



Wisconsin's Violence Against Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women Project

Collaboration Charter and History

Wisconsin's collaborative grant addressing violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women provided the impetus to formalize a nearly ten-year collaboration among three statewide organizations:

- Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW)
- Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV) and
- Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA).

Reflecting our past relationships while forging a more strengthened and sustainable effort, we hereby establish this collaboration charter.

Vision

Women with disabilities and deaf/Deaf women who experience sexual assault and/or domestic violence will be supported by people who have actively prepared for access and who think about the meaning of respect one woman at a time.

Mission

- Community alliances are created that embrace a commitment to a person-centered approach to safety and accessibility for women victims/survivors with disabilities and Deaf women.
- Disability, domestic violence (DV) and sexual assault (SA) organizations and staff alike recognize that responding to women with disabilities and Deaf women who have experienced or are experiencing violence is a core component of their services.
- The Project's organizations individually and collaboratively operate with accessibility and violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women as priority issues infused throughout organizational policies, procedures and strategic planning.
- Community efforts continue throughout Wisconsin to enhance skills and capacity to best serve women victims with disabilities and Deaf women.

Collaborative History

The three collaboration organizations have established long-term working relationships with one another. For nearly ten years, DRW has worked collaboratively in a number of ways with WCADV and WCASA. WCADV and WCASA have participated in a variety of collaborative efforts since 1995. DRW, WCADV and WCASA staff has conducted training workshops at a number of events sponsored by each of their organizations. DRW worked with WCASA on the development of a number of materials focused on sexual assault of women with disabilities. Review of WCADV produced booklets on domestic violence and women with disabilities also was performed by DRW staff. WCADV, WCASA, and DRW staff all serve together on a number of statewide workgroups that are developing policy and protocols for responding to women with disabilities and Deaf women who are experiencing violence. DRW, WCADV and WCASA all refer individual cases to one another when appropriate.

Currently all three organizations are collaborating successfully on a three-year (FY06-09) statewide OVW-funded Education and Technical Assistance Project to End Violence Against Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women. (All three organizations also worked as a collaborative team on two prior, two-year (FYs 02-04/04-06) OVW-Funded Education Technical Assistance Project to End Violence Against Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women.) These project grants have involved DRW, WCADV and WCASA working together to plan and design project activities, conduct regional and statewide training, develop a variety of written materials, and team up to provide technical assistance to sexual assault, domestic violence and disability organizations.

Values and Assumptions

- Collaboration organizations are committed to ensuring that the objectives and activities we undertake are sustained beyond the life of this Project, and are centered around:
 - the voices of women with disabilities and Deaf women, especially those who are victims/survivors of domestic violence (DV), sexual assault (SA) and stalking;
 - the paramount importance of victim safety in all of its undertakings; and
 - the fundamental importance of equal and meaningful physical, programmatic, communicative and attitudinal access through compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the federal Fair Housing Act.
- Our collaborative relationship is built on a foundation of trust, credibility and accountability between and among each of the members.

- DRW, WCADV and WCASA ourselves have a responsibility to model accessibility in attitudes, policies, communication and physical space.
- The collaborative recognizes, respects and utilizes the specific expertise of each other.
- Each organization believes that through multi-faceted technical assistance strategies, our role is to cultivate capacity among community-based direct service organizations to enhance their skills, service capacity, accessibility and confidence to advocate and support women victims/survivors with disabilities and Deaf women.
- We recognize that there are different perspectives about who a person with a disability is. Not all individuals self-identify as a “person with a disability.” The Project’s approach and strategies promote following an individual’s lead about how she characterizes herself. However, for the purposes of a legal framework, this Project defines “individuals with disabilities” in accordance with the definition contained in the Americans with Disabilities Act:
 - *“Disability” means, with respect to an individual, (A) a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of such individual; (B) a record of such an impairment; or (C) being regarded as having such an impairment. (42 U.S.C. § 12102(2)).*

Definitions

- Accessibility: A broad concept that necessitates anticipating, reducing and eliminating physical, procedural, cultural and attitudinal barriers that inhibit a person with any disability or a Deaf person from experiencing meaningful advocacy and supportive services as a result of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking. Through ongoing assessment and implementation, meaningful accessibility extends beyond meeting the minimum legal standards embodied within the Americans with Disabilities Act, Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Fair Housing Act to embrace equality and inclusion for all.
- Collaboration: Generally, it means that everything we do as a collaborative, we do together! Collaboration is action among multi-faceted individuals and organizations working to achieve a common cause. Its group dynamics involve mutual accountability, responsibility, and trust. It requires frequent, open and clear communication among all collaborative participants, collective clarity about our mission, purpose and strategies, and a

recognition that the more we learn and grow with each other, the more we are able to accomplish – individually as organizations and collectively.

- Disabilities: Women (people) with disabilities can be categorized and defined for diagnostic or statistical reasons, but not in any helpful or practical way, for our purposes. Women with disabilities are more than an “impairment” or “limitation.” They are whole and individual. Each has her own personality, life experiences, sense of humor, values, strengths, and ways of learning and communicating. Each is also someone who might have a past or ongoing problem due to violence in her life. Labels used to describe people with disabilities include: developmental, intellectual, physical, sensory, and psychiatric. Many Deaf do not consider themselves to have disabilities.

The most important answer to the question, “Who are women with disabilities?” is this:

they are mothers, sisters, friends, daughters, wives, girlfriends, lovers, nieces, cousins, aunts, neighbors, coworkers.... They are professional people and blue collar workers. Some are employed and some cannot find employment. Some have observable characteristics and many have disabilities that are invisible. They are women.

- Domestic abuse: Domestic abuse is a pattern of coercive tactics that are used to gain and maintain power and control in an ongoing, familiar relationship. Generally, several forms of abuse, such as psychological, emotional, physical, sexual and/or economic, are used in combination. Abusers believe they are entitled to control how their victims think, feel and behave. This control extends to the entire household, and children in the home are harmed by the behavior and parenting tactics of the abuser. Physical and sexual violence may be a component of the abuse but some victims are controlled through intimidation, threats, emotional and psychological abuse and isolation – no physical abuse is necessary to control the victim. In an abusive relationship, one party fears the other and attempts to comply with the other’s wishes to avoid harm.

Anyone can become a victim of domestic abuse. Abuse occurs in all racial, ethnic, economic, religious age groups and across the lifespan. Victims are primarily female, although men also can be harmed. Abusers who use power and control to gain and maintain power and control include spouses, partners, adult children or other family members, caregivers or others with whom the victim has an ongoing, trusted relationship. Intimate partners may be of the same sex or opposite sex.

- Sexual assault: Sexual assault or abuse is an act of violence where sex is used as the weapon. Assaults are motivated primarily out of a sense of entitlement and/or a need to feel powerful by controlling, dominating or humiliating the victim. Victims/survivors of sexual assault are forced, coerced and/or manipulated to participate in unwanted sexual activity. Victims/survivors can be of any race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age or ability. Perpetrators often are known and/or trusted by the victim/survivor. The perpetrator often believes that he or she can get away with the crime either because the victim will be afraid to tell or because s/he is unlikely to be believed if s/he does tell. Victims/survivors do not cause their assaults and are not to blame. Offenders are responsible for the assaults.
- Stalking: Stalking comprises an ongoing pattern of tactics that will intimidate and instill fear used by a person to gain and maintain control, or to establish a relationship with a victim. There is no one psychological or behavioral profile for stalkers.

Confidentiality

As individuals and organizations in this collaboration, we abide by a confidentiality standard that includes mutual respect, integrity and accountability. Any personal experiences shared among collaboration members through any means of communication shall remain confidential. Any information shared among collaboration members regarding a specific victim/survivor, DV, SA or disability agency, or any other individual or organization involved with this Project shall remain confidential. The collaborative also recognizes that there are specific statutes and regulations that impact each of our organization's confidentiality requirements under specified circumstances (e.g., Wisconsin's non-disclosure law that prohibits domestic violence programs from acknowledging whether any person is receiving or has ever received domestic violence services; Attorney-client privilege between clients of Disability Rights Wisconsin (P&A) and DRW staff; or advocate/victim privilege between DV and SA advocates and their clients).

Confidentiality also applies to the collaboration's on-site accessibility assessments of DV and SA programs. Each organization and the assessment team members recognize that lack of compliance by a DV or SA program has potential legal consequences. Assessment Team members are expected to maintain confidentiality about assessment findings. Because Disability Rights Wisconsin serves as Wisconsin's designated protection and advocacy agency, the collaboration understands the legal implications of DRW involvement with assessed programs. The Team states verbally throughout the assessment and in writing that an agency participating in an accessibility assessment is not a client

of DRW (as the P&A) and the written assessment findings report is intended as technical assistance and not to create an attorney-client relationship. The information in the report is of a general nature and is not meant to apply to any specific situation involving a particular individual. We also emphasize that the written report is the DV or SA agency's to decide with whom to share it; however, we reiterate that the agency's participation in an assessment does not preclude DRW from pursuing any individual's discrimination complaint regarding the agency's accessibility and services.

Timelines

- Ongoing throughout Project:
 - Attend and participate in OVW-sponsored grantee meetings,
 - Consult with and utilize technical assistance opportunities from Vera Institute's Accessing Safety Initiative and
 - Initiate or enhance informal information sharing and networking with and among other grantees.
- Develop a charter reflecting the intentions, philosophy, processes and operation of the core collaboration team. (May-June 2007)
- Consult with Vera Institute regarding collaboration Charter. (July 2007)
- Submit Collaboration Charter to OVW for comment, review and approval.
- Review information gleaned from the last four years of the project; including review of the independent evaluation and comments/reflections from all project-related activities. Compile information into a foundation document for the needs assessment phase. (June-July 2007)
- Converse with groups of individuals/constituencies about their interest in assisting with the needs assessment phase of the Project. (April-September 2007)
- Consult with Vera Institute in developing a needs assessment plan and accompanying materials. (July-August 2007)
- Submit draft needs assessment plan and materials to OVW for comment, review and approval. (August 2007)
- Make modifications to needs assessment plan and/or materials accordingly. (August 2007)
- Implement needs assessment. (August-November 2007)

- Compile and analyze needs assessment results. (November 2007)
- Based on needs assessment results, develop a strategic plan for Project activities for the implementation phase in Years 2 & 3. (November-December 2007)
- Consult with Vera Institute in developing and fine-tuning the strategic plan. (November-December 2007)
- Submit the draft strategic plan to OVW for comment, review and approval. (December 2007)
- Revisit Collaboration Charter roles and responsibilities as Team begins the implementation phase. Make charter modifications as needed. (Following Needs Assessment Planning phase and following Strategic Planning phase.)

Members of the Collaboration

In the Assessment and Planning stages, Project activities will be implemented using a collaborative arrangement of three primary partners who are well respected statewide organizations (and who have been nationally recognized for their work): Disability Rights Wisconsin, Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault. All three have been working closely together re: women with disabilities and Deaf women who have been victims/survivors of violence. This current collaboration has been highly successful and each of the partners has indicated their eagerness to continue it. We agree to work together on the majority of Project activities. The partners already have established respectful and comfortable relationships with each other which enhances creative problem solving and teaming up, and are well aware of each other's skills and areas of expertise. This Project will continue to capitalize on our collective strengths.

The collaborative membership may expand and/or involve additional subgroups in response to the needs assessment results and/or strategic plan.

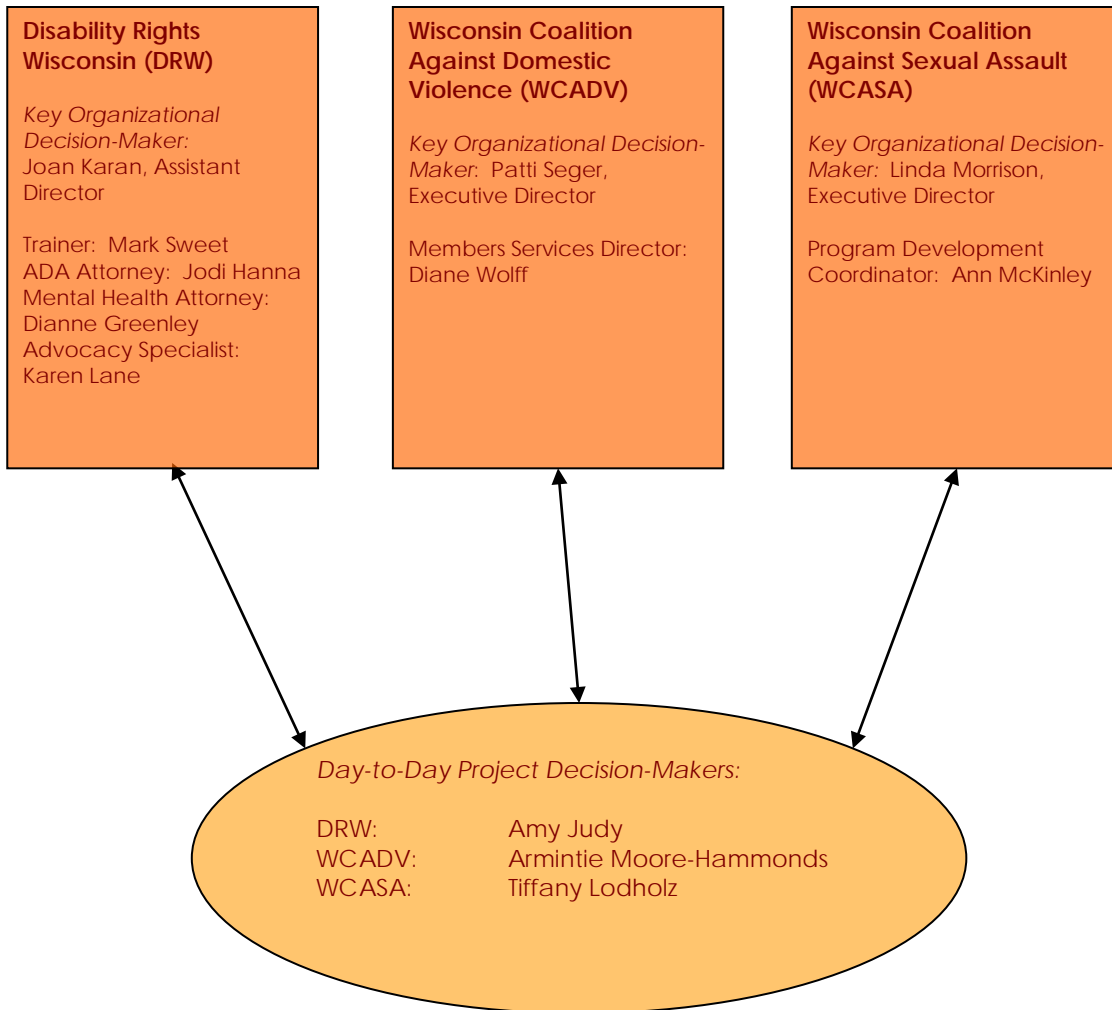
Member Roles and Contributions

As we have operated for the past five years under our OVW-funded Education and Technical Assistance grants, our multi-disciplinary team agrees to plan and implement all project activities together. There will be some areas in which the specific expertise of a partner organization will be utilized more heavily than the other partners, and in those situations, that partner will assume a leadership role in planning or implementation of that particular activity.

The following diagram identifies the relationships and individuals who will participate on the Project planning and development team. At this point in time, we have selected those individuals who have knowledge and areas of expertise which we believe will be applicable to the planning and assessment stage of the Project. Once the planning phase is completed and the Project activities are clearly identified, we will be able to designate which persons will be involved in implementation of each of the specific Project activities.

Day-to-Day Project decision-makers will have regular ongoing contact, including meeting together at least once each month (and more frequently, if necessary), along with frequent phone and email contact. Key decision-makers for each of the partner organizations will attend the monthly Project team meetings every other month, or more often if necessary, and receive ongoing communication of Project plans, decisions, activities and discussion. In addition, each of the Day-to-Day Project decision-makers maintains intra-organizational communication within her organization to infuse Project direction and action within her respective organization.

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A. Disability Rights Wisconsin (DRW)

1. DRW will be the lead agency for the Project and will assume responsibility for the overall Project's programmatic and fiscal performance.
2. DRW will develop subcontracts with each of the Project Team partners and will negotiate and administer contracts with any Project consultants and Non-Project Partners.
3. DRW will convene and facilitate the planning and development team meetings and other aspects of the planning and assessment stages of the Project.
4. DRW will convene and facilitate monthly meetings of the Project team.

5. DRW will prepare and submit all required grant progress reports and financial reports.

B. Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV)

1. DRW will subcontract with WCADV for their participation in the planning and assessment stage of the project and implementation of project activities to be determined during the planning and assessment phase.
2. Designated WCADV staff will participate on the Project planning and development team.
3. Designated WCADV staff will attend monthly Project Partner meetings.

C. Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault (WCASA)

1. DRW will subcontract with WCASA for their participation in the planning and assessment stage of the Project and implementation of Project activities to be determined during the planning and assessment phase.
2. Designated WCASA staff will participate in monthly Project Team meetings.
3. Designated WCASA staff will participate on the Project planning and development team.

Communication Among the Partner Organizations

- Respectful and effective communication among the collaboration organizations has proven to be dependent upon the three different agencies having open, clear, and *frequent* communication through a variety of methods.
- We utilize both formal and informal means to promote and ensure effective communication.
- We employ and participate in decisions and discussions via face-to-face dialogue, e-mail, hard mail and scheduled meetings of the collaborative.
- To achieve and maintain effective communication our interactions often occur outside of regularly scheduled meetings and might involve face-to-face discussions as needed.
- To facilitate mutual understanding among all Team members, we have developed common terminology and vocabulary that is used by all three organizations in our work addressing violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women.

Strategies and methods for communication with the larger community, such as community leaders, will be developed collaboratively as we identify and

broaden our involvement with other key stakeholders throughout the different phases of this Project.

Decision Making/Conflict Resolution Process

Decision-Making Process

Our decision making process is one that is grounded in open communication. As a collaborative, we agree to respect and follow the decision making and conflict resolution processes described below:

- Programmatic decisions will be made by consensus;
- Since programmatic decisions drive the budget, especially as the strategic plan is developed, DRW will make final budget decisions resulting from the strategic plan;
- If a budget issue were to arise that conflicted with the agreed-to program activity, DRW agrees to consult with WCASA and WCADV to build consensus for alternatives;
- Project Coordinator is empowered to make logistical and administrative decisions related to programming activities independently;
- Technical assistance requests made to any Team organization that fall within the scope of the strategic plan will be responded to by each individual organization without needing to consult with the other two collaborative agencies; however, each organization agrees to record and report the technical assistance information for inclusion in its monthly reports to DRW. This technical assistance information is then compiled for inclusion in Project Progress Reports to OVW.

Conflict Resolution Process

The Team believes that conflict resolution itself is a component of our overall decision-making process. As a result, if the Team were unable to reach consensus regarding a programmatic issue, the following process would be followed:

- Team agrees not to force a decision at that time – to allow for a “cooling off” period;
- Each Team member will agree that we will revisit the issue at another, agreed to time.
- We will strive to exchange questions about our differences versus making statements that reinforce a closed discussion.
- When the Team revisits the issue of conflict, ideas will be considered and the Team then will determine whether it is able to reach consensus;
- If consensus remains unattainable, each Team organization will receive one vote. The majority position will be followed.

Meetings

As the lead agency for the Project, DRW assumes administrative responsibility for, convenes and facilitates the ongoing regular monthly planning and development meetings of the Project team. If more frequent meetings are needed, the primary Project staff together will schedule the meetings. Meetings are scheduled and agendas are devised in advance with input from each organization. Every possible effort is made to hold our meetings at locations that are accessible.

Early on in our collaborative relationship, the Team agreed by consensus that the facilitator for each meeting would be Amy Judy from Disability Rights Wisconsin. The Team acknowledged that this arrangement has worked quite well for the collaborative members. This establishment of standard meeting guidelines has helped to keep meetings on track and has ensured that they are productive, with a starting and ending time. Notes are taken during the meeting and distributed to all members.

Modifications and/or Additions

The collaboration's intent in creating this collaboration charter reflects our collective understanding that the charter is designed to be fluid. We expect this charter to undergo changes that will reflect the collaboration's progress through the various stages of this grant. Any modifications and/or additions to this collaboration charter must be agreed to by all collaborative organizations.

Collaboratively developed and agreed to on August 16, 2007.