
NEEDS ASSESSMENT PLAN

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

Wisconsin's collaborative needs assessment plan involves the original Project partner organizations:

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

As a long-standing collaborative, our vision throughout this needs assessment process and the phases that will follow guides our work. Our vision is:

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.

This plan deliberately begins with sharing our collaborative vision. The plan itself is designed to provide the informational foundation necessary to realize our vision. This plan also places great emphasis on framing the needs assessment and all subsequent planning and implementation with an eye toward the future: recognizing the accountability we share to ensure our efforts are feasible throughout the grant period and sustainable beyond it.

To that end, this needs assessment plan provides our collaborative a unique opportunity to build upon, deepen and expand our learning from the previous five years as a grantee under the Education and Technical Assistance Grants to End Violence Against Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women.

Existing Data Analysis

What We Have Learned...

Throughout the last several years, we have gleaned useful information about victims/survivors with disabilities, Deaf victims/survivors, and disability, domestic violence and sexual assault services. There exists increased recognition among disability, domestic violence (DV) and sexual assault (SA) agencies of violence

against women with disabilities and Deaf women, yet there remains a lack of confidence and competence in effectively and appropriately serving women with psychiatric, intellectual (cognitive), developmental, sensory, and physical disabilities. Although our collaborative Project has accomplished some marked improvement in the overall effort to increase skilled capacity and accessibility throughout Wisconsin's DV, SA and disability programs, barriers remain. More specifically, women with disabilities and Deaf women from communities of color remain consistently underrepresented in both the disability and anti-violence systems, and also lacking are the existence of established alliances among SA, DV and disability programs.

For women with disabilities and Deaf women who need and desire effective services and support following incidents of abuse, service gaps/unmet needs continue. These service gaps are especially evident for women victims/survivors of color, women from more rural communities and DV, SA and disability programs that have not worked collaboratively to leverage community resources most effectively for the benefit of victims/survivors.

For women with disabilities, the availability of services and types of community responses varies depending on a victim's location, and the experiences and comfort of the DV, SA or disability program in working with victims with disabilities. Many DV, SA and disability program staff have attended trainings, received tailored and intensive technical assistance and become more aware of the individualized access, support and services that women victims with disabilities want and need. Particular emphasis was placed on, but not limited to, DV and SA agencies for these activities. What are still lacking in most areas of the state are efforts specific to disability organizations that emphasize the importance for enhanced capacity among disability staff to identify and address violence in their clients' lives and a broader understanding and application of the full spectrum of accessibility in their services and operations.

For Deaf women, the landscape also is encouraging. Project organizations served as key allies in the development of *Deaf Unity*, formed in 2005, as a network of Deaf and hearing allies, grassroots and professionals alike, to address the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault in the Wisconsin Deaf community. Deaf victims have been identified by state agencies on domestic violence and sexual assault and Project partners as one of the populations that are underserved in and lacking access to services in Wisconsin. Deaf victims typically continue to experience barriers largely due to language (American Sign Language (ASL)) and cultural barriers. Staff at DV and SA programs, generally, do not know ASL and lack awareness about Deaf culture, and therefore are linguistically and culturally unequipped to work with Deaf victims. They also are often not trained about communication access resources available for the Deaf.

Appendix A provides detailed information from FY2002-2006 Office on Violence Against Women "Disabilities" grants that have informed the initial conclusions drawn about Wisconsin's successes and remaining gaps that direct this needs assessment planning process. This needs assessment plan is narrower in focus and tailored to answer specific questions based on gaps identified throughout the last four years.

Needs Assessment Purpose and Narrowed Focus

What We Hope to Learn...

We intend to expand our knowledge base about the interest in, enthusiasm for and identification of the service and knowledge gaps in and among geographical, cultural and service delivery systems and communities. We intend to learn about the community and cultural strengths, skills, accessibility barriers and resources from diverse cross-disability, DV, SA, Deaf organizations, communities of color and individuals. Through the needs assessment process, we also intend to initiate and/or enhance relationships among Project organizations and key stakeholders within minority-run organizations and those primarily serving women of color.

This learning will involve new stakeholders, new perspectives and, consequently, a new focus. While it builds on our knowledge to date, the plan does not and will not allow us to presume we have all of the information needed to continue forging change throughout Wisconsin. Instead, the plan detailed in the following pages reflects our commitment and acknowledgement that the most feasible and sustainable of our efforts are ones that spring from a well-informed and inclusive collaborative. What we learn about relationships and needs will set the course for constructing the strategic plan. Overall, we hope to learn:

- The strengths and apprehensions of domestic violence and sexual assault advocates and programs related to working with women with disabilities and Deaf/deaf women.
- The breadth of accessibility strengths and barriers experienced by victims/survivors with disabilities and Deaf/deaf victims/survivors who seek to avail themselves of services from sexual assault, domestic violence and/or disability organizations.
- The strengths and apprehensions that disability service and advocacy organizations experience in working with their clients with disabilities who have experienced or currently are experiencing domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking.

- The tangible and intangible factors that contribute to the success of community-based, multi-disciplinary efforts to collectively address violence against women with disabilities and Deaf/deaf women.
- The unique strengths and barriers that victims/survivors with disabilities and Deaf/deaf victims/survivors from communities of color experienced or anticipate experiencing to access domestic violence, sexual assault and/or disability services.
- How to serve as authentic allies and promote relationship building with *UNIDOS Against Domestic Violence* (a Latina-run domestic violence and sexual assault agency) and *Deaf Unity* (a Deaf-run, volunteer advocacy organization addressing violence in the Deaf Community) to traditionally marginalized communities.

A long and deliberate process ensued by which the Wisconsin Collaborative narrowed its strategic focus for devising its needs assessment plan. Since the Project team already had identified numerous factors to consider for narrowing our assessment and Project focus, Vera, through an on-site visit, assisted us to combine these factors and focus on the “how” to incorporate these factors into strategies for narrowing our needs assessment plan. As a result of this assistance, for each primary strategy the collaborative then identified several communities to consider for implementing these needs assessment strategies. These communities were identified through the application of primary and secondary criteria that the Project collaborative considered to narrow even further the communities suggested for assessment strategy implementation. This plan is a result of that comprehensive process. A detailed description (step-by-step) and chronology of the Wisconsin Collaborative’s narrowing process is attached in **Appendix B**.

<p>Selected Communities for the Needs Assessment</p>

Strategic Question 1:

What are the current needs of a relatively successful multi-disciplinary collaborative in Brown County, Wisconsin that has interest in having a more intentional cross-disability focus with representation within communities of color?

Background Considerations

Throughout the last three years, a multi-disciplinary community group has operated in Brown County, Wisconsin to collaboratively address violence against people with disabilities and Deaf in that community. Brown County, located in the northeast section of the state, is primarily rural in nature, but

contains the mid-sized city of Green Bay. The multi-disciplinary group, entitled “A Disability Abuse Prevention Team” –ADAPT of Brown County—formed as a result of interest sparked during a cross-training conducted by Wisconsin’s Project.

Wisconsin’s Violence Against Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women Project has assisted this group with developing their mission statement, conducting strategic planning and enhancing knowledge base and skills on substantive information on disabilities and violence. The Brown County group works to collectively address abuse of people with disabilities and systemic responses to incidents of abuse. It meets monthly and provides multi-disciplinary training to service systems throughout the county, supports the creation of a peer education/social group for people with disabilities to learn about safety and abuse, and enhances effective and appropriate systems responses when a person with a disability experiences sexual assault, domestic violence or stalking.

The Wisconsin Project views the Brown County collaborative as successful for three reasons:

1. Its evolution was organic: domestic violence, sexual assault, county human services, individuals with disabilities and disability advocacy and service providers in the community themselves identified the need for joining forces to address abuse of and responses to victims with disabilities;
2. Its structure reflects a shared vision, leadership, roles and responsibilities among a broad spectrum of collaboration members; and,
3. Its operation is action-oriented toward needs and gaps identified through ongoing discussion among community stakeholders.

While this Brown County collaborative’s structure might be termed more as one of “coordination” versus “collaboration”¹, the needs assessment process will provide an opportunity to gauge the actual level of intensity reflected by the members themselves. Moreover, the collaborative’s current membership lacks stakeholders from communities of color in Brown County and a more inclusive cross-disability focus. The Wisconsin Project also hopes to learn from this collaborative about its current strengths, gaps and needs, and *apply what is learned* to the efforts involving the community selected for the implementation phase under Strategic Question 2.

¹ Sandy Jacobsen, Fieldstone Alliance, “Successful Collaborations,” PowerPoint, Accessing Safety Initiative, Vera Institute of Justice, New Grantee Orientation, December 7, 2006.

Strategic Question 2:

What are the current needs of an interested community with limited resources in creating a cross-disability and multi-disciplinary collaborative while emphasizing a multi-cultural approach to the work from the outset?

Background Considerations

A key foundation for Strategic Question 2 is based on the data learned from the needs assessment findings for Strategic Question 1. In other words, what is learned from Strategic Question 1 will guide the Project to apply the data to the community selected (from the three listed below) for Project efforts in the implementation phase. The following three communities selected for needs assessment implementation were identified as a result of a deliberate and lengthy process involving primary and secondary criteria that the Project collaborative considered to narrow the communities selected.

1. Bayfield/Douglas Counties: Primarily rural area with a well-run dual domestic violence/sexual assault program; Red Cliff Reservation is located in the area; a regional Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) will be created providing an opportunity to connect with a wide array of people with disabilities and organizations providing services and support to them; North Country Independent Living is a strong ILC and has a demonstrated commitment to violence against women with disabilities; and there are other disability groups that are well-grounded in this region.
2. Richland County: Primarily rural area with a well-run dual domestic violence/sexual assault program; this county has one of the longest standing and well respected ADRCs, and Independent Living Resources is a solid ILC with an understanding of and interest in violence against women with disabilities and Deaf women.
3. Ashland County: Another primarily rural community with a solid, dual program that has long standing involvement with the Native American community, and has a Native American Advocate on staff; the Bad River Reservation is located in Ashland County; there exist effective disability groups in the area, including Genesis (consumer-run recovery center), Community Support Program, North Country ILC, and an upcoming regional ADRC.

The ultimate outcome of the needs assessment process will require that only one of these three communities be selected for intensive focus throughout the Project's implementation phase. To prevent misunderstanding and unmet expectations involving the implementation phase, Project staff intends to be

candid with community stakeholders and organizations throughout the needs assessment process about the following:

1. Our intent requires us to select one of the three communities since we will be incapable of providing intensive support to all three communities;
2. Our selection of the single community in which to focus implementation strategies will emphasize feasibility and sustainability as core considerations in our final selection; and
3. Our intent remains to offer limited technical assistance to the two communities not chosen for implementation activities.

Strategic Question 3:

What are the current needs of two ally organizations – Deaf Unity² and UNIDOS Against Domestic Violence³ – in bringing their work to the Wisconsin Project’s selected communities?

Background Considerations

The Wisconsin Collaborative acknowledged that our emphasis on communities of color and the Deaf Community could be subsumed by other strategies if we failed to highlight its prominence. Therefore, deliberate attention to learning the primary service needs and gaps Deaf and Latina advocates identify will buttress the multi-disciplinary focus within the communities selected for needs assessment implementation. *Deaf Unity* seeks to enhance its role in the Brown County area, while *UNIDOS Against Domestic Violence* seeks to solidify its advocacy in Brown, Douglas and Richland Counties.

The goal of the Project’s needs assessment strategy with these two ally organizations involves enhancing the capacity of relationships among them and stakeholders within the community selected through the Strategic Questions 2 process, and Brown County (Strategic Question 1). The Wisconsin Project,

² A newly created network of Deaf and hearing allies, grassroots and professionals alike, who work to address the issues of domestic violence and sexual assault in the Wisconsin Deaf community.

³ UNIDOS Against Domestic Violence is a statewide membership organization whose mission is to end family violence in the Latino/migrant communities in Wisconsin.

therefore, intends to conduct implementation phase activities with UNIDOS and Deaf Unity when agreed to be mutually beneficial.

Target Audiences and Strategies for Data Gathering

Overview

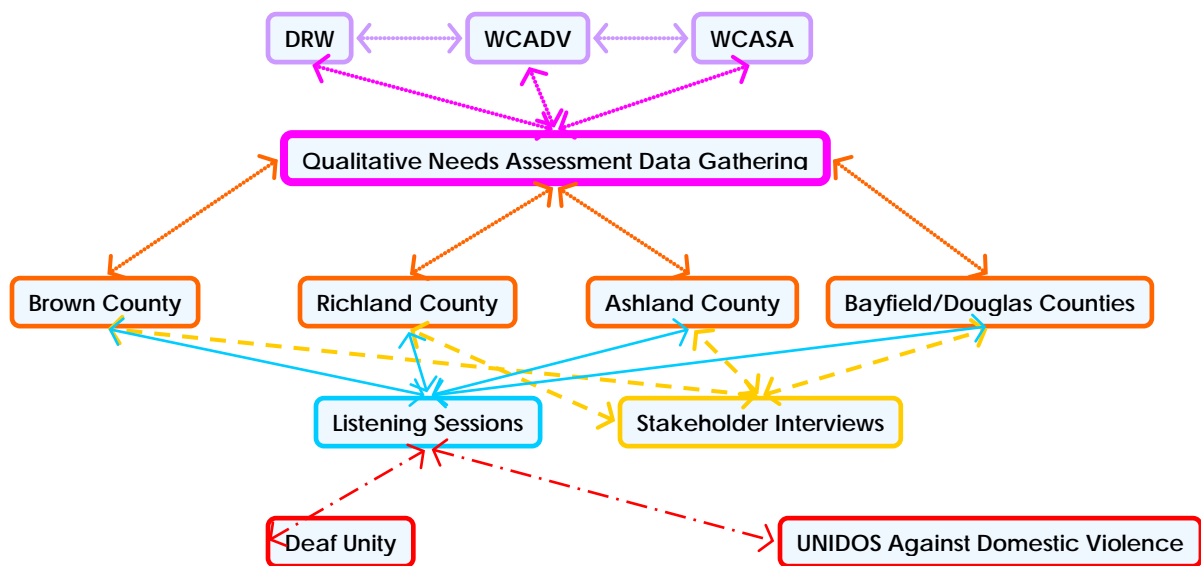
To build on and expand the knowledge base of our collaborative, the needs assessment plan targets specific audiences using tailored strategies. While the data gathered will include both quantitative and qualitative information overall, our intent is to explore the nuances of community strengths and barriers through an emphasis on stakeholder interviews and listening sessions.

Strategy A: Qualitative Data Gathering

There will be two primary methods used to gather qualitative information for the needs assessment:

1. Stakeholder Interviews (25-35 interviews), and
2. Listening Sessions (at least 6 sessions).

The diagram below depicts an overview of the needs assessment focus and the primary qualitative methods used to gather that data.



In the more detailed description below, each of the identified constituencies and the methods by which assessed needs will be gathered is designed to illuminate issues specific to the communities selected following our narrowing process: Brown, Bayfield/Douglas, Richland and Ashland counties. Therefore, we intend to conduct the needs assessment in these communities, and we expect to narrow our strategic plan implementation activities (Years 2&3) based on our analysis of the needs and feasibility considerations.

- Disability services and advocacy organizations: Project staff will conduct at least **four stakeholder interviews** by telephone or in person **in each community** within the selected communities. Stakeholders to be interviewed will be identified initially through Disability Rights Wisconsin staff and in partnership with independent living centers (ILCs), Grassroots Empowerment Project, People First, Traumatic Brain Injury Association and County Human Services contacts. The stakeholder interviewees will represent a cross-disability focus and represent differing decision-making levels within each organization selected for an interview: Executive Directors, Program Directors, Direct Support Workers, Advocates. Project Staff also will request disability agency assistance in organizing **listening sessions in each community** comprised of people with disabilities who could inform the Project about how services might be more inclusive, responsive and accessible.
- Domestic violence and/or sexual assault agencies: **Stakeholder interviews** will be conducted via telephone or in-person by Project staff of the Executive Director, Program Director, Shelter Coordinator (if applicable), and a direct services advocate at each domestic violence/sexual assault agency in the selected communities (**total = five agencies – three dual agencies and two stand-alone agencies**). Project Staff will request DV/SA agencies for assistance in organizing **listening sessions in each community** comprised of service recipients or other interested community members who could inform the Project about how services might be more inclusive, responsive and accessible.
- UNIDOS Against Domestic Violence: In partnership with the Executive Director of UNIDOS, Project staff will schedule and conduct **one listening session among the seven UNIDOS advocates** (all of whom are Latina) at a time and location that is mutually amenable to the session participants. Spanish language interpretation will be provided if the advocates would find that most helpful. Project Staff will request UNIDOS assistance in organizing **listening sessions in each community** comprised of Latina community members who could inform the Project about how services might be more inclusive, responsive and accessible.

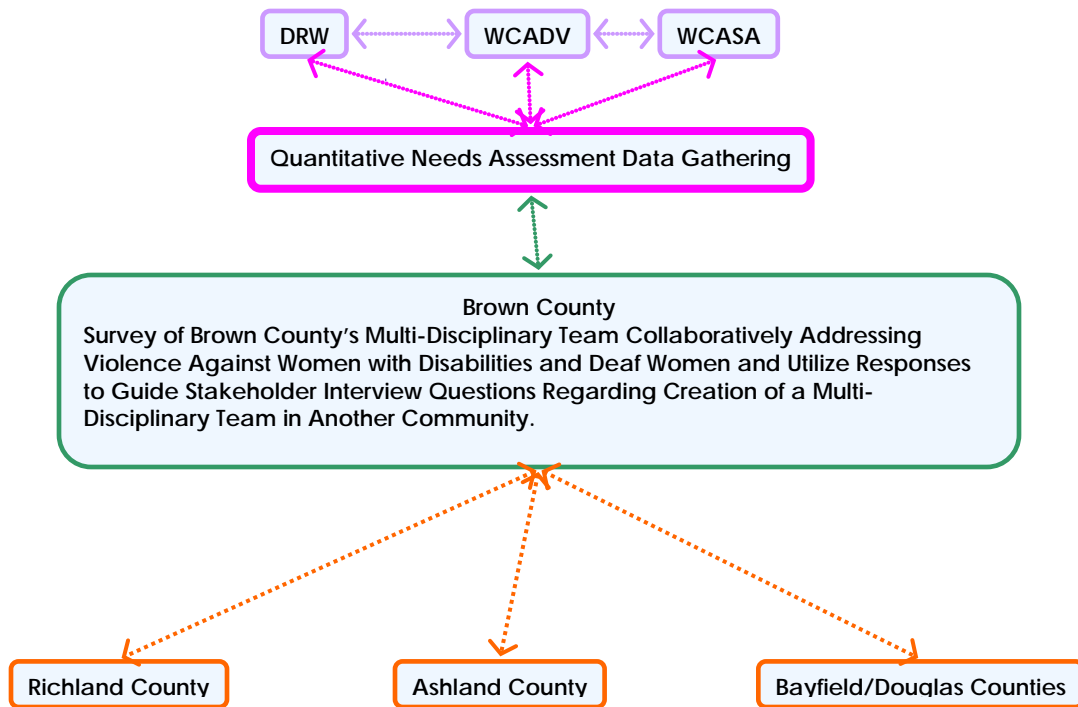
- Deaf Unity: In partnership with Deaf Unity, Project staff will schedule and conduct **one listening session among the seven Deaf volunteer advocates** at a time and location that is mutually amenable. American Sign Language interpretation will be provided. In addition, Project Staff will request Deaf Unity's assistance in organizing **listening sessions in each community** comprised of Deaf/deaf or hard-of-hearing community members who could inform the Project about how services might be more inclusive, responsive and accessible.
- Disability self-advocates: In partnership with People First, Grassroots Empowerment Project, Traumatic Brain Injury Association, and the ILCs, Project staff will recruit a total of **eight self-advocates** with whom to conduct initial **stakeholder interviews**. These interviews could be conducted either in-person or via telephone, whichever is preferred by the self-advocate. The stakeholders will be encouraged to assist Project staff to recruit individuals with disabilities in each community to participate in a listening sessions about how services could change to be more inclusive, response and accessible.

We deliberately avoided targeting victims/survivors with disabilities, and instead focused on self-advocates (many of whom will be victims/survivors) for two reasons. First, Project staff did not want individuals to be put in a position where they would have to self-identify as a victim/survivor to Project staff or to the agencies through which the Project would seek volunteer participants. While we acknowledge that some persons interviewed might self-identify as we build rapport and talk with them, we do not intend to pressure individuals into feeling that they must so disclose . . . especially considering the potential consequences of inadvertent reporting and/or trauma that could result.

Second, based on our experiences to date, there are many (if not most) individuals with disabilities who have chosen not to report or disclose the abuse they experienced. Often individuals who have not utilized the victim and/or disability services systems can inform us of barriers and deficiencies more readily than individuals who have utilized these systems, albeit not to the extent that might have been more helpful to them. Since this Project focuses on services instead of the violent experiences individuals survived, we do not intend nor need to recruit only survivor voices.

Strategy B: Quantitative Data Gathering

The diagram below depicts an overview of the needs assessment focus and the primary quantitative methods used to gather that data.



There will be one instrument used to gather quantitative data:

1. In Brown County, **one survey** of all members of the multi-disciplinary team formed to address violence against people with disabilities will be distributed to learn of their perspectives on the qualities and factors that have made their group successful. The quantitative information will help inform the development of collaborative, multi-disciplinary efforts in new sites selected as part of the strategic planning process. The survey will be a paper-based survey to be emailed to the 25-member team by its lead members. For people with disabilities on the team who do not have access to or use email, a hard copy survey will be provided and may be administered in whatever manner is deemed most accessible by the individual completing the survey.

Collaborative Partner Responsibilities

Each partner organization will *take the lead* in conducting the key stakeholder interviews with their respective constituencies (e.g., WCASA will lead interviews with sexual assault service providers, WCADV with domestic violence advocates, and DRW with disability organizations and individuals). Each lead staff person will have responsibility for scheduling the interviews that will be

conducted, sharing information among all Project members and compiling the data from the stakeholder interviews. DRW will take the lead in distributing and compiling the survey tools, will secure interpreters and reasonable accommodations as requested for listening sessions or any on-site activities, and will be responsible for compiling the Team's overall data and distributing the final results throughout the collaborative. As a team, the full collaborative will analyze the assessment results and identify the primary needs gleaned from these results.

Together, DRW, WCADV and WCASA will conduct the listening sessions held within the selected communities, share collected data and collectively analyze these assessment results.

Implementation Considerations

Confidentiality, Informed Consent and Mandatory Reporting

Because Wisconsin is working under newly enacted laws regarding the definitions and reporting of abuse of "Adults" and "Elders" at Risk, regardless of an individual's status (self-advocate, disability advocate, DV/SA advocate, etc.), every interview, face-to-face meeting and listening session will be conducted with the utmost sensitivity and preparation regarding safety, confidentiality and trauma responses of and for participants. Each participant will be given verbal notice by Project staff to ascertain passive consent for participation. Project staff will arrange with the DV/SA agency to have an advocate available to anyone who would like to or needs to talk during and following any discussions that impacts a former victim/survivor.

In addition, each listening session and face-to-face meeting will involve notice being given about the importance of confidentiality among participants, including reassurance that no personally identifiable information will be used or referenced in any way in the needs assessment findings. This prohibition on using personally identifiable information also includes an explicit statement that no audio or visual equipment will be used to record a person's participation. Notice also will be provided to participants about the implications of disclosure relative to the new Adults At Risk Reporting Law applicable in Wisconsin. Although Project staff is not "mandated reporters" per se, there may be participants or co-sponsors who hold different positions that make them "reporters" under the law.

We recognize that candid responses will best inform our implementation phase. Therefore, Project staff each will be responsible for maintaining the safety and

confidentiality of the gathered data. Any documents (electronic or hard copy) written as result of stakeholder interviews or listening sessions will be developed into a single, cohesive report within 3 business days following the assessment activity. Each report then will be emailed to DRW for inclusion in the overall assessment report. DRW will ensure that all personally identifiable information is redacted from the report prior to its inclusion in the data summary.

Project staff will identify any remaining copies of other data from the needs assessment activity and will shred/destroy this documentation after confirming that DRW has entered the aforementioned documents into the overall needs assessment report. DRW will follow the same procedure for its documents, and shred all documentation related to individual and organizational responses following approval of the Needs Assessment Report. The Project Coordinator will store all hard copy reports/documents in a locked file cabinet to which she and the Project Director only have access. Electronically based information will be secured on the Project Coordinator's hard drive (accessible only to Project Coordinator and Project Director) and will be deleted from the hard drive upon insertion into the overall Needs Assessment Report.

Project staff is mindful of the sensitivity and respect owed to assessment participants, especially if comments or concerns arise that relate to another organization/stakeholder within that community. Any paraphrased comments, etc., which could jeopardize relationship building, will be considered by Project staff in selecting the one community (Strategic Question 2), but the information shall not implicitly nor explicitly be included in the Needs Assessment Report or any published Project documents. This assurance will be communicated to assessment participants.

Accessibility of Process and Location

Accessibility is of primary importance in needs assessment implementation. All written information involved in this needs assessment process will be provided in alternate formats upon request (e.g., Braille, audiotape, CD-ROM, large print, "simple" language). All information communicated verbally will be conducted with qualified interpreters as needed (e.g., American Sign Language, Spanish, Hmong). Also, any interview, meeting or information session will announce the availability of reasonable accommodations upon request and will be conducted ONLY at locations fully accessible to individuals with disabilities. This accessibility requirement includes conducting information gathering opportunities at times that are most convenient for persons who must rely on alternative transportation services and/or lack accessible transportation altogether.

Participation Incentives for Self-Advocates and Volunteers

Self-advocates, individuals with disabilities, community members at large, Deaf advocates and listening session participants generally provide their time and expertise on a volunteer basis. In consideration of their volunteerism in the needs assessment, the Project intends to provide these advocates participation incentives that could involve mileage reimbursement at .425 per mile for travel to/from assessment activity, light refreshments during a listening session or stakeholder interview and/or a small stipend (e.g., a \$10 gift card to a coffee shop or book store).

Assessment Implementation Tools

The tools used to gather the qualitative and quantitative data were developed collaboratively and will be implemented by Project staff. No interviews or listening sessions will be conducted with audio recording equipment because their use often hinders responses and raises confidentiality and safety concerns. The survey tools will lack any personally identifiable information, and all surveys will be shredded following data entry. The tools to be used in the needs assessment are the following:

Survey

- Brown County Multi-Disciplinary Collaborative Survey (**Appendix C**).

Stakeholder Interview Discussion Questions

- Discussion Questions for Disability Organization and Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Agency Key Stakeholder Interviews (**Appendix D**).
- Discussion Questions for Disability Self-Advocates Key Stakeholder Interviews (**Appendix E**).

Listening Session Discussion Questions

- Discussion Questions for Deaf Unity (**Appendix F**).
- Discussion Questions for UNIDOS (**Appendix G**).
- Discussion Questions for Community Members gathered with the assistance of UNIDOS (**Appendix H**).
- Discussion Questions for Individuals with Disabilities gathered with the assistance of Self-Advocate Interviews, DV/SA Agencies, Disability Agencies and Deaf Unity advocates (**Appendix I**).

Wisconsin Project Description for Assessment Participants

- Wisconsin’s Violence Against Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women Project Description (***Appendix J***).

Plan Timeline

2007

Aug.-Sept. Consult with Vera re: Plan Development and Document
October 11 Email Final Draft NA Plan to Amy Loder at OVW
October 30 Refine Final Tools for Review and Approval
December 20 Submit Final Revised Plan and Tools to Amy Loder at OVW

2008

January Begin Implementation of Needs Assessment
January 3 Collaboration Meeting to Check-In re: Needs Assessment
Mid-February Project Collaboration analyzes data.
End of February Consult with Vera and Submit Needs Assessment Results Report to Amy Loder at OVW
Early March Collaboration Strategic Planning Meeting with Vera Institute
Mid-March Consult with Vera re: Strategic Plan Document
End of March Email Final Draft of Strategic Plan to Amy Loder at OVW
April Begin Strategic Plan Implementation!