

Partnering to Increase Service Access
A Project of Advocacy, Inc. and SafePlace, Austin, Texas

Needs Assessment Plan Part II: Disability Services Plan

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Partnering to Increase Service Access: A Project of Advocacy, Inc. and SafePlace, Austin, Texas

Needs Assessment Part II: Disability Services Plan

1. Introduction

The “Partnering to Increase Service Access” initiative was funded in 2006 by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women through an Education and Technical Assistance Grant to End Violence Against Women with Disabilities grant program. The collaborative partners involved in this project are Advocacy, Inc. (AI) and SafePlace. AI is the Texas protection and advocacy organization and SafePlace is a local domestic violence and sexual assault service provider. AI has regional or satellite offices in 14 communities in Texas. Both SafePlace and AI’s state offices are located in Austin, Texas.

During the first year of the project, the partners are conducting planning activities and will implement the following needs assessment activities:

- In-depth assessment of the partners overlapping areas of interest, presence, and influence related to abuse and violence against people with disabilities.
- Conducting a thorough exploration of the opportunities for coordination between the two organizations in serving domestic/sexual violence survivors who have disabilities.
- Gathering community input on the actual and perceived barriers to people with disabilities in accessing needed supports and services related to domestic violence and sexual assault.

Through the needs assessment activities, project staff will have the opportunity to more clearly identify the barriers, gaps, and needs for domestic violence and sexual assault services within the disability community in Austin, Texas. Advocacy, Inc. and SafePlace will also identify at least one additional partner or key stakeholder to engage in the implementation phase of the project’s strategic plan.

The partners are prepared to conduct needs assessment activities which include: 1) an internal survey of the gaps and needs within SafePlace and Advocacy, Inc. in coordinating services and responding to abuse survivors with a wide range of disabilities, and 2) an external assessment of needs through individual interviews and focus groups with key informants including members of the disability community, abuse survivors with disabilities, SafePlace staff, AI staff, and community based disability service providers. Using the information from this needs assessment, the Texas collaborative partners will develop a needs assessment report and propose and implement a strategic plan to address the identified needs and barriers.

2. Vision and Mission Statement

The vision of the “Partnering to Increase Service Access” project is that people with disabilities and people who are D/deaf will live as they choose, free from all forms of violence and abuse. To reflect this vision, the following guiding statement was adopted by the collaboration:

*We envision that people who are D/deaf or have disabilities live free from domestic and sexual violence and other forms of abuse.**

**This statement does not reflect the world as it is, but rather our values and beliefs about the world as it should be, and our work leads us closer to this...our dream. Our work is about believing in the vision and living the dream....*

The partnering agencies also believe that we can work to advance change within our own agencies and communities to ensure that disability and victim services are available to all members of the disability communities. To guide our planning, assessment and implementation activities, the partnering agencies adopted the following mission statement:

To advance policies, practices and services that ensure culturally aware, sensitive and fully accessible responses to members of the disability and D/deaf communities regarding domestic, caregiver and sexual violence.

3. Perspective

For the purposes of this plan and our work, *disability* is a term used to refer to people who experience difficulties or barriers that interfere significantly with communication, intellectual or physical development, mental health, mobility, cognition, perception, and sensory experiences (which may include individuals who are Deaf or have hearing loss or people who are blind or have low vision). Disability can also include people who have conditions that impact daily living yet are not readily apparent to the public (e.g., a heart condition, diabetes).

Many people who are Deaf do not identify as having a disability, but instead identify as members of a culture or community whose primary language is a form of sign language. Part I of this plan outlines the needs assessment activities that focus on identifying the gaps, barriers and access needs of individuals who are Deaf and who do not have ready access to domestic violence and rape crisis services due to communication barriers. Part II of this plan focuses on people with disabilities.

4. Overall Goals of Our Work

The following information includes the goals of our work together on this project:

- a.) As partnering agencies, AI and SafePlace will focus activities in the city of Austin / Travis County in which we will pilot activities detailed in a strategic plan based on the needs assessment findings.

Results of this needs assessment will help us identify opportunities to build partnerships with disability service agencies and to expand resources, services and supports available to abuse survivors who have disabilities within the city of Austin and Travis County.

The proposed needs assessment activities will help AI and SafePlace initiate a plan to 1) more formally coordinate services for survivors who have disabilities, and 2) identify needs and better prepare AI community integration and intake staff to identify, respond to and make referrals related to domestic and sexual violence, and 3) identify strategies to make accessibility improvements and

institutionalize new protocols within SafePlace to ensure abuse survivors with disabilities have a welcoming and accessible experience at SafePlace.

- b.) As a result of the Needs Assessment Part I and Part II, the collaboration may identify additional agencies that want to be engaged in this work by making changes within their own organizations and who want to collaborate during Year's II and III of this project. We will be working closely with Vera and OVW staff to determine if SafePlace and AI will be inviting these agencies to engage in this project.

5. Needs Assessment Goals

This project allows us to identify what is needed within our own agencies for increasing access to domestic and sexual violence services and supports to abuse survivors with a wide range of disabilities. This project is multifaceted and will allow AI and SafePlace to build and expand upon their previous work together. As a result of this collaboration and needs assessment and implementation activities, AI and SafePlace are committed to the following goals:

- *To identify strategies to increase the capacity of AI staff to identify and respond to domestic and sexual violence reports.*
- *To identify needs and increase the capacity of SafePlace staff to provide accessible domestic violence and sexual assault services to people with disabilities.*
- *Identify opportunities to increase service referrals between Advocacy, Inc. and SafePlace.*
- *To identify the needs within the disability community related to domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking.*
- *To identify the service gaps and barriers experienced by disability advocates and service providers when working with survivors of domestic violence or sexual assault who have disabilities.*
- *To explore the role of disability advocates and service providers in responding to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault they serve.*
- *To identify strategies to enhance outreach to the disability community to increase their access to domestic violence and sexual assault services.*

6. Needs Assessment Information

Overview

The needs assessment will focus on identifying the service and support needs and expanding the resources available to domestic and sexual violence survivors who have a wide range of disabilities. To accomplish this initiative, information will be gathered from a variety of sources but most directly from focus groups or key informant interviews. Staff from the two partnering organizations will co-facilitate the focus groups. Focus groups will be held with staff who have direct contact with clients where individual interviews

will be held with administration (Program Directors, Managers, and/or staff who conduct systems level work).

Sources of Needs Assessment Information

Project staff will recruit participants representative of the following target groups:

Individuals

- Community members who have disabilities

Victim Services

- SafePlace staff

Disability Advocacy Agencies

- AI staff

Disability Provider Agencies

- Disability services agency staff

Focus groups and interviews with key informants listed above will be the mainstay in forming an accurate picture of the gaps and barriers in existing services and resources, along with outreach, training and technical assistance needs. From this information, project staff will look within their own organizations to make improvements and identify opportunities to formalize coordination of services between the two partnering agencies.

Number of Focus Groups

- *Community members who have disabilities* – Three [3] focus groups
- *Victim services staff* – Four to six [4-6] focus groups with SafePlace staff
 - 2-3 non-residential services (counseling, hospital advocacy, intake, legal services)
 - 2-3 residential services (transitional housing, shelter)
- *Disability advocacy/services staff* – Up to [2] focus groups with AI staff
- *Disability services provider agencies* – Two [2] focus groups

Number of Individual Interviews

- *Victim Service staff* – UP to five [5] interviews (Directors of direct service programs for adult survivors)
- *People with disabilities* – Up to ten [10] interviews
- *Disability advocacy / services staff* – Up to four [4] AI staff [key issue experts]

7. Location of Focus Groups and Interviews

The focus groups and interviews will be conducted at the offices of SafePlace, AI, or in a neutral site such as a public library. Individual interviews will take place in a location that is convenient, accessible and private. If there are health issues that prevent an individual from leaving their home, interviews will be conducted by telephone. Overall, 11-13 focus groups and approximately 19 interviews with key informants will be conducted in the course of the needs assessment.

8. Accessibility

All sites where focus groups and individual interviews will be conducted will be accessible. Both partners are fully committed to ensuring access to all activities outlined in this document to people with a broad range of disabilities. Accessible parking will be available and meeting sites will be accessible by public transportation. When participants do not have means to access transportation, bus passes or vouchers for accessible taxi services will be provided. Sites will also be accessible to people who use mobility devices and project staff will ensure that walkways, hallways, doors and entryways are inspected and free of any obstacles prior to meetings. Sign language and other interpreter services, as well as other identified accessibility accommodations will be provided upon request. As the lead agency, SafePlace will pay for these accommodations. Potential participants of focus groups and interviews will be asked during screening to communicate their accessibility needs in advance. Participants will be reimbursed for childcare services if needed.

9. Outreach and Participant Recruitment

We expect to engage disability service organizations and to expand the network of providers available for serving survivors of domestic and sexual violence with who have disabilities as well as identifying possible future project partners.

Advocacy, Inc. staff: Participating staff from AI have been identified for both focus groups and interviews in Austin, Texas and will be contacted to establish specific dates for the interviews and focus groups. These individuals include staff in the Austin office who work directly with clients as well as staff serving on the *Protection and Civil Rights* or *Community Integration* teams. Up to four [4] staff will be interviewed individually based on their knowledge and experience and subject expertise on the abuse experienced by people with disabilities. Staff participating in the interviews will include Program Managers or staff who conduct systems level work. The individual interviews will allow the opportunity to collect more extensive information through one-to-one meetings.

SafePlace staff: Focus groups will be scheduled and conducted with SafePlace staff providing direct services including counselors, shelter staff, hotline/intake workers, advocates and transitional housing staff. The staff members will be invited to participate by their Program Director as well as project staff attending program team meetings and posting information in the agency's electronic staff newsletter and bulletin boards. Individual interviews will be conducted with Program Directors or managers (who have decision making capacity) of direct service programs that primarily serve adult survivors (e.g., Shelter, Transitional Housing, Counseling, legal Services).

Disability service providers: Recruitment from disability service providers in the Austin area will take place through contacts with Austin Resource Center on Independent Living (ARCIL), Educare Residential Services, United Cerebral Palsy of Texas, Adult Protective Services, The Arc of the Capital Area, Easter Seals, Goodwill Industries, Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitation Services, Austin State Hospital, Austin State School, Cris Cole Rehabilitation Center, St. David's Rehabilitation Center and other disability service providers in Austin, Texas. Recruitment will be targeted to both front line staff and managers who have decision making authority for their program. These agencies will be provided with an information letter and flyer about the focus group that invites participation. This information can be posted on bulletin boards or sent out electronically within each agency as recruitment methods. Follow-up phone

calls will be made to ensure representation from multiple agencies. Each focus group will include representatives from various agencies.

Community members with disabilities: Recruitment of women with disabilities will occur from within current and former clients of SafePlace who have disabilities as well as through local disability service and advocacy agencies. An information flyer about the project and interviews will be provided to SafePlace counselors and advocates who will then give that information to clients who have self-identified as having a disability. In addition, an information letter and the flyer will be distributed among the disability community in Austin, Texas through local disability service and advocacy organizations. We will request that each of these agencies will have copies of the flyer in their reception areas, and that the flyer will be distributed on the agencies bulletin boards and listserv. Local disability service and advocacy organizations including, but not limited to The Arc of the Capital Area, Department of Assistive and Rehabilitation Services, Easter Seals, Goodwill Industries, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Self- Help Advocacy Center, and Travis County MHMR will be asked to share the flyer with the individuals who are service recipients.

The recruitment emails, letters and flyers will outline the purpose, benefits and voluntary nature of the interviews and focus groups as well as provide an invitation to participate. The materials will include contact information for project staff following up with individuals who want to participate and to determine the access needs of all participants.

10. Stipends, Confidentiality, Safety and Benefits

Stipend

Women with disabilities will receive a stipend for their participation. The stipend, as approved in the project budget (\$35), will be given to individual participants at the close of each focus group. The disability service providers who participate in a focus group will receive a small gift card (\$5) as a thank you for participation. Snacks or beverages will be provided to focus group participants based upon when the group is held. Stipends will not be provided to partnering agency staff (AI, SafePlace).

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality within the limits of the law, throughout the focus group and interview processes -- although confidentiality can never be absolutely guaranteed. Participants will be informed that no personally identifying information will be recorded unless the participant gives us signed consent to contact them with follow-up questions. Even in those cases, contact information will not be kept with the notes or answers to focus group or interview questions.

Two exceptions to this confidentiality will be when current abuse is disclosed and if a participant discloses a plan to harm herself/himself or someone else. In this case, Texas is a mandatory reporting state and this information must be reported to Adult Protective Services. Should a report to protective services be made, the facilitator will make every effort to involve the participant in that process and will provide step-by-step information about what is likely to happen after a report is made. Any written records about reports of abuse will be kept in a locked file at either SafePlace or Advocacy, Inc. (Note: The lead facilitator will be responsible for making reports to APS, hence the decision as to where abuse report documentation will be kept.). Any record(s) about abuse reports will be destroyed after 3 years.

Participants will be asked to maintain each other's confidentiality as participants. This includes not disclosing another person's name, their participation, or any of their comments or answers to the focus group questions. The data/information gathered will be stored with no personally identifiable information attached unless the individual participant has given us signed consent to contact her or him with follow-up questions. Even this information will be kept in a file separate from the needs assessment information gathered. All signed consent forms will be kept in a locked file cabinet and only project staff will be able to access these forms as needed. Information gained from the interviews and focus groups will be shared with project team members. No personally identifiable information about an individual person will be shared. Confidentiality forms and data from the needs assessment will be kept for [what is the federal requirement?] years.

Results of the focus groups and interviews will be discussed as general thoughts, ideas, patterns and themes. If the project staff use any examples that illustrate findings, those examples will be completely anonymous and will not identify any one participant.

Safety

Physical and psychological safety is a primary consideration for participants willing to talk about domestic and sexual violence. Focus group facilitators and interviewers will make strong efforts to create a safe environment for these conversations. Participants will also be asked about needs in relation to accessing support and services related to abuse and violence. These personal topics could bring up memories and intense feelings in the person that requires immediate support or access to resources. A safe person will be available to talk with any participant as needed.

Participants will be given referral resources, including contact information for crisis hotlines (SafePlace, National Domestic Violence Hotline, Rape Abuse and Incest National Network), local free or low cost counseling services, and intake for advocacy and victim services (Advocacy, Inc. and SafePlace). In addition, participants will be given information about how to contact the interviewer or focus group moderators if they have additional questions or information they want to share after the focus group or individual interview. Every effort will be made to minimize the risks for all participants, and they will be reminded at regular intervals that they can withdraw from the group or interview at any time.

Potential Benefits to Participants

Focus group and individual interview participants will share information that can ultimately help increase the personal safety of people with disabilities and to improve domestic violence, sexual assault and disability-related services for members of the disability communities. We can identify no reliable individual benefits to the focus group or individual interview participants.

11. Consent Protocols

Informed Consent

Each person will review the consent form in-person just before the focus group. Facilitators will read the consent form out loud. The document is written so that each sentence is separate (rather than in

paragraph format) to make the form easier to read and process for individuals who have limited reading skills.

Participants will be verbally informed that we are going to talk about things related to abuse and violence. If they feel uncomfortable or upset, participants will be informed that they can leave the room and/or talk to a 'safe' person if they want to. The facilitator/moderator or interviewer will point out the safe person during the focus group or interview. Participants will also be given information about mandatory reporting so that any disclosure of abuse will be a fully informed choice. Any persons disclosing will have the option of making their own report and/or sitting in with the project staff while their report is being made.

Participants will first be asked if they have any questions on the consent form that they want to know or talk more about. Participants will be told that they have a choice and the right to decide whether or not they want to participate and that if they decide not to participate, they will still be given the compensation. Participants will also be told that they have the right to stop anytime and that they can 'pass' on any question they don't want to answer.

The voluntary consent to participate form will be read at the beginning of all focus groups and individual interviews. Individuals who have not yet signed their consent form will do so, and consent forms will be gathered before the focus group or interview activities are initiated.

[Voluntary consent to participate forms can be found in Appendix A. They are prepared for use in both simplified language and as a more formalized standard legal document. The interview or focus group facilitator will select and use the consent form most accessible to participants.](#)

Other Consent Process

Professional service providers and staff of AI and SafePlace will be invited to participate by an invitation letter or flyer. Any agency staff member who signs up for a focus group or interview will be reminded that participation is voluntary and that she/he has the right to pass on any question and to stop their participation at any time.

To preserve agency representative anonymity within each agency, consent documentation will not be gathered. Voluntary consent will be evidenced when a professional service provider requests participation and then shows up for a focus group or interview after reading an information flyer that includes all informed consent information detailed in the previous consent section of this document. Focus group participants will also be asked to preserve confidentiality about others who are participating and what is said and discussed by others during the focus groups or interviews.

12. Moderator and Interviewer Training

Moderator and interviewer training occurred on August 16, 2007 in Austin, Texas at SafePlace. The training was coordinated by Vera Institute of Justice and conducted by Mary Oshwald with the Regional Research Institute of Portland State University. Topics included types of focus group questions, steps for conducting focus groups, process guidelines, facilitator/moderator responsibilities, expecting the unexpected, de-briefing, strategies for recording data, important facilitator/moderator characteristics, and recording and storing information collected and data organization and analysis. The purpose of the training

was to obtain information on best practices in planning, moderating and documenting focus groups so that the Texas collaboration can develop a consistent approach for facilitation of focus groups.

13. Estimated Timeline for Completing Part II Needs Assessment Activities

The information gathered in this project's focus groups and individual interviews will be essential to the development of a strategic plan that accurately reflects the resources, barriers and opportunities for increasing accessibility to victim and disability services and safety options for people who have disabilities.

Workgroups were tasked with developing needs assessment goals that represented each of the partner agencies' internal and community based self-interests. These goals were presented and reviewed by the full project team and a final set of goals were selected which are summarized earlier in this document. The focus group and interview questions were developed according to these goals (see p. 2-3).

Following selection of our goals, we outlined a plan for completion of the various activities necessary for conducting the focus groups and individual interviews. A strategic plan will be developed, reviewed by Vera Institute of Justice staff and proposed to OVW for approval based on results of the focus groups and interviews. The approved plan will reflect the partner's recommendations and will guide the remaining project activities. The following chart details our estimated timeline for completing the needs assessment activities.

| Month | Activity and Milestones |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| June – August 2007 | Develop needs assessment goals representing each partner agencies' goals and interests community based self-interests. |
| July - September 2007 | <p>Select teams to develop needs assessment goals. Draft protocol for conducting needs assessment activities and develop focus group and interview questions based on needs assessment goals.</p> <p>Participate in training by Vera Associates on Best Practices in Moderating Focus Groups.</p> |
| October – December 2007 | <p>Develop the needs assessment plan Part I -- Deaf Services -- and submit to Vera Institute of Justice and OVW for approval.</p> <p>Finalize development of informed consent documents and stipend plan for participants.</p> <p>Attend OVW/Vera all-site meeting in St. Louis, Missouri.</p> |
| January – March 2008 | Develop the needs assessment plan Part II – Disability Services – and submit to Vera Institute of Justice and OVW for approval. |
| March – May 2008 | <p>Pending OVW approval of the needs assessment plan Part I – Deaf Services -- recruit participants and provide informed consent information.</p> <p>Implement needs assessment protocol; conduct focus groups and individual interviews for Part I – Deaf Services</p> |
| May – August 2008 | Pending OVW approval of the needs assessment plan Part II – recruit participants and provide informed consent information. |

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>Implement needs assessment protocol; conduct focus groups and individual interviews for Part II – Disability Services</p> <p>Attend OVW/Vera all-site meeting in Louisville, Kentucky</p> |
| August – September 2008 | <p>Organize and compile needs assessment data. Develop findings and integrate with other sources of information (census, agency self-interests, priority setting by collaboration, etc.).</p> <p>Submit final report on needs assessment to Vera and OVW for approval. OVW will respond within 5 days of receipt of this report either by email or telephone or by 'no response which will indicate approval of the report as submitted.</p> |
| September – November 2008 | <p>Develop strategic plan based on results of needs assessment data. Submit strategic plan to Vera Institute of Justice staff for review/feedback and then submit to OVW for approval.</p> |

14. Focus Group and Interview Questions

See Appendix B for focus group and interview questions.

APPENDIX A

Consent for Participation in a Focus Group or Interview

Date: _____ Focus group or Interview (circle one) participant

I _____ (participant name) agree to be part of a focus group or individual interview and talk about ways that domestic violence and sexual assault services can be improved or made better with people who are D/deaf or people who have disabilities in Austin, Texas.

I will be part of this project by answering questions in a small group of people (focus group) or by talking individually with someone from SafePlace or AI.

I know I will be answering questions about services related to domestic, caregiver and sexual abuse.

I am volunteering to participate in the focus group and interview and will be answering these questions.

I know that if I talk about abuse that is personally happening to me, the focus group leader may need to call Adult Protective Services (APS) and let them know about the abuse.

I can also make a report to APS about the abuse myself by calling the APS hotline at 1-800-252-5400.

If Adult Protective Services staff investigates or talks with me about the abuse-- they may offer me services. I have the right to refuse or accept those services or help. I understand that this is the law in Texas.

I can change my mind at any time about participating. I can also say "pass" if there is a question I do not want to answer. Even after the focus group or the interview starts, I can decide at any time to stop and leave.

I will be provided with cash compensation for my participation even if I am not able to complete the interview or focus group.

I also understand that SafePlace and Advocacy, Incorporated will not be responsible for replacing the cash compensation if it is lost, misplaced, stolen, or destroyed after I receive it.

I release SafePlace and Advocacy, Inc., from any and all liability connected to the cash compensation that I receive for my participation.

If I do stop answering questions or decide to leave, I can also still call Advocacy, Inc. or SafePlace if I need help with abuse. I also know that participation in a focus group or interview does not mean that I am a client of Advocacy, Inc. or SafePlace.

It is OK with me that a project person from SafePlace or AI will be taking notes on what everyone is talking about and the answers that everyone is giving. This person is taking notes to help project staff remember the things we talked about until they can write a report with all of the information from everyone. No identifying information will be included.

I know the information I give will be put together with information from other people's comments and my individual comments and answers will be confidential.

This means that no one will be told that I gave any of the specific comments / information and no one will be told that I participated in the focus group or that I was interviewed.

I agree that I will keep confidential and not share names of individuals who participate in focus groups or information that other people who are in the focus groups give by not telling anyone after leaving the focus group.

I know that SafePlace cannot guarantee that other people in the focus group will keep my name private, but everyone is being asked to keep each other's names private.

I can ask to meet with someone (a safe person) before, during, or after the focus group or interview to get support and information about where to find more support about anything hurtful or confusing that I thought about or felt during the focus group or interview.

If I have any worries or questions about the focus group or interview I can call _____
_____ Or write by email to: _____.

I _____ (my name) agree to be part of this project called "Partnering to Increase Service Access" to help identify how SafePlace and Advocacy, Inc., can improve services in Austin for people with disabilities and people who are D/deaf about issues and needs about domestic, caregiver, and sexual violence and abuse.

Signature _____ (participant)

Date _____

I agree for the facilitators to contact me at the following telephone number or email address after the focus group or interview if they have any other questions.

Telephone: _____

Email address: _____

Consent for Participation in a Focus Group or Interview

Date: _____

This is a (circle one): Focus Group Interview

Your name (please print): _____

The purpose of this Focus Group and/or Interview (collectively called the “process”) is to provide feedback in order for SafePlace and Advocacy, Incorporated to change its policies and procedures to improve their respective organizations’ accessibility to people with disabilities or people who are D/deaf. Your feedback is very important to this project and any comments or suggestions you make will be taken into consideration.

Please read the following which explains the understanding and agreement between you, as the participant, and the organizations, SafePlace and Advocacy, Incorporated. Signing this means that you agree to the terms and provisions below. If you do not understand and/or agree with any of the terms or provisions below, please do not sign this consent. However, you will not be able to participate in the process without a signed consent unless you have discussed, and otherwise resolved, your concerns with a representative of SafePlace or Advocacy, Incorporated. You may keep a copy of this consent for your own records.

If you have any questions, please contact a representative of SafePlace or Advocacy, Incorporated.

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION

By signing this consent, you understand and/or agree that:

1. You are volunteering your time to be a part of the process and that you are voluntarily participating in the process.
2. As a participant of the process, you will be answering questions from a representative of SafePlace and/or Advocacy, Incorporated in a small group format (Focus Group) or during individual interviews.
3. You understand that the questions asked during the process may include the topics of domestic, caregiver, and sexual abuse.
4. If you talk about abuse that is personally happening to you, the representative from SafePlace and/or Advocacy, Incorporated may be required to contact Adult Protective Services (APS) and report the abuse.
5. You understand that you can also make a report to APS about the abuse myself by calling the APS hotline at 1.800.252.5400.
6. If APS investigates or talks with you about the abuse, they may offer you services that, according to Texas law, you have the right to refuse or accept these services.
7. You can change your mind at any time about participating in the process and that you may leave at any time and for any reason, even after the process has begun.
8. You can “pass” on any question that you do not want to answer for any reason.
9. Even if you decide to leave during the process or “pass” on any question, you will still receive compensation for your participation.

10. If you decide to stop answering questions or to leave the process, you can talk to a “safe person” who will be made available to you during the process.
11. Whether you stay through the entire process, leave early, pass on questions, or decline to participate at all, you can still contact SafePlace or Advocacy, Incorporated if you need help with abuse.
12. You understand that participation in the process does not mean that you are a client of SafePlace or Advocacy, Incorporated.
13. You understand that a project assistant representative from SafePlace and/or Advocacy, Incorporated will be present during the process for the limited purpose of taking notes on the issues discussed, as well as the answers or comments given. The notes are necessary in order to assist the representatives of SafePlace and Advocacy to remember what was discussed until a report can be written that documents all the information and feedback the participants have provided. After the report has been written, the notes will be shredded.
14. After the process is over, SafePlace and Advocacy, Incorporated will use the information you have shared with them in order to learn how they can improve their services in order to provide better services to people with disabilities and people who are D/deaf who have been abused.
15. You can ask to meet with someone (a “safe person”) before, during, or after the process in order to get support and information about anything that you need to talk about.
16. If you have any concerns or questions about the process, you can call _____ or by e-mail _____ at _____@_____.
17. If SafePlace or Advocacy, Incorporated need to contact you with any other questions after the process, they may contact you at: _____. However, if you do not wish further contact from SafePlace or Advocacy, Incorporated after the process, you do not have to leave your contact information.

CONFIDENTIALITY

By signing this consent, you understand and/or agree that:

18. While the information you give will be placed with information from other participants of the process, all information will be kept confidential and shared only with authorized representatives of SafePlace and/or Advocacy, Incorporated involved with the project.
19. SafePlace and Advocacy, Incorporated will not share with outside parties the information about the identity of the person providing comments or information.
20. The fact that you participated, shared comments or information, or that you were otherwise involved with the process will be kept confidential.
21. You agree that, at all times, you will keep confidential and not share the names or identities of any persons you know or may know that participated in the process. You will also not share any information or comments shared by other participants of the process.
22. You understand that, while SafePlace and Advocacy, Incorporated will make every effort to keep confidential all information, including the identities of the participants, the participants of the process will be relied upon to keep all information confidential, as well. You agree to release SafePlace and Advocacy, Incorporated from any and all liability if information that would otherwise be confidential is disclosed by persons or participants out of SafePlace and Advocacy, Incorporated’s control.

23. SafePlace and Advocacy, Incorporated will keep all information, including the identity of the participants, confidential; however, they may be required to release such information if they have a legal obligation or court order to do so, or otherwise compelled to by law.

COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

By signing this consent, you understand and/or agree that:

24. SafePlace and Advocacy, Incorporated will provide you with compensation for your participation in the process even if you have not or were not able to complete the entire process.
25. SafePlace and Advocacy, Incorporated will not be responsible for or be obligated to replace lost, misplaced, stolen, or destroyed compensation once received.
26. You will release SafePlace and Advocacy, Incorporated from any and all liability connected to or arising from the compensation you receive for your participation.

Your Signature

Date

SafePlace or Advocacy, Incorporated representative

Date

APPENDIX B

Advocacy, Inc. Focus Group Questions

Advocacy, Inc. Services

1. How do issues of domestic violence or sexual abuse/assault come to AI's attention? In the context of your work, what do you do when you suspect or learn that caregiver abuse, domestic violence or sexual assault has happened?

Possible Prompts: What agency procedures, protocols and policies are in place for responding to abuse? How could policies or procedures be added or expanded for responding to abuse? What is working well currently? What service gaps or barriers have you identified? How could these problems be resolved or addresses?

2. What have been Advocacy, Inc. staff's experiences around obtaining protective orders for people with disabilities who have experienced caregiver or domestic violence or abuse in their homes?*

Possible Prompts: What problems have come up? How do you think these problems could be addressed?

3. What type of trainings, consultation, or resources would support Advocacy, Inc.'s staff for responding to caregiver abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault?

Outreach

4. Sometimes people with disabilities who are experiencing domestic violence, caregiver violence, rape or abuse do not reach out for help. What are your thoughts about this?

Possible Prompts: What would help people reach out for help if they've been abused? How could we better notify people with disabilities of available services?

5. What are your greatest concerns about domestic and caregiver violence and sexual assault committed against persons with disabilities?

Possible Prompts: What might prevent people from accessing services if they've experienced violence? What within your agency would help eliminate barriers and promote solutions?

Collaboration

6. How could you see disability advocacy and domestic violence / sexual assault agencies working together to address abuse against people with disabilities?

How could you see SafePlace and AI working together?

***These questions will be asked to assess needs for developing a Memorandum of Understanding between Advocacy, Inc. and SafePlace for cross-referrals and service coordination.**

Advocacy, Inc.
Key Informant Staff
Individual Interviews

Advocacy Inc. Services

1. In general, what experiences has Advocacy, Inc. staff had in working with clients who have experienced domestic violence/sexual assault or abuse by a caregiver?

Possible Prompts: What has been working well? What gaps or barriers have arisen? What are your thoughts about addressing these gaps or barriers?

2. What have been Advocacy, Inc.'s experiences in securing protective orders for people with disabilities?

Possible Prompts: What gaps or problems have come up? How do you think these problems could be addressed?

3. What policies or procedures does Advocacy, Inc. have in place for responding to abuse/violence against people with disabilities?

Possible Prompts: What policies or procedures could be adapted or added? What types of training, consultation or resources could support staff in responding effectively?

Provider / Service Agencies

4. From your experience, what are other disability service agencies or systems responses to people who are experiencing abuse/violence?

Possible Prompts: What are the problems you or clients have identified? How could service and system response be improved for people who have experienced abuse?

Outreach

5. What are your thoughts about why people with disabilities may not reach out for help when they are abused?

Possible Prompts: What would help people reach out for help if they've been abused?

Collaboration

6. In what ways could SafePlace and Advocacy, Inc. work together to coordinate services for abuse survivors with disabilities and D/deaf survivors?

Possible Prompts: What cross-training and technical assistance would support this coordination of services?

*These questions will be asked to assess needs for developing a Memorandum of Understanding between Advocacy, Inc. and SafePlace for cross-referrals and service coordination.

Disability Service Providers Focus Group Questions

SafePlace Services

1. Sometimes people with disabilities who are experiencing domestic violence, rape or abuse do not reach out for help. Why do you think this is?

Possible Prompts: What would help people reach out for help if they've been abused? What training or policies/procedures could support you/other staff to talk about suspicions that you have that a client has been abused? What training or policies/procedures could support you/other staff to respond to clients who disclose abuse? What ideas do you have for reducing barriers? What do you think would support people with disabilities in requesting support/services related to abuse?

2. What advice do you have for reaching out to the disability community about domestic violence or sexual abuse or rape?

Possible Prompts: Where and how should the outreach take place? What type of messages should be included? What types of messages would support individuals with disabilities who have been sexually abused in asking for help?

Provider / Service Agencies

3. If a client told you that their partner or spouse was being abusive, what would you do?

Possible Prompts: What is already working well in your agency when clients report abuse? What do you think is needed to do better? Is there training or technical assistance you need in order to respond?

Collaboration

4. How do you see domestic violence, sexual assault and disability service providers working together to respond to abuse against people with disabilities?

Possible Prompts: What type of service coordination do you think needs to be developed? Would your agency be interested in talking in more depth about how changes could be made for recognizing and responding to abuse your clients?

SafePlace Staff Individual Interview Questions

SafePlace Services

1. In general, what have been your program's experiences in working with clients who have disabilities?

Possible Prompts: What went well? What are the strengths we can build on? What hasn't gone so well or is challenging? How do you think the challenges (barriers or gaps) could be addressed? What are the areas that could use more support?

Provider / Service Agencies

2. From your experience, how are disability service agencies responding to people who have disabilities who are experiencing abuse/violence?

Possible Prompts: What are the problems you or clients have identified? How could disability service provider's responses be improved for people who have experienced abuse?

3. What types of legal issues came up when working with survivors with disabilities?*

Collaboration

4. How do you see disability service providers and domestic violence / sexual assault agencies working together to address abuse against people with disabilities?

Possible Prompts: What has it been like for you when you (or staff in your department) have tried to link clients with disabilities to other community resources? What kinds of collaboration or agreements could improve options for persons who have disabilities?*

Vision

5. What does your department need to make our work successful with people with disabilities?

What do you think our agency needs?

Possible Prompts: What about people with physical disabilities [intellectual or cognitive disabilities, mental illness, people who are blind]?

*These questions will be asked to assess needs for developing a Memorandum of Understanding between Advocacy, Inc. and SafePlace for cross-referrals and service coordination.

SafePlace Direct Service Staff Focus Group Questions

SafePlace Services

1. What are some of your experiences working with clients with disabilities?

Follow up questions: What is working well? What does not go so well?

Possible Prompts: When do you feel strongest in working with people with disabilities? What barriers do you come up against (internally or externally)? What changes would you make in the way we do things that might better support clients with disabilities? What improvements are needed to make sure services are more effective with clients who have disabilities? Any specific challenges with safety planning related to persons with disabilities being stalked?

2. What types of changes do we need to make internally to best serve the disability community?

Possible Prompt: Do you need information/training on different technology options for working with people with disabilities?

Provider / Service Agencies

3. What has it been like when you've tried to link clients to disability related services in the community?

Possible Prompts: If you could change one thing to improve services for clients with disabilities what would that be? How could we improve coordination of services with people with disabilities?

3. What have been the legal issues that came up in your work with survivors who have disabilities?*
4. What do you think is most important for other agencies to know when helping survivors who have disabilities and have been hurt by abuse?

Possible Prompts: How can other service providers improve their response to abuse against individuals who have disabilities?

Collaboration

5. Are there any kinds of training or consultation that would support your own work with clients who have disabilities?

Vision

6. What is your vision for how we can better serve survivors who have disabilities?

Possible Prompts: What approach should SafePlace use to coordinate services between disability services and other direct service programs? What do you need from the Disability Services department to make our work successful with the disability community?

***These questions will be asked to assess needs for developing a Memorandum of Understanding between Advocacy, Inc. and SafePlace for cross-referrals and service coordination.**

People with Disabilities Focus Group Questions

1. What are your thoughts about why people with disabilities may not reach out and ask for help if they've been abused?

Possible Prompts: What do you think persons with disabilities need in order to get help (services and supports) related to abuse? How can people with disabilities get this information?

2. What suggestions do you have for reaching out to people with disabilities about abuse?

Possible Prompts: What types of messages would support people who are abused to get help? What can SafePlace do to tell people with disabilities about our services?

3. What are important things that service providers need to know to help people with disabilities hurt by abuse?

Possible Prompts: What can disability service providers do? How can disability service providers create an environment that is more responsive to the needs of people who have been abused? What can SafePlace (victim service providers) do? How can SafePlace be more welcoming to people with disabilities?

4. What do you think can help people with disabilities being abused in institutions? What about people being abused in the community?

Possible Prompts: Do you think what they need is different or the same? What advice would you have about safety for someone who is leaving a state school or hospital and moving into the community? How can people get this information? What could help people with disabilities who are being abused (either in an institution or in the community)?

5. What kinds of information and training do staff in institutions and community based organizations need in relation to safety and abuse?