the key findings that we felt are most significant at the present time. We determined what was most achievable as short term goals. These key findings became our four initiatives for our strategic plan as listed below. The remaining three key findings are long-term goals beyond the life of the grant.

Overview of Our Initiatives

Initiative #1: Create safe and accessible environments at Deaf Gain Collaborative Agencies.

The Deaf Gain Collaborative heard from the needs assessment that there are various barriers among the three agencies. We will mention a few obvious barriers here and our goal to resolving these issues.

Willow buildings, including the administrative office and emergency shelter, are inaccessible to the Deaf community. This is a great barrier and adds stress for Deaf survivors. RESTORE is also facing accessibility issues at their shared building entrance. To be more specific, there are two-way audio speakers available in the Willow intercom system at the door which enables hearing speakers to identify themselves before they are let inside the building. They can communicate with each other through the intercom system. There is only one way video where the receptionist can see the person at the door but not the other way around. No video is available for Deaf people to see who they are talking to. Deaf people cannot clearly respond to the intercom system and cannot identify who they are which shows a clear communication barrier. Instead they keep trying to open the door, sometimes not realizing there is a small colored signal that indicates the door is open. This creates safety issues for both the staff and survivors. With safety in mind, the receptionist sometimes will not open the door and the Deaf person is stuck outside and frustrated. We want to change that and make these buildings more accessible and Deaf friendly.

Another significant barrier among Deaf survivors is trying to communicate with the Willow hotline staff. There are several avenues to reach the Willow 24-hour hotline staff including telephone, Facebook and e-mail. However, Facebook and email address are not widely promoted. Some Deaf survivors are led to believe the only possible communication method to reach the hotline services is utilizing Video Relay Service as the voice number is listed on the website without clearly identifying other options to reach the hotline. Additionally, Willow posters only list the voice number and the website address. Some survivors may not be able to quickly access Video Relay Service on their mobile phone in order to call the voice number. It takes some Deaf survivors extra steps to reach the hotline.

The phone number for TTY is advertised on the Willow website however TTYs are now obsolete. Almost no one uses TTY anymore. We need to better promote options to reach the 24-hour

hotline as well as bring an additional communication tool to the hotline to make it more accessible to the Deaf community.

For RESTORE, we have learned from the key findings that there were delays in coordinating interpreting services especially in emergency situations which is a significant barrier in communication access. RESTORE also relies heavily on written materials which is not always accessible to Deaf survivors.

IGNITE also experiences barriers to their facility. While IGNITE staff tend to meet clients at mutually agreed upon locations for services, there are challenges accessing the IGNITE facility which is rented out to IGNITE by a church. As with Willow and RESTORE, their facility is locked for security reasons making it even more challenging for Deaf survivors and visitors to access the building unless appointments are made ahead of time.

An effort will be made to make Willow, RESTORE and IGNITE facilities more welcoming and accommodating. As a result of the needs assessment, the Deaf Gain Collaborative is looking into safety and access as a whole and has created four action items for this initiative. Details are in the Strategic Planning Chart (below). We will review agencies' existing barriers, identify our priorities and develop a Barrier Removal and Safety Enhancement Plan.

By September 2018, we will reduce or eliminate these barriers, which include:

- Review all agencies' accessibility issues.
- Establish signage by the front door along with the intercom system with instructions for Deaf survivors and Deaf visitors.
- Provide a new cell telephone to the Willow hotline staff. This way, survivors have the option to text the hotline staff directly.
- Better advertise options to reach the 24-hour hotline staff at Willow.
- Provide other necessary tools as identified by the Deaf Gain Collaborative.
- Develop a Barrier Removal and Safety Enhancement Plan for all agencies.
- Establish a process for an annual review related to safe and accessible environments for all agencies.

Initiative #2: Build the capacity of Deaf Gain Collaborative agencies to provide culturally and linguistically competent services to Deaf survivors.

The Needs Assessment Report shows that Willow Domestic Violence Center and RESTORE Sexual Assault Services lack culturally and linguistically competent services. We concur with these findings and it is clear that we need to make some changes.

We cannot provide culturally and linguistically competent services to Deaf survivors if the hearing staff are not familiar with Deaf culture, how to ask survivors whether reasonable accommodations are needed, how to secure and work with interpreters and lastly, how to work with Deaf survivors appropriately. Moreover, it is reported that some Deaf survivors feel isolated

at the shelter. The staff is reluctant to communicate with them especially when they do not have appropriate communication tools or the knowledge, skills and abilities to work with the Deaf survivors.

With this in mind, we will identify staff training needs for existing staff as well as new hires at Willow and RESTORE. We will develop training goals and objectives for each training as well as develop training materials. Trainings will be comprehensive and intensive and will address Deaf culture, how to interact with Deaf survivors and how to work with interpreters. The materials will be submitted to OVW for approval as part of the implementation plan.

Deaf culture trainings will be required for employees and refresher trainings will be held annually for all employees which will be a part of Initiative #3. This will become one of the policies requiring all staff members to take Deaf culture trainings to ensure our services to Deaf survivors are consistent throughout the years. We have put together two actions for this initiative as outlined in the Strategic Planning Chart.

By the end of the grant cycle we will:

- Have the comprehensive and intensive Deaf culture curriculum ready.
- Have conducted Deaf Culture training for Willow and Restore Sexual Assault Services staff.
- Ensure the Deaf training curriculum is incorporated into each agency's annual training program.
- Develop resources and tools for staff and survivors to include: a Fact Sheet "How to Work with Interpreters" for staff as well as a pictured communication chart specifically for Deaf survivors who stay in the shelter.

Initiative #3: Enhance policies and procedures to ensure that they incorporate best practices for serving Deaf survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Willow, RESTORE and IGNITE each have their own internal formal or unwritten policies and procedures serving Deaf survivors that need to be identified, reviewed and revised as needed to ensure they incorporate best practices. Policies and procedures will include a focus on these areas that need most attention: reasonable accommodations, Interpreter service request protocols, the requirement to have a Deaf culture training and the intake process. We strive to provide communication access for our Deaf survivors who seek our services. Deaf survivors should feel equal and included in all aspects.

We need to review each agency's reasonable accommodation policies to ensure they are appropriate. We also envision the idea of having a better communication tool that survivors could use at the shelter to reduce the communication barrier.

Pertaining to the interpreter service request, often there is confusion for the staff, Willow and RESTORE in particular, regarding where and how to locate interpreters, how to determine

interpreters' qualifications and which staff should place a request for interpreting services, which unfairly delays services and makes Deaf survivors feel unwelcomed and frustrated.

Our goal is to have a streamlined interpreting service request protocol across agencies to eliminate frustration among Deaf survivors so they feel welcome and fully accommodated when they seek our services.

There was an additional concern at Willow Domestic Violence Center related to the release of information protocols. We need the survivor's permission before we can reach out to our pool of interpreters seeking interpreting services. Some staff members are reluctant contacting interpreters or interpreting services agencies when there is inadequate paperwork in place for this specific endeavor. We will develop a form which the survivor will sign that will allow us to place an interpreting service request in a highly confidential manner. This form will be incorporated during the initial meeting with the survivor when appropriate.

The requirement of having Deaf culture trainings for all staff members (part of Initiative #2) will also be added as a policy. This way, everyone has the same knowledge of Deaf culture and how to work with Deaf survivors with compassion. To resolve the issue as a part of the implementation plan, each collaborative partner is implementing policies and procedures reflecting agency needs. We have identified four action items needed for this Initiative as seen in the Strategic Plan Chart.

By September 2018, we will create necessary policies and accompanying protocols by:

- Creating/revising reasonable accommodation policies and securing buy-in from agencies.
- Creating an Interpreting Service Request form for all staff at their respective agencies to use, which streamlines the process.
- Creating the Release of Information form.
- Researching and identifying best practices and communication protocols.
- Incorporate a requirement to have Deaf Culture trainings for all employees.

Initiative #4: Cultivate a diverse pool of TIQIs in Monroe County.

Interpreters with TIQI experience are scarce in Monroe County. The Deaf Gain Collaborative wants to change that. Clearly, lack of qualified interpreters impact both Deaf survivors and staff. Some interpreters invest their time and energy to the Deaf Gain Collaborative and survivors while some interpreters just come and go. We need to build relationships with interpreters in the community to make the meetings more effective and efficient.

Our goal is to secure outside consultants to provide training, with CEUs, here in Rochester. The training curriculum would be approved by OVW. Training would be limited to 15 to 20 interpreters which will make the training more effective.

The training will be provided at no cost to interpreters. Registered interpreters will pay for their meals during the registration process. We'll screen the applicants and select the most qualified

interpreters to take the training. It is hopeful those who attend the TIQI training will be interested in interpreting domestic violence and sexual assault appointments or walk-ins.

We're also facing another issue pertaining to our pool of interpreters. There are numerous interpreters who have scheduling conflicts because they work full time elsewhere leaving little time for freelance assignments. Providing TIQI training will help increase our interpreter pool as part of our recruitment efforts.

We notice that many new interpreters struggle interpreting for us or for the sessions with the Deaf survivors which easily causes misunderstandings. We are exploring the opportunity of a mentoring program where the more experienced interpreters can mentor and train the newer interpreters especially in domestic violence and sexual assault related topics. There can be opportunities for newer interpreters to shadow the experienced interpreters and be more prepared to take on assignments.

Continuous feedback from interpreters, Deaf survivors and staff about the interpreting process is important so we know whether to place a particular interpreter in that specific setting or environment. An interpreter may work well with one Deaf survivor but may not work well with the other. We will follow up with parties involved, at some point after the meeting, to see if they can provide feedback.

As per the Strategic Plan Chart, we have identified four actions under our fourth and last initiative. By the end of the grant cycle, we will have:

- Built relationships with interpreters in the community.
- Secured consultants to provide a two or three-day intensive TIQI training in Rochester.
- Recruited qualified interpreters to take TIQI training.
- Increased our pool of available interpreters.
- Established an Interpreter mentor system.
- Established continuous feedback among Deaf survivors, staff and interpreters pertaining to interpreters' skill and comfort level.

It is necessary to recognize that the additional outreach to the Deaf community is necessary in order to become more visible and improving our co-advocacy approach are important as identified in two of the key findings. However, the Deaf Gain Collaborative had to prioritize key action items based to the needs assessment report. We felt it is best to focus on the four initiatives that can be achieved in short term and put them into action within this grant cycle. We decided to put the remaining key findings aside for the time being until after our implementation phase is completed. These became our long-term goals to be achieved.

Strategic Plan Implementation Guide (Chart)

Initiative 1: Create safe and accessible environments at Deaf Gain Collaborative agencies											
Key Activities	Who is Responsible	Timeline									
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Post Grant
Action 1: Develop/identify tool for safety review and agency accessibility	Willow Staff										
Research and review tools	Willow Staff										
Select tools to be used	Willow Staff										
Submit tool to OVW for approval	Project Manager										
Adapt tool for each agency	Willow Staff										
Identify team members to serve on review committee	Willow Staff										
Provide committee with training on the tool	Willow Staff										
Action 2: Conduct safety review	Willow Staff										
Schedule review	Willow Staff										
Conduct reviews at each agency	Willow Staff										
Assess results and determine priority areas	Willow Staff										
Submit results / priority areas to leadership of each agency	Willow Staff										
Action 3: Develop barrier removal/safety enhancement plan	Willow Staff										
Identify NEPA-related items; submit NEPA form to OVW	Project Manager										
Write plan for barrier removal and safety enhancement	Willow Staff										
Submit safety enhancements to OVW for approval	Project Manager										
Identify funding sources for safety enhancements	Willow Staff										
Implement changes as funding is secured	Willow Staff										
Action 4: Establish process for annual review	Willow Staff										
Identify agency positions to be included in annual review	Willow Staff										
Establish date for annual reviews	Willow Staff										
Include annual review in organization policy	Willow Staff										
Conduct annual reviews	Willow Staff										

Initiative 2: Build the capacity of Deaf Gain Collaborative agencies to provide culturally and linguistically competent services to Deaf survivors

Key Activities	Who is Responsible	Timeline									
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Post Grant
Action 1: Train staff at Willow & RESTORE to provide culturally & linguistically competent services	IGNITE Staff										
Identify pressing training needs by reviewing NA report	IGNITE Staff										
Develop training goals and objectives for each training	IGNITE Staff										
Develop curriculum and training materials	IGNITE Staff										
Submit curriculum and materials to OVW for approval	Program Manager										
Identify dates, times and locations of trainings	IGNITE Staff										
Develop announcements for trainings	IGNITE Staff										
Conduct required trainings for all staff	IGNITE Staff										
Evaluate trainings and update based on feedback	IGNITE Staff										
Establish date for annual trainings	IGNITE Staff										
Include annual trainings in organization policy	IGNITE Staff										
Conduct annual trainings	IGNITE Staff										
Action 2: Develop resources and tools for staff and survivors	IGNITE Staff										
Determine the toolkit	IGNITE Staff										
Submit toolkit to OVW for approval	Project Manager										
Discuss opportunities for use of toolkit with each partner	IGNITE Staff										
Package and disseminate toolkit for Willow and RESTORE	IGNITE Staff										
Implement toolkit	IGNITE Staff										
Evaluate use of the toolkit in Willow and RESTORE	IGNITE Staff										
Include toolkit in organization policy	IGNITE Staff										

Initiative 3: Enhance policies and procedures to ensure they incorporate best practices for serving Deaf survivors of violence

Key Activities	Who is Responsible	Timeline									
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Post Grant
Action 1: Develop reasonable accommodation policies and protocols	RESTORE Staff										
Review existing policies	RESTORE Staff										
Identify best practice policies and communication protocols for staff/ survivors	RESTORE Staff										
Update / tailor protocol for each collaborating agency	RESTORE Staff										
Submit to OVW for approval	Project Manager										
Action 2: Research/identify relevant policies/procedures	RESTORE Staff										
Draft, review and revise interpreter protocol	RESTORE Staff										
Research other DV/SV agency policies/ procedures	RESTORE Staff										
Assess collected information to determine those that will be most useful in the collaborative's work and share options with partners	RESTORE Staff										
Submit to OVW for approval	Project Manager										
Action 3: Review and identify agency policies and procedures	RESTORE Staff										
Identify policies in need of implementing in collaboration's existing policies	RESTORE Staff										
Revise policies and procedures accordingly	RESTORE Staff										
Submit policies and procedures to HR for implementation	RESTORE Staff										
Submit to OVW for approval	Project Manager										
Include updated policies in organization P&P book	RESTORE Staff										
Action 4: Incorporate requirement that employee orientation include training on culture and linguistic competency and annual refresher for all staff	RESTORE Staff										
Draft policy and confirm implementation with each agency	RESTORE Staff										

Initiative 4: Cultivate a diverse pool of TIQIs in Monroe County

Key Activities	Who is Responsible	Timeline									
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	Jul	Aug	Sep	Post Grant
Action 1: Build relationships with interpreters in Monroe Co.	IGNITE Staff										
Identify competent interpreters (direct bill and agency based including CDIs and Dis)	IGNITE Staff										
Gauge interest in TIQI training	IGNITE Staff										
Solicit feedback on how to approach training	IGNITE Staff										
Action 2: Provide trauma informed TIQI training to interpreters in the context of DV/SV	IGNITE Staff										
Identify potential competent TIQI trainers	IGNITE Staff										
Review curriculum, training and promotional materials	IGNITE Staff										
Submit curriculum and materials to OVW for approval	Project Manager										
Identify dates, times, location	IGNITE Staff										
Determine process for securing CEUs for the training	IGNITE Staff										
Develop registration process	IGNITE Staff										
Advertise and recruit interpreters to attend training	IGNITE Staff										
Secure interpreters for the training	IGNITE Staff										
Conduct training	IGNITE Staff										
Collect feedback from participants	IGNITE Staff										
Collaboration debriefing activity	IGNITE Staff										
Action 3: Develop feedback loop between survivors/interpreters to improve interpreters' skills & comfort	IGNITE Staff										
Create feedback system for survivors, staff and interpreters	IGNITE Staff										
Identify who can see all feedback on interpreters and share with interpreters	IGNITE Staff										
Action 4: Maintain pool of quality interpreters	IGNITE Staff										
Recruit interpreters who completed TIQI training	IGNITE Staff										
Establish interpreter mentors	IGNITE Staff										
Maintain relationship with current interpreters and provide support	IGNITE Staff										

Conclusion

The Deaf Gain Collaborative was established through a grant from the Office of Violence Against Women. We are entering our third and final year of the grant.

We recognize our responsibility is to utilize grant funds in order to make improvements and provide best practices to the Deaf community. We are committed to providing Deaf survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault equal access to our services.

The Deaf Gain Collaborative is excited to have reached this point of action and is anxious to see system changes happening with our important grant work. The Deaf survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault will see improvements for years to come as result of our work.