

DEAF PATHWAYS

FOCUS MEMORANDUM



CLEVELAND 2020

To: Office on Violence Against Women
Attention: Sylvia Pauling
Date: 8/12/2020
From: Rachel Wright—Project Manager
Re: Statement of Focus

In accordance with the urgent need to increase service providers' responsiveness and accessibility to Deaf and Hard of Hearing survivors of rape and sexual abuse, a collaboration between Cleveland Rape Crisis Center and Cleveland Hearing and Speech Center was funded in 2019 by the Office on Violence Against Women Disability Grant Program. This collaboration, named Deaf Pathways, will work toward the enhancement of services to Deaf and Hard of Hearing survivors.

HISTORY OF COLLABORATION

Cleveland Hearing and Speech Center began the Disability Grant Process in 2011 in partnership with the Domestic Violence and Child Advocacy Center (DVCAC) and the Cleveland Division of Police (CDP). This first three-year funding cycle focused primarily on planning and collaboration building, whereby a Collaboration Charter, Needs Assessment, and Strategic Plan were created. Following on the heels of this project partnership, DVCAC submitted a second application for funding in 2017 adding the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center as an additional partner. The focus of this two-year project was on providing training and education to community partners, developing a co-advocacy model for serving deaf victims/survivors of sexual and domestic violence, and continuing to address the barriers and challenges faced by the deaf community to services and programs as well as the criminal justice system. While this short-term funding was successful in helping to inform and educate both our partners and community members, significant work remains. By participating in this new grant cycle, CRCC and CHSC will build upon our previous knowledge and collaborative history to create long-lasting systems change in both organizations.

COLLABORATION PARTNERS

Cleveland Rape Crisis Center (CRCC)

Cleveland Rape Crisis Center is one of the largest free-standing Rape Crisis Centers in the US, reaching more than 40,000 individuals each year with its comprehensive services.

Founded in 1974, Cleveland Rape Crisis Center has grown from a grassroots, volunteer-run hotline service to assist survivors of rape and sexual abuse to a 70+ employee nonprofit organization providing leading counseling services, victim assistance in the justice system, and 24-hour services to survivors of rape and sexual abuse in Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake and Ashtabula Counties.

CRCC's vision is the elimination of sexual violence. CRCC's mission is to support survivors of rape and sexual abuse, promote healing and prevention, and advocate for social change. The organization also serves survivors of human trafficking.

Cleveland Rape Crisis Center also offers education programs to hundreds of organizations, schools and businesses throughout Northeast Ohio including Cuyahoga County, Lake County, Geauga County and Ashtabula County. We believe that outreach to the community and education and prevention services are vital components in eliminating sexual violence.

CRCC has extensive experience in successfully conducting outreach in underserved communities. Using a multi-pronged approach is crucial; from social media to simply showing up at community events, the primary lesson is to listen to members of the community about what is most effective and to build and nurture trust.

Cleveland Hearing and Speech Center (CHSC)

Cleveland Hearing & Speech Center (CHSC) is the oldest freestanding speech and hearing center in the United States. Founded in 1921, it remains Northeast Ohio's only non-profit agency dedicated to helping individuals gain or regain their ability to communicate with others and live more independently, serving adults and children in Northeast Ohio who are D/deaf, hard of hearing, or have communication challenges. Today, CHSC serves thousands of Northeast Ohioans, providing clinical services in speech-language pathology, audiology, outreach to families of infants and toddlers who are deaf or have profound hearing loss, and services for those who are deaf or hard of hearing. CHSC's Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the first center of its kind in Ohio, was established in 1975 and provides case management, advocacy, information and referral, and sign language interpreting services. CHSC is accredited by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and is a certified Medicaid and Medicare provider.

CHSC envisions a community where every individual communicates effectively and offers a wide variety of programs and services to meet the needs of the largely underserved Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. The agency's Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing provides support services and case management for persons who are Deaf and their families; vocational rehabilitation programming for those seeking employment; advocacy and ADA consultation; training and professional development on Deaf Culture; information and referral; summer youth programs; and ASL instruction. In addition, several of the staff are trained advocates and they provide services and advocacy in a culturally competent and trauma informed manner to Deaf victims/survivors of sexual assault, stalking, intimate partner violence. The team also provides training and education to social service agencies as well as the criminal justice system to more effectively interface with crime victims who are deaf. Finally, the agency provides 24-hour sign language interpreting across 8 northeastern Ohio counties.

OUR WORK TO DATE

Deaf Pathways is on schedule to complete five deliverables as part of the planning and development phase of the grant process. Our collaboration charter has been completed and was submitted to OVW for review on June 15th, 2020 and was approved on August 10th, 2020. Our team meets at least once a week for two hours to build team cohesion, work toward our deliverables, and ultimately work toward creating accessible services for Deaf and Hard of hearing survivors. Our Project Manager is also attending ASL classes once a week and occasionally practices with team collaboration members who are fluent in ASL. Our collaboration attends All-Sites meetings, technical assistance from the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera) when required or necessary, and our Project Manager attends weekly check-ins with technical assistance from Vera.

OUR FOCUS POPULATION

Deaf Pathways is dedicating its efforts towards Deaf and Hard of Hearing adults who are survivors of rape and sexual abuse.

CAPACITY TO CREATE CHANGE

Cleveland Rape Crisis Center and Cleveland Hearing and Speech Center bring prolonged knowledge, expertise, passion, and resources to this work and are well-positioned to work with this focus population. Cleveland Rape Crisis Center, as the sole Rape Crisis Center in the four-county area, brings over 45 years of trauma informed services to survivors and are experts in their field of sexual violence. Cleveland Hearing and Speech Center is the only service provider in the eight-county area that provides services specific to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population. CHSC provides trainings around the area, educating other service providers, from hospitals, courts, and behavioral health organizations, how to best serve Deaf and Hard of Hearing clients and bring accessibility to their service areas.

Throughout the integration of best practices and knowledge into the core of each organization and system, CRCC and CHSC anticipate enhancing the organizational capacities to support Deaf and Hard of Hearing survivors of rape and sexual abuse.

Our ultimate goal is to increase the service provision as well as accessibility in a trauma informed and culturally responsive way that ensures equality and equity for all.

VISION STATEMENT

Deaf Pathways envisions a society where all service providers and systems are trauma informed, fully resourced, and prepared to offer equitable and accessible services to Deaf and Hard of Hearing survivors of rape and sexual abuse. We envision services that promote healing and empowerment in a timely, trustful, and safe manner that elevates Deaf Culture, as well as all variations of communication preferences and access. Deaf Pathways envisions a future of empowered individuals and agencies where equity for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people and sexual violence survivors remain at the forefront of services.

MISSION STATEMENT

Deaf Pathways' mission is to create sustainable systems change within our agencies by:

- Prioritizing a client-focused approach and letting the input of those we serve guide our practices
- Identifying and addressing barriers within the Deaf community and working to eliminate those barriers to receiving services
- Providing creative resources, education, and training to agency staff to respond to current and future needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing survivors of sexual assault
- Implementing strategies for effective communication, such as using in-person ASL interpreters, especially when serving survivors of sexual violence experiencing trauma
- Providing outreach and education to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community regarding sexual violence and the accessible services that are available
- Promoting healing and empowering survivors to make their own informed decisions
- Promoting transparency and educating agency staff continuously on topics such as, but not limited to: trauma informed care, how to respond to disclosures of sexual violence, Deaf Culture and barriers to services.
- Leveraging existing collaborations with systems and other service providers to inform best practices and decisions that impact our clients
- Advocating for Deaf survivors of sexual violence outside of our own agencies and communities