

NOLA SEA PROJECT CHARTER



End Violence Against Women with Disabilities Grant
Office on Violence Against Women (OVW)
United States Department of Justice

Collaborative Partners:
Lighthouse Louisiana
Disability Rights Louisiana
Metro Centers for Community Advocacy
New Orleans Family Justice Center

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ACRONYMS

ADL	Activities of Daily Living
ASL	American Sign Language
D	Deaf (In the context of this document, the capital D is being used when referring to people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deafblind.)
DRLA	Disability Rights Louisiana
DV	Domestic Violence
I/DD	Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
MCCA	Metro Centers for Community Advocacy
NLP	No Light Perception
NOFJC	New Orleans Family Justice Center
NOLA	New Orleans, Louisiana
OWW	Office on Violence Against Women
SEA	Safety/Empowerment/Access
SA	Sexual Assault (In the context of this document, Sexual Assault (SA) is being used as an umbrella term to also include sexual violence.)

INTRODUCTION

The NOLA SEA (Safety, Empowerment, Access) Project is a collaboration between four (4) community-based agencies in New Orleans, Louisiana: Disability Rights Louisiana, Lighthouse Louisiana, Metro Centers for Community Advocacy, and the New Orleans Family Justice Center. Our service area is the Greater New Orleans region that encompasses eight parishes (Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, St. Tammany and St. James) centering on the city of New Orleans. Each of the NOLA SEA Project's collaborative member organizations are committed to the principles underlying the Collaboration Charter.

The NOLA SEA Project is a newly formed multidisciplinary collaboration to improve services for a mutual population: survivors of domestic violence (DV) and sexual assault (SA) who are Deaf (D), blind and/or are living with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD). Through a multidisciplinary collaborative team of key participants from all four organizations, we will focus on building our collaboration, identifying needs, and developing strategies for addressing these needs and gaps in services in the first phase. The second phase will focus on the implementation of identified changes.

Our efforts will enhance our organizational capacities to better identify, respond to and support survivors of DV and SA who are Deaf, blind and/or are living with I/DD, in a trauma-informed and culturally responsive manner that ensures equality and equity. Regardless of which agency door they open, survivors will access a rich array of comprehensive, individualized, seamless services and will be safer as a result of our collaboration.

The NOLA SEA Project is a unique collaboration and we wanted an equally unique logo. Our logo design represents the collective commitment of each collaborative partner to a common agenda, and it reflects our cross-sector collective approach to improving services for a mutual population. The project is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

MISSION & VISION

VISION

The NOLA SEA Project envisions that every person, living in the Greater New Orleans region, is safe and empowered with the resources and tools they need to thrive without barriers or restrictions. We envision a service delivery system that is responsive to different needs and fully accessible to all survivors equally.

Our vision conceives an informed and supportive community where every survivor is able to express their own choices freely and confidently. The partnership envisions a continuous collaboration that drives parallel improvement in both safety and accessibility. It ensures a healthier and inclusive environment where the survivor is the decision maker and has complete access to every service that supports their choices.

MISSION

Our mission is to center the needs of DV and SA survivors who are Deaf (D), blind and/or are living with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (I/DD), in order to increase partner agencies' knowledge and capability to serve them by:

Engaging in rigorous self-exploration by:

- Conducting a needs assessments of NOLA SEA Project partner agencies;
- Identifying gaps in services for DV and SA who may have intellectual and/or developmental disabilities, as well as survivors who are Deaf and/or blind;
- Reviewing our organizational procedures and policies to increase survivor-centered services, based on an empowerment model that is trauma-informed as well as ethnically, linguistically and culturally responsive; and
- Building an atmosphere of mutual trust.

Learning and cross training by:

- Leveraging the expertise of collaboration members;
- Promoting strategic communication and education of topics related to DV, SA, Deaf and blind culture, and IDD services; and
- Expand cross-organizational communication and openness toward embracing further responsive practices and knowledge sharing.

Disability Rights Louisiana

8325 Oak Street
New Orleans, LA 70118

Representative: Debra Weinberg, Esq.
Director of Community Advocacy



Disability Rights Louisiana (DRLA)

DRLA (known as the Advocacy Center until January 2020) a non-governmental organization established in 1978, is the state of Louisiana's protection and advocacy system.

DRLA's Mission

Disability Rights Louisiana protects and advocates for the human and legal rights of all children, adults and seniors with disabilities. Our work aims to empower the disability community to live an integrated life, free from abuse, neglect and exploitation.

Scope of Services

DRLA provides direct legal and non-legal representation, education, training, and systems advocacy. While DRLA has three offices and 50 staff across the state, DRLA's main office is located in New Orleans. DRLA's current priorities are improving the accessibility of services, facilities, and housing for people with disabilities; preserving or increasing autonomy; increasing access to equal education; ensuring competitive employment; preserving home and community-based healthcare services; investigating allegations of abuse and neglect in institutional settings; and advocating for voting rights. In 2018, DRLA provided legal advocacy to impact over 1,454,029 individuals, 724 through individual advocacy and legal representation and 1,453,305 through impact litigation; and provided rights training to 491 persons with disabilities, families, lawyers and other advocates, service providers, and other professionals. DRLA also provided information and referral to 2,947 individuals.

Lighthouse Louisiana

123 State Street
New Orleans, LA 70118

Representative: Anne Springer Jayes, MPH
Senior Director, Advocacy
Mary Alexander, MSW
Project Director, NOLA SEA Project



Lighthouse Louisiana (The Lighthouse)

The Lighthouse is a nongovernmental organization serving individuals with disabilities throughout Southeast Louisiana. The Lighthouse has been providing individuals with disability services, employment and advocacy since 1915 and is the largest and longest running disability service provider in the state of Louisiana.

The Lighthouse's Vision

The Lighthouse envisions a world where: everyone with a disability who wants to work can find a job, people who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing have access to communication with everyone, vision loss does not mean a loss of independence, and people with disabilities have equal access to community spaces, public transit, and safety net services.

The Lighthouse's Mission

The Lighthouse empowers people with disabilities through services, employment and advocacy.

Scope of Services

The Lighthouse provided direct services to 1,980 individuals who are blind, low vision, Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deafblind in 2018. The Lighthouse offers a range of services for children, adults, and seniors with all types of disabilities. The Vision Rehabilitation Department provides occupational therapy, adaptive technology training and equipment, social services, support groups, braille classes, senior living classes, recreation, no-cost summer camp, certified in-school Teachers for the Visually Impaired. The Deaf Services Department provides high quality communication access, services, advocacy, and equipment to people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deafblind, and people who have hearing loss or speech impairment. The Lighthouse provides Pre-Employment Transition services for individuals with all disabilities within public and charter schools in both New Orleans and Baton Rouge. The Lighthouse provides work readiness, job seeking and placement support, and extended support services and job coaching for individuals with all disabilities working as a vendor through the state of Louisiana Rehabilitation Services (LRS) and an Employment Network vendor through the Social Security Ticket to Work Program. The Lighthouse is also an AbilityOne nonprofit agency, currently employing 90 individuals with disabilities, 58 of them on AbilityOne contracts in high-speed cup and paper towel manufacturing and machine operation, packing, mailroom and call center operation, and serving as a demonstration center for the employment capabilities of individuals who are blind or have other significant disabilities for the region.

COLLABORATION MEMBERS & MEMBER AGENCIES

Metro Centers for Community Advocacy

3929 Jefferson Hwy
Jefferson, LA 70121

Representative: Rebecca Rainey, LSCW
Program Director



**Metro Centers
for Community
Advocacy**

Shelter from the Storm

Metro Centers for Community Advocacy (MCCA)

Established in 1986, MCCA is a community-based, independent, non-profit 501 (c) (3) social service agency serving women, children and men who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual and assault and stalking.

MCCA's Vision

MCCA is dedicated to assisting survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking to live their lives without fear of violence and to be financially and emotionally independent.

MCCA's Mission

To break the cycle of violence and aid survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking through advocacy, intervention, empowerment and transformation.

Scope of Services

MCCA provides wrap-around services including individual advocacy, information and referrals, group support, medical advocacy, legal advocacy, sheltering, individual support, safety planning, and caregiver support to survivors in eight Louisiana parishes that are St. Tammany, Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard and the river parishes (St. Charles, St. John, and James Parish). MCCA provides two (2) clinical case managers to the Children Advocacy Center in Orleans Parish to provide sexual assault services. MCCA has a main office complex, three shelters, and six satellite offices. MCCA also provides 24/7 Crisis Line for counseling and/or referrals for survivors. In 2018, MCCA took 4286 crisis calls. The crisis calls requested assistance with domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, trafficking and/or a combination. MCCA provided counseling services to 1004 (unduplicated count) domestic violence and sexual assault survivors and provided 5762 shelter nights. MCCA staff are credentialed Master's Level Social Workers, Licensed Clinical Social Workers and/or Licensed Professional Counselors. All services provided for survivors by MCCA are free and confidential.

COLLABORATION MEMBERS & MEMBER AGENCIES



New Orleans Family Justice Center

701 Loyola Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70113

Representative: Eva Lessinger, MSW
Director of Programs



New Orleans Family Justice Center (NOFJC)

NOFJC was established in 2007 and is operated by the New Orleans Family Justice Alliance (501 (c) (3) organization), and accredited by the Alliance for Hope International, the agency responsible for the Family Justice Center model in the United States and world-wide. NOFJC provides services to survivors and their children with a variety of needs and circumstances related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.

NOFJC's Vision

Our vision is a future where we all work together to meet the needs of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and stalking survivors through comprehensive, holistic, and accessible services. Through a coordinated and co-located model of prevention and intervention services, we strive to break the vicious generational cycle and community impact of interpersonal violence and trauma.

NOFJC's Mission

New Orleans Family Justice Center is a partnership of agencies dedicated to ending domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault, human trafficking and stalking through prevention and coordinated response by providing comprehensive client-centered, empowerment services in a single location.

Scope of Services

NOFJC is a comprehensive victim services center locating 10 agencies on-site to provide victim advocacy, case management, a continuum of housing services (including emergency, transitional, rapid re-housing, and permanent supportive housing), civil legal services, legal advocacy, education and employment, individual and group trauma counseling for adults and children, education and employment, holistic healing, forensic interviewing, primary medical services, law enforcement investigation, and prosecution. All services are free and confidential. The NOFJC is the designated domestic violence and sexual assault provider of Orleans Parish. In addition, the NOFJC runs Crescent House, the domestic violence shelter for Orleans Parish and sits on numerous local, state, and national committees and task forces to represent the myriad needs and strengths of survivors.

As part of our commitment to creating sustainable change in our agencies, the NOLA SEA Project will operate under the following set of values in order to meet the complex needs of our community. Although the following values are in alphabetical order, all values and assumptions are of equal importance within the Collaboration and its efforts. These values will inform all of our decisions, interactions and work.

Accessibility

The Collaboration recognizes the importance of inclusion of all people accessing our member agency services. We commit to strengthening our services to provide an array of linguistically and culturally appropriate resources that acknowledge and respect each individual's wide range of needs.

Accountability

The Collaboration values each of our member organizations. We agree that transparency, honesty, and responsibility are of paramount factors within our accountability structure if we are to build our capacity as well as inspire organizational change in each of our agencies. We have established processes in place to ensure that conflict is navigated with respect to all parties involved.

Autonomy

The Collaboration believes that all people, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, Deaf, hard-of-hearing, and people who are blind have the right to be fully respected and to experience the dignity to make decisions about their own lives and personal safety. This includes the right to culturally appropriate information and resources that are accurate and accessible, to aid in decision making and safety planning.

Confidentiality

The Collaboration is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of the people served by our agencies. We recognize that each agency in our collaborative must follow mandated confidentiality and reporting protocols and that our agencies' protocols may differ. We commit to respecting the confidentiality requirements of our multiple systems while supporting each person's right to manage and disclose their own information.

Diversity

The Collaboration recognizes strength in differences and is committed to capturing diverse voices in our work together. We recognize that among the collaborative representatives, we do not have racial or gender diversity, any representative from the Deaf or blind communities, nor anyone living with a developmental or intellectual disability, and therefore must work intentionally and diligently to ensure that a wider diversity of staff and client voices from each agency is included throughout the project.

Empowerment

The Collaboration believes all services should focus on the empowerment of those using them. The focus should be on fostering what each individual identifies as their strengths and their way to regain power over their lives. This includes the right to culturally appropriate accurate and accessible information, resources to aid in decision making and safety planning, and respecting their decisions and assisting in a way that fosters independence and autonomy.

Humility

The Collaboration commits to respectful, nonjudgmental approach, embracing cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences and applying them to our services in order to create relevant support systems. We acknowledge the existence and experiences of others outside of our own Collaboration team.

Inclusion

The right of all people to have opportunities to use their abilities to participate and contribute as a member of society. Inclusion recognizes and values the diversity within our community and ensures that those facing the highest barriers are thought of first when planning services.

Safety

The Collaboration believes that everyone has a right to live without fear of emotional and physical harm. We place paramount importance on the safety of survivors using the services of each member agency. Safety is multi-layered and dynamic as many survivors have been harmed by multiple individuals and institutions over the course of their lives. We view safety in the broadest sense and believe it needs to be defined by each individual based on their needs and experiences.

Self-determination

The Collaboration believes each individual is the authority on their own life. We recognize the rights and needs of a person to be free to make their own informed choices and decisions that support their own goals and life.

Trauma-informed

The Collaboration acknowledges the role trauma has played in the lives of DV and SA survivors. We believe in a trauma-informed approach to engaging people with histories of trauma that recognizes how traumatic experiences affect a person's mental, behavioral, emotional, physical and spiritual health.

Through the combined expertise represented within the multidisciplinary collaborative, NOLA SEA Project holds certain beliefs.

1. We assume people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, Deaf and/or blind are at a higher risk for experiencing DV and SA.
2. We assume DV and SA survivors with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as Deaf and/or blind may face unique challenges and barriers to accessing support.
3. We assume DV and SA survivors with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as Deaf and/or blind may not have always had an equal opportunity to benefit from our programs, services, and activities which may have led to a loss of hope for them and negatively impacted our reputation. We fully embrace this opportunity to bridge the gaps in programmatic services to build trust among DV/SA survivors who have an intellectual and/or developmental disability, as well as Deaf and/or blind.
4. We assume that DV and SA are never the fault of the survivor.
5. We assume that DV and SA survivors with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as the Deaf and/or blind are telling the truth about their experiences and have the right to be validated and receive respectful services that support their dignity and autonomy.

CONTRIBUTIONS & COMMITMENTS

NOLA SEA Project Partnership Collaboration

As part of the NOLA SEA Project Collaboration, Disability Rights Louisiana, Lighthouse Louisiana, Metro Centers for Community Advocacy and the New Orleans Family Justice Center and their representatives are committed to completing the work necessary to ensure that each of the founding organizations has a roadmap that outlines the changes that will increase their organizational capacities to support survivors with intellectual and developmental disabilities, Deaf, hard-of-hearing, and blind. Each designated member of the NOLA SEA Project is authorized to represent their organization in collaborative decision-making throughout this project and accepts responsibility of keeping their organization informed about the efforts of the Collaboration. The designated agency representative should remain consistent throughout the three-year funding cycle of the grant, and all collaboration members should participate in all meetings.

To meet this goal, NOLA SEA Project will:

- Follow our Collaboration Charter to guide our work;
- Complete all required deliverables, actively participate in all phases of the grant project, including collaboration building, needs assessment, strategic planning, and implementation. Will also implement changes as determined by the collaboration team;
- Assess each organization using the appropriate set of Vera performance indicators;
- Communicate information regarding the collaboration to their respective agencies and regarding their agencies to the collaboration as needed to facilitate the work of the project;
- Dedicate on average twelve (12) hours per month to collaboration work to include activities that support collaboration and capacity building such as attending technical assistance trainings, webinars and collaboration meetings, reviewing and amending internal policies and procedures, and providing timely finance reports to lead agency and;
- Maintain compliance with all requirements as outlined in our grant award letter from OVW, including all required and additional communication with Vera and OVW.

PARTNER AGENCY ROLES & COMMITMENT

As partnered agencies of the NOLA SEA Project Collaboration, Lighthouse Louisiana, Disability Rights Louisiana, Metro Centers for Community Advocacy and New Orleans Family Justice Center each promise to the following:

As the Lead Agency, Lighthouse Louisiana will:

- Enact organizational change as determined by the NOLA SEA Project needs assessment and strategic plan, including those that may have policy and budgetary implications;
- Fulfill the role of fiscal administration of the project budget;
- Submit the semi-annual progress reports and quarterly financial reports to OVW;
- Provide the administrative and programmatic staff to meet the goals and objectives of the collaborative;
- Participate fully in all steps of project development and implementation including OVW contracted technical assistance from the Vera Institute of Justice. This includes ongoing communication with the Vera Liaison, attending meetings hosted by OVW and Vera, webinar participation, and any other activities that support the success of the grant;
- Commit staff time and organizational resources as needed to the collaboration to ensure its success, which includes, but is not limited to, replacing any team member who leaves their position within the organization, or any other factors that may lead to their displacement from the collaboration's team;
- With input from the Charter members, submit requests for extensions to OVW;
- Delivery of information to Lighthouse Louisiana Board of Directors regarding the grant, its funding, and any potential changes to the agency budget; and
- Contribute expertise about providing services to people who have a sensory disability.

PARTNER AGENCY ROLES & COMMITMENT

As a Collaborative Agency, Disability Rights Louisiana will:

- Commit to enact organizational change as determined by the NOLA SEA Project needs assessment and strategic plan;
- Participate fully in all steps of project development and implementation including technical assistance from Vera. This includes ongoing communication with Vera Liaison, webinar participation, and any other activities that support the success of the grant;
- Commit to provide continuing education and ongoing policy review and updates as appropriate to the assessments and outcomes of the grant;
- Commit staff time and organizational resources as needed to the collaboration to ensure its success, which includes, but is not limited to, replacing any team member who leaves their position within the organization, or any other factors that may lead to their displacement from the collaboration's team;
- Act as the primary liaison with programs of Disability Rights Louisiana, its board, service users, employees, and other community stakeholders; and
- Contribute expertise about providing services to people who have an intellectual and/or developmental disability.

As a Collaborative Agency, Metro Centers for Community Advocacy will:

- Commit to enact organizational change as determined by the NOLA SEA Project needs assessment and strategic plan;
- Participate fully in all steps of project development and implementation including technical assistance from Vera. This includes ongoing communication with Vera Liaison, webinar participation, and any other activities that support the success of the grant;
- Commit to provide continuing education and ongoing policy review and updates as appropriate to the assessments and outcomes of the grant;
- Commit staff time and organizational resources as needed to the collaboration to ensure its success, which includes, but is not limited to replacing any team member who leaves their position within the organization, or any other factors that may lead to their displacement from the collaboration's team;
- Act as the primary liaison with programs of Metro Centers for Community Advocacy, it's board, service users, employees, and other community stakeholders; and
- Contribute expertise about providing services to survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

As a Collaborative Agency, New Orleans Family Justice Center will:

- Commit to enact organizational change as determined by the NOLA SEA Project needs assessment and strategic plan;
- Participate fully in all steps of project development and implementation including technical assistance from Vera. This includes ongoing communication with Vera Liaison, webinar participation, and any other activities that support the success of the grant;
- Commit to provide continuing education and ongoing policy review and updates as appropriate to the assessments and outcomes of the grant;
- Commit staff time and organizational resources as needed to the collaboration to ensure its success, which includes, but is not limited to replacing any team member who leaves their position within the organization, or any other factors that may lead to their displacement from the collaboration's team;
- Act as the primary liaison with programs of New Orleans Family Justice Center, it's board, service users, employees, and other community stakeholders; and
- Contribute expertise about providing services to survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

PROJECT DIRECTOR

The NOLA SEA Project Collaboration Team includes a Project Director and four (4) Agency Representatives.

These team members commit to the following:

The Project Director will:

- Champion the NOLA SEA Project Collaboration in each of the four team agencies;
- Provide summaries/presentations of Collaboration activities to each partner agency as needed;
- Build and maintain positive relationships within Collaboration Team agencies;
- Lead the NOLA SEA Project Collaboration through the development phase and oversee the implementation phase of the work plan;
- Draft and finalize deliverables based on team input, concepts and decisions;
- Conduct the Vera organizational capacity indicator assessment;
- Coordinate necessary interagency cross-training;
- Facilitate collaboration meetings, work groups, and assessment interviews;
- Guide and resolve conflict within the collaboration using the outlined conflict resolution guidelines;
- Communicate any and all information to the team that may have a significant impact on the collaboration's work and will communicate such in a timely manner;
- Successfully manage the timeline of deliverables as outlined in the Work Plan;
- Act as the primary liaison to Vera and OVW;
- Fully participate in all Vera technical assistance as required and appropriate. This includes participation in Vera sponsored webinars; and
- Submit all reports and deliverables to OVW.

Each Agency Representative will:

- Attend Collaboration meetings as scheduled (weekly for 1 ½ hours) and complete any outside tasks assigned by the collaboration team;
- Fulfill their assigned roles on the team;
- Provide summaries of Collaboration activities within their home organizations on a regular basis during leadership team and board meetings;
- Champion the NOLA SEA Project Collaboration within each of their agencies;
- Update the Collaboration team regarding big changes at their home organizations; and
- Engage fully in all aspects and stages of the grant process, including development of all deliverables.

DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

Decision-Making Process

NOLA SEA Project is committed to a Decision-Making Process that values the contributions of each member. Our collaboration has selected a decision-making model that respects the unique opinions and perspectives of each group member. Decisions made by the collaborative will embody our collective dedication to our established vision, mission, and values.

NOLA SEA Project Collaborative Team values working together and will use consensus decision making as our method for determining the course of the project. The Project Director will be responsible for facilitating consensus development within the collaboration team.

If we are not able to reach an immediate consensus through discussion, then we will utilize the following decision-making process:

We will name and agree upon the issue and solicit input from all group members through discussion. We will check in to determine if each member has sufficient information to make a decision and will continue the discussion until all feel prepared. Each member will be asked to indicate their position on the issue based on the following classification:

- o 1= Full support
- o 2= Moderate support
- o 3= Undecided
- o 4= Disagree, but open for further discussion
- o 5= Strongly Disagree

We will move forward with the decision if all of the responses are a 1 or a 2. If all responses are a 1, a 2, or a 3, we will consider the decision to be tentative and will revisit it at our next meeting. If discussion becomes unproductive or a consensus cannot be reached; the team will set aside the discussion for the duration of the current meeting. At the end of the meeting, action items (e.g. finding more relevant information or researching alternative solutions developed by others) will be identified and assigned to the appropriate team member to complete in advance of the next meeting.

DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

Administrative Decisions

We recognize that not all decisions require the full collaboration to develop a consensus and may be made by the following entities.

Collaboration Authority

The Collaboration will be involved in decisions that change the meaning or direction of the project. The Collaboration will set the direction of the collaboration's work including its vision, mission and values. The Collaboration will periodically reflect on and evaluate the group process. The Collaborative will determine when to consult internal and external stakeholders, including Vera and OVW in regards to the development of deliverables.

Fiscal Agency Authority

Lighthouse Louisiana, acting as the Fiscal Agent, has the authority to employ and supervise the Project Director, implement the budget, and submit budget and financial reports to OVW. The Fiscal Agent will submit bi-annual reports to OVW.

Project Director Authority

The Project Director has the authority to manage the day-to-day operational decisions of the grant project including setting timelines, developing meeting agendas, and coordinating project logistics. Working in a collaborative manner, the Project Director will communicate and disseminate information to the collaboration partners. The Project Director will be the point of contact for OVW and the primary contact for the Vera Institute.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION PLAN

Our collaboration respects the unique perspective that each partner brings to the NOLA SEA Project. We will strive to use our differences to gain a richer, deeper understanding of the work we do. If conflicts do arise within our collaborative, we will not allow them to deter or sabotage our commitment to the project. We will instead look at conflict through the lens of opportunity to grow and change as we strive to find common ground.

We expect that we will be able to resolve most conflicts through respectful discussion. Our guidelines for positive conflict resolution include the following:

- We will openly discuss issues that affect our collaboration and empower each Agency Representative to voice their opinion, be listened to, and feel that they are a critical part of the solution.
- We will frequently check-in with each Agency Representative to proactively identify areas of potential disagreement or discomfort and clarify misunderstandings.
- We will take steps to understand any conflicts that arise by defining the problem, agreeing that it is the problem, and identifying the source of the problem.
- We value our relationships with our agency partners and will engage in processes and solutions that support and build those relationships.

If we are unable to resolve a conflict within our group the project director will seek support from the OVW technical assistance provider, Vera Institute of Justice. If the conflict cannot be resolved by Vera, OVW will be engaged in the conversation.

CONFIDENTIALITY & MANDATED REPORTING

Confidentiality

NOLA SEA Project is committed to preserving the confidentiality policies of each organization and therefore the dignity and safety of the clients served. We consider confidentiality to be a key principle underlying our work. We recognize that working collaboratively to meet the goals of the grant, specifically to identify service gaps and needs within each organization, creates a need for members to share potentially sensitive information about their organization with one another. We recognize that our individual agencies operate under different requirements for honoring confidential information from local, state or federal regulations and governing entities. We will therefore respect the boundaries and requirements of each partner agency, as well as to give specific reminders when sharing information that we expect to remain within the collaboration.

Confidentiality of Client Information

Personal, identifying information about individuals served at any of the partner agencies is considered confidential and may only be shared within the collaboration as permitted under the policy and/or law governing the process under which the information was obtained. Any information shared will be for the purpose of advancing the work of the collaboration in creating systems change. Information discussed under these guidelines will not be shared outside of the collaboration without express, written permission by the individual.

The needs assessment survey and report will contain only aggregate data, qualitative and quantitative information, and non-identifying participant quotations. Identifying information gathered during the needs assessment process will not be disseminated outside of the collaboration in any form. Participants will be fully informed of procedures and confidentiality protocols surrounding the needs assessment prior to participation. An individual's participation will not impact her ability to receive future services from partner agencies.

Confidentiality of Partner Agency Information

Our work as a collaboration is focused on ensuring a safe, responsive service delivery system for survivors at our partner agencies. Throughout this process, we will gather and examine a range of information regarding each agency including policies, procedures, and service delivery protocols as a means of enhancing services, safety, and accessibility. Information that could be sensitive within a partner agency will be considered confidential and not shared outside of the collaboration.

Mandated Reporting

The NOLA SEA Project Collaborative holds DV and SA survivor’s autonomy and confidentiality to be two of our key principles underlying our work. We believe that respecting the autonomy and confidentiality of survivors who are Deaf, blind and/or living with I/DD is paramount to ensuring safe, accessible services. The Collaborative members discussed in-depth the reasons why mandated reporting may possibly result in adverse outcomes for survivors of DV and SA who are Deaf, blind and/or living with I/DD. We recognize that aligning our values regarding autonomy and confidentiality and meeting our state reporting requirements may sometimes seem at odds under the legal system in Louisiana.

The Louisiana legal system is unique when compared to the rest of the United States because, unlike the other 49 states that base their interpretation of the law on what is referred to as “common law,” Louisiana adopted its laws from our colonial past as a possession of two civil law countries, Spain and France. Under Louisiana law at LA R.S. 15:1504, anyone who suspects abuse, neglect, exploitation, or extortion of an adult is required to report their suspicions. (An “adult” is defined as “any individual eighteen years of age or older, or an emancipated minor who, due to a physical, mental, or developmental disability or the infirmities of aging, is unable to manage his own resources, carry out the activities of daily living, or protect himself from abuse, neglect, or exploitation.” LA R.S. 15:1503(3)).

LA R.S. 15:1503 defines abuse, neglect, exploitation, and extortion as follows:

“(2) “Abuse” means the infliction of physical or mental injury, or actions which may reasonably be expected to inflict physical injury, on an adult by other parties, including but not limited to such means as sexual abuse, abandonment, isolation, exploitation, or extortion of funds or other things of value.

(7) “Exploitation” means the illegal or improper use or management of the funds, assets, or property of a person who is aged or an adult with a disability, or the use of power of attorney or guardianship of a person who is aged or an adult with a disability for one's own profit or advantage.

(8) “Extortion” is the acquisition of a thing of value from an unwilling or reluctant adult by physical force, intimidation, or abuse of legal or official authority.

(10) “Neglect” means the failure, by a caregiver responsible for an adult's care or by other parties, to provide the proper or necessary support or medical, surgical, or any other care necessary for his well-being. No adult who is being provided treatment in accordance with a recognized religious method of healing in lieu of medical treatment shall for that reason alone be considered to be neglected or abused.”

Louisiana law is so broad that all five members of the collaborative may be considered mandated reporters. As such, we will make mandatory reports of abuse when necessary under the law, except for the Director of Community Advocacy at Disability Rights Louisiana who, as an attorney, is ethically bound to keep confidences if any attorney-client relationship is perceived.

Mandated Reporting (Continued)

While we will make mandatory reports when necessary under the law, we will put both safe guards in place to prevent situations of disclosure to the collaborative and analyze any potential need for a report. To this end, we have defined the following strategies to support autonomy and confidentiality for people who are Deaf, blind and/or living with I/DD who may disclose domestic violence or sexual assault:

1. We will notify people that we are mandated reporters early in conversation, using plain language. (E.g. I can keep anything you say between us, unless it involves you being hurt or hurting someone else.) When a mandatory report is required, we will involve the survivor in reporting to the relevant regulator agency. This can involve facilitating a self -report or making a report with involvement from the survivor;
2. Reports are only necessary if we determine that the individual involved is unable to manage their own resources, carry out the activities of daily living, or protect themselves from abuse, neglect, or exploitation;
3. That the utilization of accommodations and the seeking out of supports, and services for assistance not only should not be used to prove inability, but instead may be evidence that a person is able to manage their own resources, carry out the activities of daily living, and protect themselves from abuse, neglect, or exploitation;
4. Personal, identifying information about individuals served at any of the partner agencies is considered confidential and may only be shared within the collaboration as needed; and
5. Any information shared will be for the purpose of advancing the work of the collaboration in creating systems change

Needs Assessment Considerations

Although the needs assessment does not directly inquire about a client's history of abuse, there is the potential for a disclosure to take place during this phase of the project. Therefore, agreements and planning are necessary to prepare for the response of such disclosures.

- If a disclosure is made, the NOLA SEA Project will follow Louisiana's Mandatory Reporting Requirements.
- A discussion will be held during the needs assessment preparation phase as to what the appropriate process is for conducting the needs assessment to ensure careful consideration of mandatory reporting and confidentiality requirements are met.
- Identifying information will not be gathered during the needs assessment process.
- The needs assessment survey and report will contain only aggregate data, qualitative and quantitative information, and non-identifying participant quotations.
- Participants will be fully informed of procedures and confidentiality protocols surrounding the needs assessment prior to participation.
- An individual's participation will not impact her ability to receive future services from partner agencies.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

NOLA SEA Project recognizes the importance of effective communication in building and sustaining our collaboration. Our communication plan outlines communications processes among members of the collaboration, with our agencies, with outside parties, and with external stakeholders including media contacts. To ensure effective and timely communication, NOLA SEA Project defines the following communication guidelines:

Internal Communications within the Collaborative

Guidelines: All project partners will use open, ethical communications in interactions, discussions, and sharing of information with other members of the collaborative. We will respect the various perspectives that each member brings to our work, and we will each seek to understand perspectives that differ from our own. Information will be presented without any hidden agendas. In an effort to provide transparency, partners will try to understand how a statement might be perceived and address it proactively. Issues that affect the group should be discussed as a group. We will avoid “parking lot” conversations. If a group member has a conflict or issue specifically with another member, the discussion about the issues will be directly between the two individuals.

Confidentiality: We will conduct discussions with an expectation that the information is open and not to be considered confidential. Partners are responsible for notifying the other group members when sensitive information is presented that needs to be considered confidential. As a group, we will decide the parameters for the handling of sensitive information. Each member agrees to use discretion when communicating within their own organizations as well as among the partner agencies.

Meetings: Partners will meet once a week for 1 1/2 hours during the planning phase of the project. The Project Director will facilitate each meeting. Once we are no longer self-isolating due to COVID, meeting locations will rotate among the partner agencies and at the various program sites of each agency. The meeting schedule for subsequent phases will be determined during strategic planning.

Mode of communication: The primary communication between the collaboration members will be via email and Zoom. Alternate communication methods may be used as appropriate. The Project Director will be primarily responsible for disseminating agendas, documents, and other relevant information regarding the project to the group members via email.

Collaborative Member and Partner Agency Communication

Each partner will be responsible for communicating pertinent information about the project to her own agency and for communicating pertinent information about her agency to the collaborative. The communications may take place through a variety of avenues as appropriate for each agency. Such avenues may include meetings with staff members, board members, and other internal stakeholders, interagency informational systems such as internal newsletters or other agency communications methods.

External Communications

- Vera Institute of Justice: The Project Director will be the key contact person for Vera and will communicate on a regular basis with our Vera program associate. Other project partners can also initiate communication with her as needed. On occasion, our Vera program associate will participate in collaborative meetings to ensure that all project partners have opportunities for contact with her.
- Office on Violence Against Women: The Project Director will be the primary contact with OVW.
- Other stakeholders: Our project partners will communicate with additional stakeholders in the community as needed to maintain positive relationships and support for the work of the collaboration. Project partners will use the NOLA SEA Project's Talking Points in communicating information about the project.

Media Plan

- Talking Points: Talking Points have been developed by the collaboration to allow partner agency representatives to respond to requests for information on the NOLA SEA Project. Talking Points will be used by the partner agencies following each agency's individual media protocol. If a situation arises where the set of Talking Points does not apply, the project partners will convene to determine the media response. If a response cannot be agreed upon, the collaboration will forgo the media opportunity.
- Media Contacts: Each agency will use its own method of filtering media requests. Any individual designated as a media contact by a partner agency may speak to the media regarding the NOLA SEA Project following that agency's media protocol. The speaker's comments should be based on the agreed upon Talking Points and the mission, vision, and values of the collaboration.
- Contact Tracking: When media contact is made by a partner agency, information regarding the contact and copies of any resulting articles should be sent to the Project Director. Any noted issues about the contact, such as unknown information or misquotes, should be included as well.

NOLA SEA Project Talking Points

Who

The NOLA SEA Project is a collaboration of four agencies: Lighthouse Louisiana, Disability Rights Louisiana, Metro Centers for Community Advocacy and New Orleans Family Justice Center.

What

Our collaboration is in the planning phase of a project to transform services into a seamless, responsive, and sustainable system that fully meets the needs of people with intellectual or developmental disabilities and/or Deaf or blind people who are survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. The project is funded through a grant from the US Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.

When

The NOLA SEA Project is a three-year initiative that began in October 2019. The planning phase will focus on building our collaboration, identifying needs, and developing strategies for addressing these needs. The second phase will focus on the implementation of identified changes.

Where

Our project is focused on the Greater New Orleans area.

Why

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities and/or Deaf and blind people who are survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault can encounter multiple barriers to accessing services. Organizations that serve individuals facing these concerns must strive to understand and commit to removing these barriers. Safe, responsive, comprehensive services should be available regardless of which agency door a person enters first.

How

Our project partners will examine the knowledge, culture, and environment as well as policies and procedures of each individual partner agency and the service delivery system as a whole to promote accessibility and safety.

WORK PLAN

Deliverable	Action Item	Timeframe
Mission & Vision Collaborative Name Collaborative Logo	Two-day collaborative site visit facilitated by Vera Institute of Justice	April 2020
NOLA SEA Project Charter	Development, Internal Review & Team Approval	April – September 2020
	Submit to Vera for Review & Approval	September 2020
	Submit to OVW for Approval	September 2020
Progress Report	Complete Progress Report and Submit	July 2020
Statement of Focus	Development, Internal Review & Team Approval	September 2020
	Submit to Vera for Review & Approval	October 2020
	Submit to OVW for Approval	October 2020
Needs Assessment Plan	Development, Internal Review & Team Approval	September & December 2020
	Submit to OVW for Approval	December 2020
Progress Report	Complete Progress Report and Submit	January 2021
Needs Assessment	Conduct Needs Assessment	January - March 2021
Performance Indicators	Complete Performance Indicators and Submit	March 2021
Needs Assessment Report	Develop Findings Report, Internal Review & Team Approval	March- April 2021
	Submit to Vera for Review & Approval	April 2021
	Submit to OVW for Approval	April 2021
Strategic Plan	Develop Strategic Plan, Internal Review & Team Approval	May – July 2021
	Submit to Vera for Review & Approval	July 2021
	Submit to OVW for Approval	July 2021
Progress Report	Complete Progress Report and Submit	July 2021
Implementation		August 2021 – September 2022

GLOSSARY OF TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Ableism: Ableism is a set of practices that discriminates against people with intellectual, developmental and other disabilities. Ableism is often associated with types of harm including denial of accessibility, unequal treatment and violence.

Abuse: Within the context of this collaboration, abuse is specifically seen within the context of domestic violence and sexual assault. The Collaboration has agreed to use the Louisiana Revised Statute 15:1503 definition for abuse. It defines abuse as, "the infliction of physical or mental injury, or actions which may reasonably be expected to inflict physical injury, on an adult by other parties, including but not limited to such means as sexual abuse, abandonment, isolation, exploitation, or extortion of funds or other things of value." LA R.S. 15:1503(2).

Accessibility: People with disabilities and/or Deaf survivors can promptly obtain services for sexual assault, sexual violence, and intimate partner violence when these services are needed. Service providers are approachable and able to effectively address SA, SV, and IPV survivors through information, referrals or direct services regardless of their intellectual and developmental disability, as well as Deaf, hard of hearing, or blind.

Accommodations: Accommodations are actions taken to ensure that services are responsive to a person's needs in order to allow for equal access.

American with Disabilities Act (ADA): a federal civil rights law, enacted in 1990, that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities and places the responsibility for access provision on places of public accommodation, such as our collaboration partners.

American Sign Language: The Collaboration has agreed to use the National Association of the Deaf's definition of American Sign Language (ASL), which states: "American Sign Language is a visual language. With signing, the brain processes linguistic information through the eyes. The shape, placement, and movement of the hands, as well as facial expressions and body movements, all play important parts in conveying information. Sign language is not a universal language - each country has its own sign language, and regions have dialects, much like the many languages spoken all over the world. Like any spoken language, ASL is a language with its own unique rules of grammar and syntax. Like all languages, ASL is a living language that grows and changes over time."

Assistive Technology/Device: Assisted Technology/Device is any item or piece of equipment used to assist an individual in performing a particular task or function.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Audism: Audism is a form of discrimination, prejudice, or a general unwillingness to accommodate individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or late deafened.

Barrier: A tangible or intangible obstacle that impedes progress or achievement of an objective

1. Physical barriers interfere or impede a person from accessing the particular location or service.
2. Communication barriers deter a person from accessing information in a usable format.
3. Attitudinal barriers are inaccurate beliefs or perceptions about a person's ability.
4. Systemic barriers occur when practices of an organization discriminate individuals by "screening them out" from participation.

Blind: Total blindness is a total loss of vision. It is the complete lack of light perception and form perception, and is recorded as no light perception (NLP). The terms light perception and form perception describe the ability to perceive the difference between light and dark, or daylight and nighttime. A person can have severely reduced vision and still be able to determine the difference between light and dark, or the general direction of a light source.

Throughout this document, the term blind is used as an umbrella term to also include low vision and legal blindness. Low vision impairment affects an individual's Activities of Daily Living (ADL) performance but allows some usable vision. Legal blindness is a definition used by the United States government to determine eligibility for vocational training, rehabilitation, schooling, disability benefits, low vision devices, and tax exempt programs. Legal blindness is determined by a 20/200 visual acuity measurement and a visual field (the total area an individual can see without moving the eyes from side to side) of 20 degrees or less (also called tunnel vision) in the better-seeing eye.

Braille: a tactile system of communication in which characters are represented by raised dots that can be identified by fingertips.

Caregiver: A person who regularly assists another person in the performance of their daily activities.

CODA: An acronym for "child of a deaf adult" and typically refers to a hearing child(ren) born to one or more deaf adults.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Collaboration/Collaborative Team: this is the core group responsible for developing and approving deliverables, overseeing changes at the founding organizations, and adhering to the parameters set forth in the award from OVW.

Confidentiality: The obligation or agreement to keep information private.

Cultural Humility: the practice and process by which individuals are able to increase their understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and similarities within, amongst, and between groups to enhance diverse understandings and intersections. This includes awareness of systemic bias and belief systems and how these impact and can work to oppress survivors, particularly for individuals who have intersecting identities that have been historically marginalized.

Deaf (D): Individuals that have shared social beliefs, behaviors, art, literary traditions, history, values and/or shared institutions of communities that are affected by deafness, and who use sign language as the main means of communication. Deaf individuals have their own sense of identity and resultant actions. As with all social groups that a person chooses to belong to, a person is a member of the Deaf community if that person identifies themselves as a member of the Deaf community, and other members accept that person as a part of the community. Throughout this document, the term Deaf is used as an umbrella term to also include people who are hard of hearing and Deafblind.

deaf (d): The term deaf (written with a lowercase “d”) refers to a physical condition characterized by a relative lack of hearing ability or used for individuals who have hearing loss and/or are hard of hearing. These individuals identify themselves mostly with the hearing community and are not culturally deaf.

Disability: The World Health Organization (WHO) defines disability by stating that “a disability is not something that a person has but, instead, something that occurs outside of the person - the person has a functional limitation. Disability occurs in the interaction between a person, his or her functional ability, and the environment. A person’s environment can be the physical environment, communication environment, information environment, and social and policy environment. It’s the intersection between disability and the environment that needs to be accommodated.” We acknowledge, though, that for the purposes of state and federal laws regarding the right of people with disabilities, lawmakers have established disability definitions and requirements that focus instead on whether a person is seen to have impairments that limit major life activities. After discussing this, and determining that the WHO definition is more in line with our mission, the NOLA SEA Project will use the following definition: Disability is the intersection of abilities and the many types of environments with which an individual interacts. An individual is not disabled, but experiences a disability when proper accommodations are not in place.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Domestic Violence: The OVW defines domestic violence as “a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.”

While many organizations include all types of family and household violence under this definition, for the sake of this multidisciplinary collaboration, the NOLA SEA Project collaborative defines domestic violence only between partners who have/had a marriage and/or other emotionally intimate or dating relationship.

Empowerment: the process by which people, organizations, or groups who are powerless or marginalized: (a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context, (b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives, (c) which they exercise, (d) without infringing on the rights of others, and (e) which coincides with actively supporting the empowerment of other in their community.

Hard of Hearing (HH): refers to individuals who have some degree of hearing loss ranging from mild to profound. This may be because they were born with a hearing loss or they may have lost some of their hearing later in life. Many hard of hearing people continue to rely on their spoken (or written) language as their primary mode of communication.

Human Rights: According to the United Nations, Human Rights are, “rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible.” (OHCHR, 1948).

Identity First Language: Identity first language refers to the diagnosis first, for example autistic, blind, hard-of-hearing. There are a number of individuals with disabilities who prefer identity-first language and are offended by person-first language. Some people prefer to refer to themselves as autistic. They feel that their diagnosis is a strength and an inherent trait, therefore it does define them in a lot of ways. They find the term “person with autism” offensive because they feel it infers the diagnosis is a negative thing and something that needs to be fixed or cured but they don’t see their diagnosis that way. Again, we will observe, listen, ask (when appropriate), and respect an individual’s preference for how they prefer to be addressed.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Intellectual and Developmental Disability: The Collaboration uses the definition established by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, which states, “intellectual disability is one type of a larger universe of many types of developmental disabilities. Developmental disabilities are defined as severe chronic disabilities that can be cognitive or physical or both. Intellectual disability encompasses the ‘cognitive’ part of this definition that is a disability that is broadly related to thought processes. Because intellectual and other developmental disabilities often co-occur, intellectual disability professionals often work with people who have both types of disabilities.”

Large Print: Large print is a type size, typically 16 to 18 point, used to make print more visible/accessible for people with low vision.

Neglect: The Collaboration uses the definition established by the State of Louisiana as defined in LA R.S. 15:1503, defining neglect as, “the failure, by a caregiver responsible for an adult’s care or by other parties, to provide the proper or necessary support or medical, surgical, or any other care necessary for his well-being.”

Person-Centered Services: Recognition of an individual’s preferences and needs during all components of service planning, which gives individuals the power to use resources in ways that they decide what makes sense in their lives.

People-First Language: People-first language is just what the name implies: the person is listed or mentioned before the disability. The NOLA SEA Project prefers to use people-first language as an acknowledgement that the disability is just one part of a person, not their only defining feature. People-first language emphasizes the individual as human first, with the disability listed second. However, the NOLA SEA Project recognizes that some individuals with disabilities have their own preference for how their disability is discussed. While we will generally use people-first language in our communications, we will observe, listen, ask (when appropriate), and respect an individual’s preference for how they prefer to be addressed.

Safety: protection against physical, emotional, or psychological harm or other events which threaten the well-being of an individual. Each survivor will have their own perspective on what safety means for their situation.

Safety Plan: A detailed strategy to address safety concerns and reduce the risks of harm.

Service Animal: A Service Animal is an animal that is specifically trained to perform tasks to assist people with disabilities.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Sexual Assault: The Collaboration has agreed to use the definition established by the United States Department of Justice, which is, “any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient.” Throughout this document, the term Sexual Assault (SA) is used as an umbrella term to also include survivors of sexual violence.

Sighted Guide: A process for providing means of assisting a blind person to navigate unfamiliar situations. A person who is sighted can offer a person who is blind or low vision their assistance, but should never assume someone requires help. Additionally, a sighted person should not grab or tug on a person who is blind.

Survivor: a person who has lived through an episode or series of episodes of violence/abuse and continues to live, prosper, or remain functional. The word “survivor” is considered to be an empowering term preferred by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

Systems Change: a process of altering social systems and institutions in significant and sustainable ways through changes in infrastructure or culture, in an effort to correct deficits, barriers, or gaps in service.

Trauma: trauma occurs when an individual experiences or perceives an enormous sense of helplessness and physical threat that leads to the interruption of standard or expected development. People also experience psychological trauma due to episodic events that occur over extended periods of time. Traumatic experiences continue to intrude into people’s lives well beyond the time usually required for restabilization after a crisis event. The general goal of treatment for trauma is to overcome the trauma by coping with the memories in a way that does not force clients to repeatedly re-experience the trauma.

Trauma-Informed Care: is a strengths-based approach to treatment grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

White Cane: A device people who are blind or low vision use to collect information about their physical space. A white cane is an assistive mobility device which requires specialized training to use. As such, a white cane should not be referred to as a “stick.”