



Rhode Island ACT Needs Assessment Plan

INTRODUCTION TO THE ACT INITIATIVE

In October of 2006, the ACT Initiative received three years of funding from the Office of Violence Against Women through its Education & Technical Assistance Grants to End Violence Against Women with Disabilities Program.

The ACT Collaborative, guiding this Initiative, is made up of three project partners – Day One, PAL and the RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and two affiliated member agencies – Advocates in Action and Blackstone Valley Advocacy Center – who have agreed to collaborate together in support of the mission and vision jointly created through this newly funded initiative.

The ACT Initiative was first created through previous OVW funding (2004), and the project partners are privileged to be strengthening both their collaborative and community work through this new grant. This current grant will take the ACT Collaborative the next step towards creating systems change, and allow us to provide intensive technical assistance and support to disability advocacy and violence response/prevention agencies in two Rhode Island Communities of Focus (COFs).

Vision, Mission and Context for Our Work

It is our **VISION** to create an accessible system that is person-centered in its service delivery, provides a comprehensive spectrum of services, and is delivered by informed and accountable professionals to individuals with disabilities and Deaf individuals, who are survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

Our **MISSION** is to ACT together through Advocacy, Collaboration and Training to better respond to violence against individuals with disabilities and Deaf individuals with the **PURPOSE** of fostering an environment that works to:

- Improve accessibility to advocacy and safety planning services for individuals with disabilities and Deaf individuals;
- Develop a collaborative network through open dialogue to improve the quality of supports individuals with disabilities and Deaf individuals receive;
- Provide cross-training, cross-fertilization, and bridge-building opportunities for professionals working in the fields of sexual assault, domestic violence and disability services to better detect, react to and reduce violence in the disability and Deaf communities.

Establishing our Guidelines & Narrowing Our Focus

As a precursor to this Needs Assessment Plan, the ACT Collaborative identified two Communities of Focus (COFs), target populations in which sustainable, systems change can be made to better respond to violence against individuals with disabilities. We utilized the same “non-negotiables” guiding the work of our Collaborative in deciding the agencies to participate in our COFs. We sought to work with agencies who demonstrate an ability and willingness to:

- Utilize a person-first approach for responding to violence against individuals with disabilities and Deaf individuals;
- Look beyond crisis intervention to also include long-term futures planning and support for and around these individuals who have experienced violence in their lives;
- Build community relationships and valued roles for individuals who have experienced violence in an effort to keep them safe in the future;
- Include Rhode Island’s strong network of self-advocates in the planning and implementation of all ACT initiative goals;
- Include survivors in the planning and implementation of all ACT initiative goals;
- Always ask the question “what will keep people safe?” and assure that it underlies all proposed interventions and implementations;
- Serve as the facilitator of conversations in an effort to create systems change, because it is our belief that change happens one conversation at a time;
- Foster a learning environment;
- Focus on the possibilities, and not on the deficits, within the service provider system;
- Always ask the question “what can we do together that we cannot do alone?”

Our Communities of Focus (COFs)

Through our “narrowing” work as a Collaborative in consultation with the VERA Institute of Justice, two communities emerged as our Communities of Focus – the City of Warwick and Newport County.

- Warwick, RI is the second largest city in the state, and as of the 2000 Census there were 85,808 people residing in the area with a median household income of \$46,483. The city covers 49.6 square miles of which 35.5 square miles are land and 14.1 square miles are water.
- Newport County is one of five counties in the state, and as of the 2000 Census is home to 85,433 people with a median household income of \$50,488. The entire county covers 314 square miles of which 104 square miles are land (66.83% of this county is water).

Through previous work of the ACT Collaborative, it became apparent over and over again which agencies in RI were truly ready to embark on systems change work. When the ACT Collaborative and its partner agencies hosted events and conversations around the intersection of violence and disability, it was the community service agencies working with adults with cognitive and developmental disabilities that continually showed up at the table. Therefore, the Collaborative narrowed the focus of our work in these two locations to the population of individuals with developmental and cognitive disabilities. More specifically, the ACT Collaborative will be conducting a needs and strengths assessment within the following agencies:

City of Warwick:

3 Agencies serving individuals with developmental/cognitive disabilities: Avatar, MENTOR Shared Living, and The J. Arthur Trudeau Memorial Center (Kent County Arc).

The Domestic Violence Member Agency: Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center

The Sexual Assault Agency: Day One¹

Newport County:

2 Agencies serving individuals with developmental/cognitive disabilities: Looking Upwards and Bridges, Inc.

The Domestic Violence Member Agency: The Women’s Resource Center of Newport & Bristol Counties

The Sexual Assault Agency: Day One

¹ Day One is a project partner and the only agency in Rhode Island organized specifically to deal with issues of sexual violence as a community concern. Day One is both the state coalition and the statewide service provider. Day One is the sexual violence response agency in both Communities of Focus.

GLOBAL QUESTIONS

The ACT Collaborative seeks to understand both the needs and strengths of our two COFs in regards to their ability to respond to women with cognitive disabilities, who have survived abuse. It is our goal to paint a picture of survivors' experiences with navigating the current service delivery system, uncover the unmet needs of both survivors and the agencies that are trying to help them, and identify community strengths, best practice approaches and resources available within our COFs.

We have specifically identified several areas of inquiry which define the goals of our Needs Assessment:

- What are the existing strengths, best practices and possibilities that exist in our COFs for a person-centered, cross-discipline response to abuse?
- What are the barriers survivors with developmental and cognitive disabilities face when trying to access advocacy and safety-planning services?
- What are the entry points, if any, into the violence response system for individuals with developmental and cognitive disabilities, and how can we improve access to these entry points?
- What capacities, skills and competencies need to be nurtured in agencies and staff who work with individuals with developmental and cognitive disabilities, who have survived abuse?

SOURCES OF EXISTING DATA

The ACT Collaborative has been working together since the fall of 2004 when this partnership was originally created through previous funding from the Office on Violence Against Women. Under that previous funding cycle the Collaborative conducted community forums and facilitated conversations with both disability and violence service provider professionals, and individuals with developmental and cognitive disabilities. The results of this current needs assessment will be used in conjunction with the data collected under that previous grant, as it applies to improving access to services for individuals with developmental and cognitive disabilities, as well as these other sources of existing data:

- The PAL Quality of Life Initiative (QLI) data. The main purpose of the QLI project is to gather information from Rhode Islanders with disabilities, who

receive funding from the Department of Developmental Disabilities, on how they are doing, the quality of their services and to hear and record their goals and dreams.

- Data collected through recent community forums conducted by RI Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals in its work towards developmental disability system development and reform.
- Day One clinical and advocacy client data.
- Data from the Department of Developmental Disabilities Office of Quality Assurance and its Incident Management Model Trends Committee.
- Data from the Medicare/Medicaid Fraud Unit of the Attorney General's Office

PRIMARY AUDIENCES FOR THE CURRENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT INQUIRY

The ACT Collaborative seeks to have conversations with the widest range of stakeholders throughout this process in an effort to get a picture from both the macro- and micro- levels of the service delivery system for women with disabilities, who have survived abuse. The ACT Collaborative wants to understand both the day-to-day work that is being done with these individuals, as well as understand the larger system in which front-line staff and the individuals themselves must navigate. Understanding that any needs and strengths assessment in our COFs must look at these multiple layers, the following audiences will be gathered for our conversations:

- Leadership (Executive, Department, Shelter Directors and Board Members) of COF Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Agencies
- Leadership (Executive, Department, Residential Directors and Board Members) of COF Disability Service Agencies
- Clinical and Advocacy Staff of COF Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Agencies
- On-call volunteer advocates for the Victims of Crime Helpline who provide hospital accompaniment for victims of domestic and sexual violence
- Direct Support Professionals and Residential House Managers of COF Disability Service Agencies
- Individuals with Developmental and Cognitive Disabilities receiving services within our COF agencies

METHODOLOGY FOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT INQUIRY

One of the primary roles of our Collaborative is to serve as the facilitator of conversations in an effort to create systems change, because it is our belief that

change occurs one conversation at a time. Because of this guiding principle – the ACT Collaborative has chosen three methodologies that will allow us to connect directly to our stakeholders and allow stakeholders to connect with each other.

The data resulting from these three methodologies will be analyzed alongside our existing data, culminating in a **thematic analysis** of needs and strengths in our COFs. The findings of the Needs and Strengths Assessment will be made available to all ACT Collaborative Members and staff of the eight COF agencies, and this analysis will lead to collaborative work within these two COFs and the subsequent development of an **implementation plan** for systems change.

The three methodologies are:

I. **INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS** will be utilized for the Executive Directors of our COF Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault and Disability Service Agencies. These interviews will allow the ACT Collaborative to look at the overall capacity of the individual agencies, while benefiting from the many years of experience these leaders bring to the fields of sexual assault, domestic violence and disability advocacy. These individuals have the unique perspective of understanding their agency's current role within the larger service delivery system while being able to speak to their agency's capacity for change. The directors of our COF agencies are best able to speak to the organizational capacity that exists, or is needed, to better serve women with cognitive disabilities, who have survived abuse.

Recruitment for our interviews has been being cultivated since the narrowing process and COF selection began. All of our eight COF agencies have exhibited a high level of buy-in and understanding as to the importance of this initiative. All directors have already met one-on-one with members of the ACT Collaborative in preparation for their agencies being part of this initiative, and several have appointed themselves as the primary contact person for the grant work in these communities. Participation in these interviews will be solicited by phone, email, or during the monthly COF meeting (if the director is the agency's representative at the meeting). Interviewees will be able to schedule a single interview time from a choice of several dates and times over the course of one month. The interview will take place at the interviewee's home agency, unless a change in venue is specifically requested by the interviewee.

The interviews with the eight Executive Directors of our COF agencies will be scheduled within a one-hour time block. The interviews will be conducted by a paid independent interviewer, and a second individual will attend the interview as a note

taker. The outline of questions for this structured “conversation” is included in the attached Appendix A as “Leadership Questions”.

Consent to participate in these conversations will be obtained through a signed consent waiver (Appendix B) which outlines both the benefits and risks of participation. The consent waiver also makes clear the RI Duty to Report statutory requirements, and the option to discontinue the interview at any time. Interviewees will not be compensated for their participation in the hour-long interview.

The content of the interviews will be known by the interviewer and note taker, and written notes will be shared with the five members of the ACT Collaborative for use in the thematic analysis. Once the data from the interviews has been compared to the other sources of data, and reported without identifiers in the thematic analysis report, the original notes will be shredded. All written notes will be destroyed within 180 days of the interview itself. The thematic analysis report will be made available to all interviewees once completed.

II. **OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY** will be utilized for Clinical, Direct Support Professional Staff, and Paid and Volunteer Advocates in our disability, domestic violence and sexual assault agencies. Open Space Technology is a way to format a group conversation that generates communication, collaboration, innovation and other solutions to challenges and transitions. The process is interactive and has historically been used to bring a diverse group together to explore a theme or issue across hierarchical and divergent perspectives. The process is used under the following conditions:

- Where there is a high level of complexity in terms of the issues to be discussed;
- Where there are high levels of diversity in terms of the folks who have to work on the issues;
- Where high levels of conflict may exist (both actual or perceived);
- Where conflict or role confusion is holding back the ability to change;
- Where all stakeholders are needed for good decisions to be made;
- When participants are committed to focusing on the NOW and possibilities for the future;
- Where you have no preconceived notion of what the outcomes should be.

The questions and facilitation guide for this methodology are included in Appendix A under “Questions for Direct Support Professionals, Volunteers and Advocates” and

“Open Space Technology Facilitation for Direct Support Professionals, Volunteers and Advocates”.

Recruitment for the Open Space will be done by assisting the Communities of Focus (COFs) in identifying a hierarchy of staff to participate in the Open Space sessions. The agencies in our Communities of Focus will be facilitating the recruitment of both their paid and volunteer staff to participate in the Open Space Technology process. Organizations will select and invite staff members who are able to speak to the individual level of service delivery, and to identify the needs and strengths of their own organization. All agencies have already committed to allow work day time and space for their staff to participate in Open Space. Staff will be provided a confirmation of participation including our focusing statement/question, the ACT initiative summary (mission & vision), and particulars of the date, time and location prior to the event.

The Open Space is scheduled for two-hour time blocks over 9 separate sessions, and will be conducted by ACT Collaborative members and a paid facilitator:

Audience	Location	# of Sessions	# of Anticipated Attendees Per Session
Clinical and Advocacy Staff – Domestic Violence Agency	Warwick	1	5 – 8 people
Clinical and Advocacy Staff – Domestic Violence Agency	Newport County	1	4 – 6 people
Clinical and Advocacy Staff – Sexual Assault Agency	Day One	1	10 – 15 people
Victims of Crime Helpline Volunteer Advocates	Day One	1	8 – 12 people
Direct Support Professionals and Residential House Managers – Disability Service Agencies	Warwick	3	15 – 20 people
Direct Support Professionals and Residential House	Newport County	2	15 – 20 people

Managers – Disability Service Agencies			
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Passive consent will be utilized for the Open Space conversations. To begin the gathering, the Facilitator helps the group generate the “ground rules” for discussion. All ground rules are posted in the front of the room. If the group does not generate the following ground rules, the Facilitator will add them to the posted list:

- Names will not be recorded with participants’ comments.
- One person speaks at a time.
- What is said in the room stays in the room.
- Never disclose the names of survivors.
- The RI Duty to Report Statute² for abuse of Persons with Developmental Disabilities is in effect, and will be posted for the participants.
- Participants are able to leave the conversation at any point without question or penalty.

Participants will be taking part in the Open Space during work hours, and will not be further compensated for their participation. Light refreshments will be served throughout the duration of the conversation. A volunteer advocate from the Victims of Crime Helpline will be available for participants before, during and after the Open Space sessions to talk or provide resource information.

III. **CAFÉ CONVERSATIONS** will be utilized in talking with Individuals with Developmental and Cognitive Disabilities who receive services in our COFs. The

² **§ 40.1-27-2 Duty to report.** – (a) Any person within the scope of their employment at a program or in their professional capacity who has knowledge of or reasonable cause to believe that a participant in a program has been abused, mistreated or neglected shall make, within twenty-four (24) hours or by the end of the next business day, a written report to the director of the department of mental health, retardation, and hospitals or his or her designee. The report shall contain: (1) The name, address, telephone number, occupation, and employer's address and the phone number of the person reporting; (2) The name and address of the participant who is believed to be the victim of the abuse, mistreatment, or neglect; (3) The details, observations, and beliefs concerning the incident(s); (4) Any statements regarding the incident made by the participant and to whom they were made; (5) The date, time, and place of the incident; (6) The name of any individual(s) believed to have knowledge of the incident; and (7) The name of any individual(s) believed to have been responsible for the incident. (b) In addition to those persons required to report pursuant to this section, any other person may make a report if that person has reasonable cause to believe that a participant has been abused, mistreated, or neglected.

Café Conversation Process is a reasonable accommodation in itself and is an accessible and hospitable format for group discussion.

According to www.TheWorldCafe.com: Café Conversations focus on the future not the past and focus on how we can make things better rather than dwelling on things we cannot change, or past events that cannot be undone. They start from where we are now and move us on from there. The Conversations are as much about discovering and exploring powerful questions as they are about finding effective solutions.

The questions and facilitation guide for this methodology are included in Appendix A under “Questions for Women with Developmental & Cognitive Disabilities” and “Café Conversation Facilitation”.

Recruitment for the Café Conversations will be done by assisting the Self-Advocacy Groups, affiliated with our COF agencies, to invite both members and others who receive supports to participate in the Café Conversation. Staff at COF agencies will assist the Self-Advocacy Groups in extending this invitation. The invitation will include our focusing question, “how can services for individuals with developmental and cognitive disabilities who experience abuse be improved?”, and the particulars of the Café – date, time and location. Contact information for members of the ACT Collaborative will be available to any potential participants who may have questions, or would like to request an accommodation. The location is being selected in consultation with the community agencies that provide support, and will be a space familiar and accessible to our Café Conversation participants.

The Café Conversations are scheduled for two-hour time blocks – including a meal – and will be facilitated by ACT Collaborative members, Ken Renaud (PAL) and Deanne Gagne (Advocates in Action) over 5 sessions:

Audience	Location	# of Sessions	# of Anticipated Attendees per Session
Self- Advocates and Individuals Receiving Services	Warwick	3	8 – 10 people
Self-Advocates and Individuals Receiving Services	Newport County	2	8 – 10 people

Passive consent will again be utilized, similar to the Open Space protocol. The facilitators will again walk the group through ground rules, and include the above

stated Open Space essential ground rules if not generated by our Café Conversation participants. A volunteer advocate from the Victims of Crime Helpline will be available before, during and after the conversation to talk or provide resource information.

Participants will be given a “grab bag” of goodies, including colored pencils and \$10 gift card for a local store or food establishment, at their café placemats. These thank you gifts are placed on tables before participants arrive and prior to the start of the conversation. This gift is the participant’s to keep, even if someone opts to remove herself from the conversation. A light meal will also be provided to participants of the Café Conversations.

Confidentiality, safety and disclosure for Open Space & Café Conversations

Throughout the needs assessment and implementation process, the ACT Collaborative will be collecting a great deal of information about the response to abuse, and the accessibility of services. All information collected is for the purpose of improving service delivery by making recommendations and policy change, and will never be used for whistle-blowing or punitive purposes.

At the beginning of each Open Space and Café Conversation session, participants will be led in a group discussion of the guidelines for the conversation. These guidelines are generated by the participants themselves and should address the confidentiality of what is going to be said, how information will be documented, what individuals need in order to feel safe to take part in the conversation, and any mandatory reporting situations that apply to personal disclosures made regarding abuse. All participants will be reminded not to identify other participants by name or any other identifying information once they leave the room. A list of the required guidelines is highlighted in the Open Space methodology above.

At all group conversations a domestic violence/sexual assault advocate will be present before, during, and after the conversation if any participant would like to step out of the conversation to take care of him- or herself, or would like someone with whom to talk. Resource materials and information will be available at all conversations upon request.

Documenting of Café Conversation and Open Space Responses

Responses and conversations elicited from Open Space and Café Conversations will be recorded as accurately as possible using graphic recording methods on long rolls of butcher paper. Materials generated from these forums will be scanned and saved in

electronic format as a .jpg; transcribed for use in the thematic analysis; and housed at Day One in secure file cabinets. The transcribed information will not identify the specific individuals who made comments, but will be reported in the aggregate. Electronic messages and collected data will be stored on a password protected computer. At no time will identifying information be asked for or recorded on notes of the conversations in order to ensure the confidentiality of participants.

Accessibility

All Café Conversations and Open Space Technology sessions will be held at local organizations and within timeframes, whenever possible, when individuals are already scheduled to be at their agency. Physical accessibility, especially travel paths, and bathroom accessibility will be assessed through on-site visits by the ACT Collaborative. Many of the sites to be utilized have already been deemed accessible and are often used for convening groups of individuals with disabilities. Sign language or other interpreters will be made available upon request. Requests for specific accommodation needs will be asked on the conversation invitations.

WORK PLAN

June 2008	Needs & Strengths Assessment Proposal submitted to OVW
August – September 2008	Conduct Needs & Strengths Assessment in 2 Communities of Focus
September 2008	Compile data and complete Thematic Analysis Report
October 2008	Submit Thematic Analysis Report to OVW
October 2008	Conduct Strategic Planning Session with the assistance of the VERA Institute of Justice's Accessing Safety Initiative
November 2008	Strategic Plan submitted to OVW

Appendix A: Conversation Tools & Facilitation Guides

- Leadership Interviews
- Open Space Technology
- Café Conversations



Questions for Leadership

- What experiences has your agency had in providing support to women with cognitive disabilities who have survived abuse?
 - How did these women in need of support come to the attention of your agency?
- Why do you think women with cognitive disabilities may be reluctant or unable to reach out to your agency for support when abuse happens?
- What barriers and challenges does your organization face when providing support to individuals with cognitive disabilities who have survived abuse? (Interviewer Note: prompt interviewee to think about issues related to staff time, access to financial resources, staff level of knowledge, and external challenges).
 - How can the ACT Collaborative assist your organization to overcome these barriers? What resources would you need?
- Has your agency developed any policies or protocols on how to respond to abuse against women with cognitive disabilities? How do you make these policies known to staff?
 - How does your agency handle abuse cases that come to the attention of the media? (*Disability Agencies Only*)
 - Does your agency provide orientation information to individuals and their families, new to the service delivery system, about how to recognize and report abuse, or obtain referrals for advocacy services? (*Disability Agencies Only*)
- Has your agency addressed issues of accessibility for individuals with disabilities? (Interviewer Note: prompt interviewee to think about all kinds of accessibility – physical, attitudinal, programmatic and educational)
 - How could the ACT Collaborative help your agency work toward the goal of better accessibility?
- Of what are you most proud about the way your organization responds to women who have survived abuse?
- How does change happen in your organization?

- What is your agency's relationship with other agencies in the COF?
 - Is there positive collaboration already taking place?
 - How might you work with the other agencies to improve accessibility to services for women with cognitive disabilities?
- What can your agency do to ensure that the voices of women with disabilities are heard, and how can the ACT Collaborative help your agency assure that service responses are person-centered?
- Is there anyone else in your agency (e.g., Program Directors or Board members) that we should talk to regarding these questions?



*Questions for Direct Support
Professionals, Volunteers and
Advocates*

These questions and conversation facilitation tools will identify, document, and guide our process for the development of our Implementation Plan.

- What makes you most proud about the way your agency responds to women with cognitive and developmental disabilities who have survived abuse?
 - What additional resources would your organization need to improve the response to women who experience abuse? (Facilitator Note: prompt group to think about resources related to staff time, budget, staff level of knowledge, and improving collaboration with other agencies.)
- What are the barriers and challenges you face when providing support to individuals with cognitive and developmental disabilities who have survived abuse? (Facilitator Note: Accessibility for women with disabilities encompasses four major areas: environmental, attitudinal, education/experience, and programmatic – encourage participants to consider ALL areas of accessibility.)
 - How can the ACT Collaborative assist your organization to overcome these barriers? What resources would you need?
- Does your organization have established policies and protocols for providing services to women with cognitive and developmental disabilities who have experienced abuse?
 - How could disability and domestic violence/sexual assault agencies streamline the process of referral?
 - How could your organization inform women with cognitive and developmental disabilities about your services?
 - How would your organization ensure the response to individuals with cognitive and developmental disabilities is person-centered?
- What capacities, skills and competencies do you need to work with individuals with cognitive and developmental disabilities who have survived abuse?

- What can your organization, or other organizations in the community do to build these capacities?
- What are the possibilities for cross-discipline collaboration in responding to abuse against individuals with cognitive and developmental disabilities?
 - What organizations are missing from this collaboration to improve responsiveness to individuals with cognitive and developmental disabilities who have survived abuse?

Final Question - Consensus Statements from the Table:

- What would be the single most meaningful change that would improve the quality of violence response services for women with cognitive and developmental disabilities in your organization? Within the COF?



*Open Space Technology
Facilitation for Direct Support
Professionals, Volunteers and
Advocates*

The facilitation process ACT has selected for this needs assessment supports our value of *“What can we do together that we cannot do alone?”*

Positive Anticipated Outcomes:

- The process builds energy, commitment and shared leadership
- Participants accept responsibility for what does or does not happen
- Action plans and recommendations emerge from discussions
- An entire record of the proceedings is documented

The Open Space Process:

Setting the Stage. The ACT Collaborative will set the stage for the Open Space. Pods of tables and chairs will be arranged to center on the front of the room. The ACT Collaborative and the Open Space Facilitator (the same facilitator who works with the Collaborative during our monthly meetings) will create a Process Agenda for our time together. Wall space will be available at the front of the room to post both the Process Agenda and the identified responses to our focusing statement/question.

Blank sheets of paper and markers will be placed at all pod tables for participants to record their discussions.

Connecting to content. The ACT Collaborative will state our focusing statement. Our focusing statement will ground the COF as to the purpose of our work together:

“What can we do together that we cannot do alone?”

The facilitator will frame the work we are about to begin with the COF by stating some parameters for the Open Space:

- There are issues and barriers we have no control over such as the Rhode Island budget deficit, staff shortages, and the current political climate. We are not here to solve these larger issues; rather we are here to discuss, very specifically, the possibilities that exist for our organization(s) in collaboration with others to improve the violence and abuse response service system for women with developmental and cognitive disabilities.
- When thinking about possibilities for future work, keep in mind the parameters and deliverables of this grant: (1) increase provider knowledge of sexual assault, domestic violence and disability; (2) increase the resource pool available to service providers; (3) increase the network of colleagues upon which service providers may call; (4) increase comfort levels around issues of violence and disability; and (5) identify collaborative efforts to influence the policies and practices of key components of the system. These “FIVE KEYS” will be posted in the room (Appendix C).

Begin the Gathering. To begin the gathering, the Facilitator helps the group generate the “ground rules” for discussion. All ground rules are posted in the front of the room. If the group does not generate the following ground rules, the Facilitator will add them to the posted list:

- Names will not be recorded with participants’ comments.
- One person speaks at a time.
- What is said in the room stays in the room.
- Never disclose the names of survivors.
- The RI Duty to Report Statute³ for abuse of Persons with Developmental Disabilities is in effect, and will be posted for the participants.

³ § 40.1-27-2 **Duty to report.** – (a) Any person within the scope of their employment at a program or in their professional capacity who has knowledge of or reasonable cause to believe that a participant in a program has been abused, mistreated or neglected shall make, within twenty-four

- Participants are able to leave the conversation at any point without question or penalty.

The Facilitator explains: the focusing statement, theme and the simple process the group will follow to organize and create a record. The participants for the Needs Assessment will be broken up into pods. Pods will contain 5 – 8 people. Each pod will have a table and a facilitator. The facilitator's role is to guide the conversation and graphically record answers to the questions.

The ACT Collaborative members will act as “floaters” during these table conversations to listen in, answer questions and redirect discussions if they veer off the topic. The Facilitator will offer two rounds of opportunities for participants to share contributions at the different pods.

Open Space Facilitation. The pod facilitator will state a question and document responses on butcher paper at each table. The group will be given 45 minutes to answer all questions from the ACT Tool. After 45 minutes the pod facilitator will check in with the group to see if all ideas have been documented. Time blocks of 5 minutes will be allotted if the group requests it.

Closing Circle. After a 15 minute break. All are convened, not as a formal reporting-out period (as everything is already graphically recorded on the butcher paper), but to share interesting discoveries, new possibilities and key learnings. Participants listen as everyone is asked whether this process has helped them solidify their understanding of issues or has allowed them to change to a new perspective. The Facilitator will bring all voices into the conversation. Comments will be graphically recorded on the Agenda Wall.

(24) hours or by the end of the next business day, a written report to the director of the department of mental health, retardation, and hospitals or his or her designee. The report shall contain: (1) The name, address, telephone number, occupation, and employer's address and the phone number of the person reporting; (2) The name and address of the participant who is believed to be the victim of the abuse, mistreatment, or neglect; (3) The details, observations, and beliefs concerning the incident(s); (4) Any statements regarding the incident made by the participant and to whom they were made; (5) The date, time, and place of the incident; (6) The name of any individual(s) believed to have knowledge of the incident; and (7) The name of any individual(s) believed to have been responsible for the incident. (b) In addition to those persons required to report pursuant to this section, any other person may make a report if that person has reasonable cause to believe that a participant has been abused, mistreated, or neglected.

The facilitator asks the participants to say one word that summarizes their experience with the Open Space Technology event. The participants are thanked for their contributions and informed of these next steps:

- ACT will be taking the documentation for our Open Space Needs Assessment and publishing a Thematic Analyses report.
- Participants will have an opportunity to contact the ACT Collaborative partners to add any thoughts or suggestions to the report.
- We will be using the needs assessment findings to develop our implementation plan.
- The implementation plan will be shared with the two COF Collaboratives.



Questions for Women with Cognitive & Developmental Disabilities

These questions and conversation facilitation tools ACT created will identify, document, and guide our process for the development of our Implementation Plan.

- How should staff and organizations respond when you need help?
- How should staff and organizations NOT respond when you need help?
- How could individuals with disabilities find out about organizations that can help them?
- How can agencies that help people reach out to people with disabilities?
- When do individuals with disabilities feel safe and comfortable enough to talk with staff about the help they need?
- How can you help your organization create better ways to respond to individuals with disabilities who need help?



Café Conversation Facilitation

The Café Conversation Process:

Create a hospitable space for our conversation. The ACT Collaborative will create a space that is welcoming and feels safe. A Café will be set-up with small tables, table cloths, menus, flowers, and a “grab bag” of goodies – including colored pencils and \$10 gift card – and place settings. The Facilitator will lead the participants in the

creation of “ground rules” for our conversation – rules that will make people feel safe. If the group does not generate the following ground rules, the Facilitator will add:

- RI’s Duty to Report requirements.
- The identity of the agency’s abuse investigator,
- What is said in the room stays in the room.
- Don’t tell other people’s stories.
- One person talks at a time.
- Names won’t be recorded on the conversation notes.
- Anyone can leave the conversation at any time.

Break bread together to enhance the creation of a safe container for our conversation.

A light meal will be served prior to beginning our conversation. Counselors and Volunteer Advocates will be on site before, during and after our Café to assist those who would like someone to talk to and to provide resources if necessary. The Café will start with a fun ice-breaker.

Talk about questions that matter. The Facilitator will explore questions that will ultimately improve access to services for individuals with developmental and cognitive disabilities who experience abuse.

Facilitator Notes:

The Facilitator will set the parameters of our time together:

- Today we are here to talk about how we can improve services for individuals with disabilities.
- We will ask you some questions.
- There are no right or wrong answers
- Your answers will help us understand the needs of individuals with disabilities and how we can best help them.

Create a record of our conversation. A Graphic Recorder will document our conversation on charts posted in the front of the room. The Recorder will review graphic representation to ensure accuracy of captured conversation.

Encourage contribution from all participants. The Facilitator will encourage participants to share ideas and perspectives, as well as honor those who are active listeners.

End the Café. The Facilitator will review the record that was created. Participants will be thanked for their contributions.

Appendix B:

Leadership Interview Consent Waiver

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION

in the ACT COLLABORATIVE NEEDS & STRENGTHS ASSESSMENT

Purpose of Assessment:

The **MISSION** of this initiative is to ACT together through Advocacy, Collaboration and Training to better respond to violence against individuals with cognitive and developmental disabilities. Our **PURPOSE** is to foster an environment that works to improve accessibility to advocacy and safety planning services for individuals with disabilities; develop a collaborative network through open dialogue to improve the quality of supports individuals with disabilities receive; and provide cross-training, cross-fertilization, and bridge-building opportunities for professionals working in the fields of sexual assault, domestic violence and disability services to better detect, react to and reduce violence in the cognitive and developmental disability community.

Process:

If you consent to be part of this assessment, you will be asked to participate in an hour-long, face-to-face interview. The interview questions are focused on the organizational capacity that exists, or is needed, in your agency to better serve women with cognitive disabilities, who have survived abuse. One individual will ask the interview questions, while a second individual will take detailed written notes.

Risks & Benefits:

The interview will focus on responses to sexual and physical violence. Our Collaborative understands that interpersonal violence affects many individuals, and service providers are not immune. You have the choice at any time to decline to answer a specific question, or end the interview completely.

The interview will also ask you to reflect on the capacity of the agency you lead and the larger community and system of which your agency is a part. If you feel answering any of these questions is harmful, you may decline to answer.

You may withdraw your interview from the Needs & Strengths Assessment at any point after the interview.

By consenting to be part of this Needs & Strengths Assessment you are contributing to an increased knowledge about the service delivery system for individuals with cognitive and developmental disabilities, who have survived abuse. Your input will assist in developing both local and national best practice models to providing accessible service.

Confidentiality:

Your name and agency will not be recorded on any written notes from the interview. The content of the interviews will be known by the interviewer and note taker, and written notes without identifiers will be shared with the five members of the ACT Collaborative for use in the thematic analysis. The written notes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet, and all notes from the interview will be destroyed within 180 days of the interview, once responses are integrated into a thematic analysis report. This final report is available to you upon request.

Both the interviewer and note taker are bound by ¹ § 40.1-27-2 **Duty to report.** – (a) Any person within the scope of their employment at a program or in their professional capacity who has knowledge of or reasonable cause to believe that a participant in a program has been abused, mistreated or neglected shall make, within twenty-four (24) hours or by the end of the next business day, a written report to the director of the department of mental health, retardation, and hospitals or his or her designee. The report shall contain: (1) The name, address, telephone number, occupation, and employer's address and the phone number of the person reporting; (2) The name and address of the participant who is believed to be the victim of the abuse, mistreatment, or neglect; (3) The details, observations, and beliefs concerning the incident(s); (4) Any statements regarding the incident made by the participant and to whom they were made; (5) The date, time, and place of the incident; (6) The name of any individual(s) believed to have knowledge of the incident; and (7) The name of any individual(s) believed to have been responsible for the incident. (b) In addition to those persons required to report pursuant to this section, any other person may make a report if that person has reasonable cause to believe that a participant has been abused, mistreated, or neglected.

Cost and Compensation:

There is no cost to you as a participant. You will not be paid for your time. Your responses during the interview will assist in developing an implementation plan within our Communities of Focus which may directly or indirectly benefit your agency in terms of improved capacity.

Questions:

Any questions or concerns you have before consenting to participate or after the interview has been conducted should be directed to Karyn Hadfield, ACT Collaborative Director, at (401) 421-4100 x162 or khadfield@dayoneri.org.

Consent:

I am voluntarily consenting to be interviewed for the Needs & Strengths Assessment. I understand I will be given a copy of this consent waiver. I also understand that I may request a copy of the finished thematic analysis for which my input is needed.

Interviewee's Name (Printed)

Interviewee's Signature

Date

Appendix C:

Conversation Parameters and Sample Invitation

- Conversation Parameters: Open Space “Five Keys”
- Café Conversation Sample Invitation

The Five Keys will be posted during Open Space Conversations to remind participants of the parameters of the grant.

What we can do together, that we cannot do alone?



Key #1: Increase service providers' knowledge about:

- Sexual Assault
- Domestic Violence
- Disability Issues



Key #2: Increase resource pool available to service providers



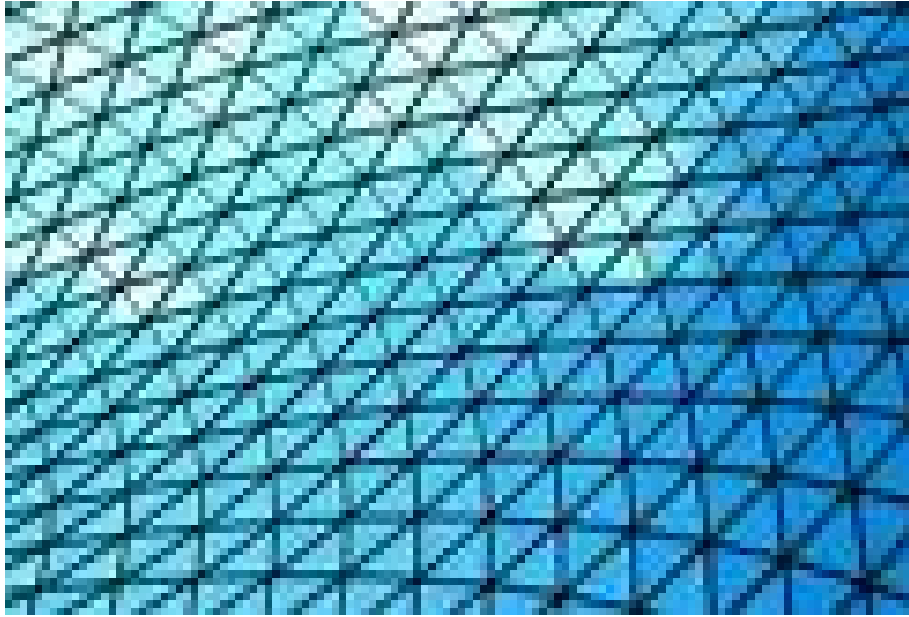
Key #3: Increase the networks of response upon which service providers may call.



Cleo Pawson's Self-Portrait
Outside the Lines
Self Portraits by Artists with Disabilities

Key #4: Increase Comfort Levels around sexual assault, domestic violence, and disability.

- *Strengthen collaboration in the sexual assault, domestic violence and disability advocacy communities to better communicate about the intersection of violence and disability.*



Key #5: Focus on collaborative efforts to influence agency policies and practices.

- *How do we change our own organizations to be more responsive to women with disabilities?*
- *How will we sustain the changes we create?*

SAMPLE INVITATION



Please join us for a Café Conversation

Deanne Gagne and Ken Renaud will be
hosting a conversation about:

How can services for individuals with
developmental and cognitive disabilities be
improved?

This important conversation will take place:

DATE TBD

Noon to 1:30pm

PAL Meeting Place

98 Rolfe St., Cranston, RI 02901

Lunch will be served.

Please call PAL at 785-2100 or RI Relay 711, if you can join us.

This is a free event.

Staff will not be allowed in the room, unless you need them to be with you.

A counselor from Day One will be with us in case you need to talk to someone
privately before, during or after our conversation.