

**ILLINOIS IMAGINES**

**COLLABORATION CHARTER**

# ILLINOIS IMAGINES CHARTER

Illinois Imagines is a sexual assault systems change initiative designed to strengthen the service delivery system infrastructure and develop a statewide model for community collaboration between disability service providers and sexual assault centers to improve response to sexual violence against women with disabilities. This initiative will assess the system's strengths and challenges and identify opportunities for enhancement, such as state and local policy development, enhancement of a regional support system, improved training requirements, and resource development.

The charter membership reflects the commitment of key stakeholders in the social service delivery system in Illinois who are in a position to make changes which influence the experience of women with disabilities who are survivors of sexual violence. Most importantly, the work of Illinois Imagines is shaped by women with disabilities who are survivors of sexual violence. The charter will serve as a guide to promote ongoing collaboration and sustainable systems change.

## **Article 1: Vision, Mission, Values, and Goals**

### **1-1 Our Vision**

All women with disabilities will be guaranteed an environment free from sexual violence, where they are empowered to speak and act for themselves. Survivors of sexual violence will be assured a proactive, individualized, compassionate response to their experience.

### **1-2 Our Mission**

To develop, implement, formalize, and sustain integrated systems in Illinois that will:

1. Empower women with disabilities to actively shape those systems.
2. Prohibit and interrupt sexual violence perpetrated against women with disabilities.
3. Support and empower women to report sexual violence to any provider, agency or law enforcement official.
4. Provide survivor-centered crisis response, advocacy and counseling for women with disabilities.

5. Remove all obstacles faced by women with disabilities who are survivors of sexual violence.

### **1-3 Our Values**

All members of the Illinois Imagines team are dedicated to creating a service delivery system built on the following values:

- Survivor-driven
- Non-judgmental
- Empowering
- Diversity and individualism
- Respect
- Flexibility
- Promotes teaching and learning
- Inspiring (had been motivating/inviting/appealing)
- Practical
- Radical
- Hopeful
- Tenacious
- Do what's right
- Fluid
- HLAM (harm less, affirm more)
- Straight forward (no hidden agenda)

### **1-4 Our Goals**

- Reduce the incidence of sexual assault and the threat of sexual violence against women with disabilities.
- Create a supportive, accessible environment for women with disabilities who choose to disclose sexual assault or the threat of sexual violence.
- Ensure survivors receive timely, relevant, survivor-centered services.

## **Article 2: Statement of Rights for Women with Disabilities**

The Illinois Imagines team is working to ensure that all women with disabilities are guaranteed the following rights:

1. The right to live in a world without sexual violence.
2. The right to be treated with respect and dignity in an accessible environment.

3. The right to speak for themselves and make the decisions that are right for them.
4. The right to information that will help keep them safe from sexual exploitation and violence.
5. The right to explore and enjoy their sexuality.
6. The right to pursue loving intimate relationships with the partners they choose.
7. The right to talk about their experiences freely, without fear of judgment.
8. The right to be heard, understood, and supported in reporting and healing from sexual violence.
9. The right to identify and define their own sexuality and sexual orientation without judgment or discrimination.
10. The right to receive and share information in a way that meets their individual needs.

## **Article 3: Definition of Terms**

### **3-1 Access and Accessibility**

Individuals with disabilities will be able to utilize the same services as individuals without disabilities. Full access means being able to obtain these services without physical barriers, cultural barriers, communication barriers, attitudinal barriers, and programmatic barriers.

### **3-2 Co-advocacy**

Co-advocacy is a collaboration between the survivor and service providers from different disciplines/agencies which provides the best network of support and resources.

### **3-3 Community-Based Advocacy**

Community-based advocacy services are provided by non-government agencies and non-profit organizations. Services will be provided based on the needs or wants communicated by the victim/survivor.

### **3-4 Deaf**

The term “Deaf” is defined by the individuals who consider themselves a part of Deaf culture. Individuals who self identify as Deaf may or may not self identify as a person with a disability. However, we recognize that Deaf individuals also face serious barriers in seeking and receiving services and we strive to include them in our work.

### **3-5 Disability**

The Illinois Imagines team believes that disability is:

- A predictable condition of human life;
- A matter of degree and kind; and
- Derives its meaning from the surrounding culture.

The following definition of disability from the Accessing Safety Website is consistent with the collaborative team’s belief system.

“According to the newest definition developed by the World Health Organization, disability is not something that a person has but, instead, something that occurs outside of the person – the person has a functional limitation. Disability occurs in the interaction between a person, his or her functional ability, and the environment. A person’s environment can be the physical environment, communication environment, information environment, and social and policy environment.

This new definition helps us to understand that disability is a matter of degree one is more or less disabled based on the intersection between herself, her functional abilities, and the many types of environments with which she interacts. Moreover, the experience of disability can be minimized by designing environments to accommodate varying functional abilities and providing individualized solutions when needed.”

### **3-6 Self Advocacy**

Self advocacy is communication and/or actions by survivors that asserts their wishes and rights.

### **3-7 Sexual Violence**

Sexual violence is non-consensual or coercive sexual conduct. Sexual violence includes any unwanted behavior or contact of a sexual nature, from sexual harassment/bullying to sexual assault.

### **3-8 Survivor-Centered Services**

Providing survivor-centered services is the heart of Illinois Imagines' mission. This means providing survivors with information about all of the options and services available to them and ensuring survivors have the means to make their own decisions about the services they need and the actions they wish to take in utilizing those services. In order to develop survivor-centered services, survivors will be included in the development, implementation and evaluation processes.

### **3-9 Systems Change**

Systems change is grounded in the belief that growth and change is good. The past system is valued and provides the foundation for future efforts. The goal of changing the system to be more responsive to the changing needs of individuals, families, and communities is a core element of this collaborative.

Systems change is a comprehensive planning and program development approach that focuses on strengthening the service delivery system infrastructure in order to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of services to consumers. A systems change approach involves extensive, on-going collaboration among all partners, including consumers. The ultimate goal of systems change is to integrate sustainable change into the service delivery system that has a positive impact on the quality of life for consumers.

### **3-10 Victim/Survivor**

These words are used interchangeably when referring to individuals who have experienced sexual violence. It is up to individuals to decide whether to refer to themselves as victims or survivors, and the collaboration team will mirror the language individuals choose. The term victim/survivor will apply to all individuals who seek sexual assault services from the agencies that make up the collaborative team, regardless of whether the individual is otherwise referred to as a "client", "customer", "consumer" or other term by those agencies.

## **Article 4: Member Organizations and Roles**

### **4-1 Partners and Roles**

The Illinois Imagines team is comprised of advocates and five organizations, all of which will play a vital role in the collaboration:

- **Advocates** bring unique and invaluable perspectives to the team based on their personal experiences as well as their interactions with the service delivery system. These advocates, which include women with disabilities and individuals with family members who have disabilities, play a vital role in the group's ability to understand the needs of women with disabilities,

the strengths and weaknesses of the current service delivery system, and the steps needed to create survivor-centered services. The input of advocates is an integral component throughout all phases of the initiative: planning, implementation, and evaluation.

- **Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)** provides funding to service providers as well as direct services to women with disabilities through its Divisions of Community Health and Prevention, Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health, and Rehabilitation Services. IDHS acts as the fiscal agent and provides grant management. The IDHS Division of Community Health and Prevention's Bureau of Domestic and Sexual Violence Prevention provides project oversight through a project director. Staff of the IDHS partner divisions provide expertise in their respective fields and facilitate access to community providers as needed. IDHS is responsible for coordinating meetings, managing communications, administering grant funds, maintaining a work schedule, and providing fiscal and program accountability. IDHS will integrate needed systems supports to promote sustainability, such as changes in policy, contractual language, training standards, and staff functions.
- **Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ICASA)** consists of 33 rape crisis centers located across the state of Illinois. Each ICASA center provides counseling, medical and legal advocacy, and prevention education. The centers operate 24-hour hotlines to provide services to victims of sexual assault, sexual abuse, and sexual harassment, along with services to the victims' significant others. ICASA will support systems change by participating in grant-related planning and implementation meetings, providing expertise in sexual assault issues, and connecting collaborative efforts to the provider network. ICASA is responsible for arranging meeting/training logistics, reimbursement of non-DHS committee member expenses, and sub-contracted work.
- **Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living (INCIL)** is a statewide association that serves as the voice for Illinois' 23 Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and coordinates statewide activities. CILs provide services to people with disabilities to help them gain the skills they need to be independent, understand their rights, and be effective self-advocates. INCIL coordinates the activities and efforts of all CILs, resulting in a stronger, more unified voice to promote the needs and priorities of the CILs and the individuals with disabilities they serve. An INCIL representative will support systems change by participating in grant-related planning and implementation meetings, providing expertise in disability issues, and connecting collaborative efforts to the provider network.

- **Blue Tower Training Center, a division of Macon Resources, Inc.**, provides training, consultation, and training materials related to sexual abuse and persons with disabilities on a local, regional, and national level. Blue Tower Training Center also administers **Illinois Voices**, a statewide self-advocacy initiative designed to empower people with developmental and other disabilities to make their own decisions, stand up for their rights, and speak for themselves based on their strengths and desires. Blue Tower will support systems change by participating in grant-related planning and implementation meetings, providing expertise in disability issues, and connecting collaborative efforts to the provider network.
- **Illinois Family Violence Coordinating Councils** support a coordinated community response to family violence. The Councils work to improve institutional and professional response to family violence issue, engaging in education, intervention, prevention, and coordination of services for victims and perpetrators of child abuse, domestic violence and elder abuse. IFVCC will support systems change by participating in grant-related planning and implementation meetings, providing expertise in systems work and coordinated community response.

Expansion of the charter membership may change as the initiative further defines its scope and workplan. Changes in the charter or membership can be initiated by any partner of Illinois Imagines. Such proposed changes will be agreed upon by the full membership. (see 5-3)

## **Article 5: Policies, Practice, and Work Schedule**

### **5-1 Collaboration Structure**

The Illinois Imagines collaboration structure is flat to ensure that all team members have an opportunity to provide input and participate in collaborative decision making. The team maintains an atmosphere that encourages open communication and sharing of ideas and opinions.

Membership of the Illinois Imagines team may be expanded only if there is consensus among all team members. The team may also create Ad Hoc committees to work on specific issues. These Ad Hoc committees will share information and recommendations with the team which will discuss the input and facilitate decision making. Ad Hoc committees will be immediately disbanded following completion of their committee assignments. If issues or concerns arise and cannot be resolved, the team will follow the conflict resolution process in place (see 5-4).

## **5-2 Decision Making Authority**

The Project Director is authorized to make decisions for the project related to management and coordination of day-to-day grant activities. These activities include: coordinating meetings, managing communications among partners, administering grant funds, maintaining a work schedule, and providing fiscal and program accountability.

When decisions require team input, the Project Director will consult with the collaborative team via email, conference call, or during a regularly scheduled team meeting. Full input and decision-making will be called for on those areas impacting the direction of the initiative or requiring commitment of resources. For example, the team will jointly make decisions about the collaboration charter, membership, needs assessment plan, and the work plan. The Project Director will share all final decisions in writing with the collaborative team.

## **5-3 Decision Making Process**

The Illinois Imagines team will adhere to the following decision-making process:

1. When the team needs to initiate action, the meeting leader initiates discussion on the recommendation.
2. The meeting leader asks if anyone objects to the recommendation. If there are no objections, the meeting leader calls for consensus.
3. If there are objections, those with objections are invited to explain their objections.
4. The meeting leader calls for consensus on the recommendation. A member with an objection may:
  - note their objection and join consensus;
  - note the objection and step aside, allowing the consensus process to continue; or
  - note the objection and block consensus.
5. If consensus is blocked, the meeting leader will ask member(s) blocking consensus to offer a compromise recommendation. Those blocking consensus may ask other team members to assist in crafting a compromise.
6. If no compromise is offered, the original recommendation will prevail.
7. If a compromise is offered, the team will consider the compromise. The team may discuss and negotiate a variety of compromises to try to reach consensus.

The team may agree to limit discussion time, send the issue back to a committee/work group for further work or table the issue for a future meeting.

8. When the final compromise recommendation is offered, the meeting leader will ask for consensus. If the team reaches consensus on the compromise, the compromise will be approved.
9. If a team member(s) blocks consensus on the compromise recommendation, the meeting leader will poll the team on both the original and compromise recommendations. Members will be asked to vote for the original recommendation or the compromise recommendation. The recommendation that receives a majority of votes (over 50% of members present) is approved.
10. If neither recommendation receives a majority of votes, the issue will be returned to a committee/work group or tabled until a future meeting. If the issue is urgent and requires an immediate decision, the team will consider other compromise recommendations until consensus is reached or a simple majority approves a recommendation.

#### **5-4 Conflict Resolution Process**

The team anticipates that conflict will arise among team members at some point and is committed to address conflict in a respectful manner. Team members will promote respect by:

- Supporting a safe environment in which all team members feel comfortable expressing their opinions;
- Actively listening to each other, recognizing the different backgrounds and experiences of team members, and trying to understand other peoples' perspectives;
- Agreeing to disagree; and
- Sharing opinions with everyone on the team rather than having "hallway conversations".

When conflict arises, the team will first attempt to resolve the conflict through group discussion. If the conflict is not resolved, a third-party facilitator will be asked to serve as a mediator. If possible, Vera staff will be invited to mediate because of their familiarity with the grant. While mediators would not decide the conflict, they will be used to help the team gain a new perspective on the issue(s) causing the conflict.

## **5-5 Communication**

### ***Partner Meetings***

The Illinois Imagines team meets during prescheduled meetings with additional meetings scheduled as needed. Typically, team meetings will be held one time per month for 3 hours. The meeting schedule will be adjusted to respond to issues and work needs. These meetings enhance team growth and cohesion among agencies as well as promote sustainability.

Agenda development, facilitation, and meeting minutes will be the responsibility of the project director. In case of absence, the project director will arrange for another team member to assume the responsibility. The expertise and needs of the group will influence the distribution of meeting responsibilities.

The team will agree on assignments, identify members to work on those assignments, and determine completion dates. Team members will share updates on assignments during the team meetings and have an opportunity to request feedback and/or assistance from the team. Additionally, sub-committee and individual work will be assigned as needed to complete workplan activities. Team members will communicate with each other between scheduled meetings to discuss and complete assignments via e-mail and phone contact.

### ***Internal Communication Plan***

Each Illinois Imagines partner embraces the following values that define the collaboration team's internal communication:

- Effective communication is built on a foundation of mutual respect, appreciation of diversity, openness, and flexibility;
- Shared information facilitates systems change and empowerment;
- Open communication among team members is valued and encouraged; and
- All individuals have the right to full access to information.

These values are reflected in Illinois Imagines' internal communication plan that includes these elements:

- The collaboration team has input into each meeting agenda and schedule;
- The Project Director notifies partners of meetings in a timely fashion and provides the agenda and all meeting materials;

- The Project Director disseminates meeting notes to all partners in a timely fashion;
- Each partner is committed to empower the project and promote organizational ownership by sharing information and resources, and providing project updates;
- Each partner embraces appreciative inquiry, allowing for an open-minded exploration of other partners' perspectives;
- Each partner is committed to resolve conflicts based on the Conflict Resolution Process (see 5-4);
- Interpreters, materials in Braille and large print, and other accommodations will be made available upon request from partners;
- All information will be written in a user-friendly, non-bureaucratic style; and
- The Project Director will post relevant information on web sites and in appropriate newsletters.

### ***External Communication Plan***

The Illinois Imagines team recognizes that effective communication with external stakeholders is vital to the success of Illinois Imagines. This communication will cultivate relationships with external stakeholders that will provide a broad base of support for project activities and promote sustainability. Effective, two-way communication will facilitate enhanced awareness and ownership among external stakeholders that must occur before significant, lasting changes can be made to the service delivery system.

The team's external communication plan includes these elements:

- The team will identify external stakeholders and create distribution mechanisms to disseminate project-related information;
- All informational materials will be fully accessible;
- All external communications will be approved by the project team;
- The team will support a survivor-driven approach by actively soliciting feedback from survivors and incorporating that feedback into the project design

- All team members will act as conduits of information having the responsibility to share with and gather information from their respective organizations, obtain provider and individual feedback, and gain needed approval when necessary.
- The team will share information through a variety of outreach materials and activities that will support systems change and enhance on-going communication with external stakeholders (e.g., newsletters, legislative reports, provider meetings, and community forums).
- Media inquiries will follow established DHS communication policy (see attachment A)
- All products will be approved by the Office of Violence Against Women.

## **5-6 Confidentiality**

The Illinois Imagines team recognizes that confidentiality plays a vital role in promoting the safety of and respect for survivors. All team members agree that no communication, documents, or other information that could identify a survivor will be shared unless the survivor has signed a release form.

Commitment to confidentiality will be embraced throughout all project activities, including the needs assessment process. Prior to individual interviews or focus groups, participants will be informed that all information shared is confidential. To ensure confidentiality, all interviews and groups will be staffed by individuals who are not mandated reporters. Sessions will not be audio taped or video taped. Data obtained through the needs assessment will not be linked to specific individuals or agencies: only group data will be used.

Creating a safe environment for all charter members to openly discuss and address system strengths and challenges is essential to achieving authentic systems change. As a team, Illinois Imagines will problem solve issues together in a positive, respectful manner which honors the commitment of all charter members to change and adheres to confidentiality of issues.

## **5-7 Mandatory Reporting**

The Illinois Imagines team acknowledges that team members are impacted by different mandatory reporting requirements which may affect their roles and responsibilities. Because mandatory reporting requirements may eliminate or compromise survivors' choices, the team will take these requirements into consideration throughout the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.

The Illinois Imagines team will ensure survivor rights and maintain survivor-centered services by:

- Making all individuals aware of mandatory reporting requirements and potential implications prior to engagement in activities; and
- Ensuring that all individuals fully understand mandatory reporting requirements;
- Empowering individuals to determine if they want to continue a conversation and/or request that specific people are not present during the discussion.

### **5-8 Accessibility**

As a systems change initiative, the Illinois Imagines team will integrate physical, informational, and programmatic accessibility into all project components to ensure that the entire service delivery system is fully accessible to all women with disabilities. The Project Director is responsible for assuring accessibility for all related activities. Requests for meeting accommodations should be sent to the Project Director.

### **5-9 Work Plan**

The Illinois Imagines team will develop a work plan that reflects the team's survivor driven philosophy and is based on information obtained from the comprehensive needs assessment. This work plan will be a living document that will be modified as needed to ensure that the project is responsive to the needs of women with disabilities and maintains the integrity of the team's vision, mission, and values. (see attachment B)

# ATTACHMENTS

## **ATTACHMENT A**

### **Project Timeline**

May, 2008 – Implementation of plan upon approval

April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008 - Strategic Plan (SP) to OVW

April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008 - Submit SP to Vera

Submit to state (no definite date)

March 19 - 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008 - SP retreat

Feb. 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008 - NA report submitted to OVW

Beginning of February - Feb 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2008 - Analyze data from NA and write report

Dec. and January, 2008 - Implement NA plan (focus groups, interviews, etc...)

End of November, 2007 - schedule outreach

Mid-November, 2007 - NA Plan approved

October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2007 - NA tools to OVW

October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007 - NA plan to OVW

October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2007 - Collaboration call/meeting - tools to Vera

October 1- 15, 2007 – Development of needs assessment plan and tools

October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2007 – Collaboration charter submitted to OVW

September 2007 - Collaboration charter submitted to VERA

## **ATTACHMENT B**

### **01.04.01.020 Communications with the Media**

**NUMBER: 01.04.01.020**

**EFFECTIVE: 03/15/00**

**REVISED: 03/03/03, 08/15/05**

**SECTION: PRESS COMMUNICATIONS/COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

**SUBSECTION: DEPARTMENT RELATIONS**

**SUBJECT: COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE MEDIA**

**AUTHORITY: HEALTH INSURANCE PORTABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS [45 CFR 160]; HIPAA SECURITY AND PRIVACY [45 CFR 164]; CONFIDENTIALITY OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE PATIENT RECORDS [42 CFR 2]; AIDS CONFIDENTIALITY ACT [410 ILCS 305]; MENTAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY CONFIDENTIALITY ACT [740 ILCS 110].**

#### ***Policy Statement***

The Department of Human Services (DHS) shall be open, accessible, and cooperative with the public and news media on all requests for information. However, all employees must adhere to all State and federal confidentiality laws regarding all inquiries. The Illinois Office of Communication and Information (IOCI) shall be primarily responsible for communication with the media to ensure consistent interpretation of DHS policies.

#### ***Procedures***

##### **I. Secretary is the Primary Spokesperson for DHS**

The Secretary is the primary spokesperson on all issues, programs, and policies involving DHS. The Illinois Office of Communication and Information (IOCI) may also speak officially for DHS. The Secretary also reserves the right to name other spokespersons as necessary, but no DHS employee may speak officially for the Department, unless so designated by the Secretary or the DHS Communication Manager of the IOCI.

##### **II. Media Requests**

- A. To ensure the accurate and comprehensive release of information from DHS, the IOCI should be informed of all media requests for information related to opinions, interpretations, or decisions as soon as possible. With respect to all information requests, all employees must adhere to all State and federal confidentiality laws. Any health-related information shall be released only in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and all other laws or regulations governing release of information about a specific health condition, including but not limited to: mental health and

developmental disability diagnosis and treatment, HIV diagnosis, substance abuse diagnosis and treatment, and special education or early intervention therapy. Any information given to the IOCI must meet these requirements.

- B. All media inquiries must be forwarded to one of the DHS communication managers of the IOCI, who may then need to be supplied with information adequate to answer the request or authorize a DHS employee to speak on DHS' behalf. In all cases of news media contact, employees also must report this to their supervisor. At no time is a DHS employee to answer media inquiries without prior approval from the IOCI.

III. **Events That May Attract Media Attention**

The IOCI must be informed in advance of any event that may attract media attention. Any office seeking assistance in the promotion of a special event to the media can call one of the DHS communication managers of the IOCI. Any office planning a special event is required to complete the Event Proposal Form (IL444-4327) available on the DHS Intranet and return it to the IOCI. The form must be approved by the Office or Division Director before forwarding to the IOCI. Even if an office does not need assistance with a special event, they still must inform one of the DHS communication managers of the IOCI in advance of the event by completing an Event Proposal Form. Supervisors must contact the IOCI whenever they feel an item in their area, positive or negative, may attract the attention of the media.

IV. **Press Releases and Media Advisories**

No DHS employee, office, or division shall be allowed to send out press releases and/or media advisories. All releases and media advisories must be processed by the IOCI.

V. **DHS Communication Managers**

The DHS communication managers are:

Tom Green  
Stratton Building, Room 611  
401 S. Spring Street  
Springfield, IL 62706  
Phone: 217/558-1538  
Fax: 217/558-0547  
TTY Relay Number: 800-526-0844

Stephanie Gadlin  
James R. Thompson Center, Suite 5-500  
100 W. Randolph Street  
Chicago, IL 60610  
Phone: 312/814-0095  
Fax: 312/814-7245 TTY Relay Number: 800-526-0844

Authorized by: *(Signature on File)* Carol L. Adams, Ph.D. Secretary