

January 12, 2016

To: Amy Loder

From: PA Keystone Partnership

Re: Narrowing the Focus



Introduction

This partnership of The Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR), the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV), the Institute on Disabilities at Temple University (IOD), the Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania (DRN), and the Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council (PASILC) came together to focus on individuals with complex communication needs, because we collectively realized people with complex communication needs have significant difficulty being understood and are severely restricted in their communication and their ability to effectively disclose and report incidents of sexual and domestic violence. We recognized that individuals with complex communication needs are disproportionately victims of sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking, but, are underserved by local rape crisis centers and domestic violence programs.

We recognize that providers often address the safety concerns within their existing systems of services and do not generally refer someone with a disability who has been assaulted or raped to local domestic or sexual violence programs. These obstacles can be compounded by an overall lack of coordination and communication between sexual assault and domestic violence programs and disability organizations.

We have come together to address the needs of survivors with complex communication needs who are survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking on a statewide level.

Who we are

The **Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR)** began in 1975 as the first sexual assault coalition in the country and is the statewide nonprofit organization working to prevent sexual violence at the state and national levels. Its mission is to work to eliminate all forms of sexual violence and to advocate for the rights and needs of victims of sexual violence. PCAR provides training and technical assistance statewide and nationally to sexual violence advocates and allied professionals.

Organized in 1976, the **Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV)**, is the first domestic violence coalition in the country. PCADV is a nonprofit that works at the state and national levels to eliminate domestic violence, secure justice for survivors, enhance safety for families and communities, and create lasting systems and social change. PCADV's mission is to eliminate personal and institutional violence against women through programs providing support and safety to victims through, direct services, public information and education, system advocacy, and social change activities.

The **PASILC (Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council)** is a nonprofit, cross-disability, consumer-controlled organization dedicated to securing public policies that ensure civil rights for people with disabilities by supporting the independent living philosophy. The PASILC works with Pennsylvania's eighteen Centers for Independent Living (CILs). CILs are community based, cross-disability, non-profit organizations designed and operated by people with disabilities, and are unique in that they operate according to a strict philosophy of consumer control, wherein people with all types of disabilities directly govern and staff the organization, provide peer support, information and referral, individual and system advocacy, and independent living skills training. PASILC supports Centers for Independent Living (CILs) that work with SV/DV programs.

The **Temple University Institute on Disabilities (IOD)** is one of sixty-seven University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service. Established in 1973 and located within the College of Education at Temple University, the IOD is a vibrant, diverse organization with more than forty staff members, including persons with disabilities, family members of people with disabilities, and students. For more than twenty years, the IOD has led the Commonwealth's program under the federal Assistive Technology Act and its amendments (formerly the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act 1988). The IOD is a national leader in leadership development, assistive technology (including but not limited to augmentative and alternative communication), Disability Studies, justice for people with disabilities, and inclusive education.

The **Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania (DRN)** is a statewide, non-profit corporation designated as the federally-mandated organization to advance and protect the civil rights of adults and children with disabilities. DRN works with people with disabilities and their families, their organizations, and their advocates to ensure their right to live in their communities with the services they need, to receive a full and inclusive education, to live free of discrimination, abuse and neglect, and to have control and self-determination over their services. DRN advocates to ensure that people with disabilities have equal and unhindered access to employment, transportation, public accommodations, and government services; to enforce their rights to vocational, habilitative, post-secondary educational, health, and other services; and to protect them from abuse and neglect. DRN identifies systemic issues which are important to people with disabilities and seeks change and reform through litigation, administrative advocacy, and public education.

Our Partnership's Focus

The Keystone Partnership will be focusing on reviewing the internal capacity of our five agencies and our respective staff members' abilities to provide training, technical assistance, and support to the centers, programs, providers and allied professionals on supporting survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking experienced who are individuals with complex communication needs.

PCAR will focus on building internal capacity of their entire staff, which includes the state coalition and their national project, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), Board of Directors, leadership, communications, information technology, outreach and support staff. They will focus on their ability to provide technical assistance to rape crisis centers in Pennsylvania.

PCADV will focus on building the internal capacity of their entire staff, including the Board of Directors, leadership, communications, information technology, outreach and support staff. They will be focus on their ability to provide technical assistance to domestic violence programs in Pennsylvania.

PASILC will be focusing on building their entire staff's capacity, which includes the executive director, manager of finance and administration, and policy adviser to provide support to the independent living centers across the state regarding the intersection of sexual assault and domestic violence and complex communication needs among people with disabilities.

Institute on Disabilities at Temple University will be focusing on their ability to respond to sexual assault and domestic violence with individuals with complex communication needs, specifically with their Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology (PIAT) program and outreach coordinator's communication services and assistive technology specialists on indicators of sexual and domestic violence.

DRN will be focusing on building the capacity of their entire staff, Board of Directors, and Mental Health Advisory Council members. They will be focusing on their staff's ability to respond during intake and advocacy to sexual assault and domestic violence with individuals with complex communication needs. Additionally, they will focus on their staff's capacity to provide technical assistance regarding this topic.

Narrowing: Geography

The Keystone Partnership has a statewide focus. Pennsylvania is culturally diverse, with densely populated metropolitan and rural areas. The partnership will seek to complete its needs assessment in a manner that will be reflective of these geographic and culturally unique populations. We will ensure that individuals who live in rural communities are represented, as these groups can be traditionally overlooked given Pennsylvania's two large metropolitan areas, and its state capital south centrally located in the state. Additionally, we seek to capture the voices of individuals of all genders, sexual orientations, racial, ethnic, cultural and economic backgrounds.

Narrowing: The Population

Many agencies in this partnership have previously collaborated on providing domestic violence and sexual assault services to individuals with disabilities. From experiences during these past efforts, we collectively decided to focus this grant partnership on individuals with complex communication needs who are survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking. We recognize these individuals may face additional barriers to services, and so we strive to address this gap.

Narrowing: The Types of Victimization

For effective change, we believe that sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking should be the focus of our work as often times these are the most private and most underreported crimes committed against someone with a disability.

Our Shared Commitment

We recognize our responsibility as statewide organizations to lead the advancement of accessible quality sexual assault and domestic violence services for survivors with complex communication needs that reflect our partnership's values and mission. We share the belief that change must occur within each of our organizations and are committed to assessing our capacities to address serving individuals with complex communication needs who are survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking. We have the commitment at the organizational and the individual levels to implement change.

Within our partnership, we have the right balance of expertise in our respective fields; we can ensure that this work is done in a cross-disciplinary and cross-system manner to produce the best quality services. Our Partnership is in the position to inform and foster change within our

own organizations and the programs, centers we support. These changes will permeate into the everyday mission work of our organizations that include training, technical assistance, and individual and systems advocacy.

We are committed to ensuring that the work done during this grant funded partnership lives past the funding period. We believe sustainability of our work must not only be with our partnership, but within the local communities that provide direct services. During our planning and implementation, we will prioritize initiatives and tools that will sustain our work locally and statewide, as we understand this is a proven method to achieve institutionalized change.