

Describing Change & Success: Survivors of Domestic Violence

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GOALS

- ▶ Understand how survivors of domestic violence describe success compared to our (worker's) expectations
- ▶ Recognize how identifying individual challenges/assets and formal/informal networks, resources and services informs and strengthens our work
- ▶ Explore how housing families experiencing domestic violence differs from housing other homeless families
- ▶ Enhance knowledge of confidentiality laws related to survivors of domestic violence

Starting with strengths... Leads to possibilities

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▶ *How Do Survivors Define Success? A New Project To Address An Overlooked Question*

- Anna Melbin
- Audrey Jordan
- Katya Fels Smyth

A report based on a multi-year project conducted in California from 2012–2014

▶ The Full Frame Initiative
changing systems, changing lives

The Full Frame's mission is to change systems so that people and communities experiencing poverty, violence and trauma have the tools, supports and resources they need to thrive

www.fullframeinitiative.org

What Full Frame Did

Two information collection and analysis phases:

- > 150 survivors
- > 185 practitioners
- 46 workshops

- ▶ Asked survivors
 - Identify a single moment where you felt success in your life
- ▶ Survivor examples
 - Connection with family members, friends and other informal networks
 - Something that created value and worth for themselves and/or others
 - Moments characterized by calm, predictability

Phase I

- ▶ Asked workers
 - Identify a single moment where they felt a survivor they had worked with was successful
- ▶ Worker examples
 - Helping survivors transform out of the role of victim with emphasis on changes in survivors' perspectives about the abusive relationship
 - Focus on services

Phase 1

- ▶ Survivor's moments of achievement seldom related to leaving or making changes in the abusive relationship
- ▶ 7% of all survivors' moments of success included changing or leaving the abusive relationship

- ▶ Workers' moments of achievement primarily focused on domestic violence being the central focus of their work with the survivor
- ▶ 39% of workers' moments of survivor success involved separation

Overall Findings

Overall Findings

Findings

- Workers see and understand that:
 - Survivors have a range of challenges and assets
 - Domestic violence is rarely the survivors' most critical or primary issue

Findings

- Workers believe that:
 - There are expectations that domestic violence be the focus of their work
 - Services and connections to professionals are the way to safety and wellbeing
 - The crisis focus and nature of their work emphasizes problems, deficits and what is not working rather than focusing on strengths, assets, and what is going well

Findings

- Workers recognize that:
 - Bringing attention and resources to the issue of domestic violence and helping survivors become safe is vital work
 - It is not, in and of itself, complete

Recommendations

- Create measures of success based on survivor defined success
 - Convene time limited, action oriented task force of funders, direct service workers, and survivors to translate findings into shared definitions and program measures of success
 - Adapt key grants and related reporting requirements to reflect the new definitions and measures, and corresponding program activities

Recommendations

- Equip the field with tools and skills to learn from positive experiences that go well
- Use lessons to strengthen practice
 - Develop and launch a Train-the-Trainer Institute with accompanying technical assistance and coaching based on the project's methodology and other techniques designed to recognize and document the impact of moments of personal success and accomplishment

Recommendations

- Re-tool traditional program services to explicitly support survivors in enhancing and capitalizing on their informal social connections and community resources
 - *Provide skill development, training and flexible or reallocated funding to equip the field to make the shift so that formal services are relied on only when needed and in support of, not replacing, survivors' own assets and efforts*

Homelessness and Intimate Partner Violence

- ▶ Homeless women are not more likely to be victims of domestic violence
- ▶ Rather, experiencing domestic violence or sexual assault often forces women and children into homelessness
- ▶ Abusers commonly sabotage a victim's economic stability
- ▶ Victims are staying longer in emergency domestic violence shelters as long term housing options become scarcer

Domestic Violence Survivors Confidentiality

- ▶ Victims of domestic violence are at greater risk of homicide at the point of separation or after leaving their violent partner
- ▶ 87% of the US population have characteristics that likely make them unique based upon a 5 digit ZIP code, gender and date of birth
- ▶ Victims must be able to flee without being vulnerable to tracking by an abusive partner

Domestic Violence Survivors Confidentiality

- ▶ The Violence Against Women Act protects the confidentiality of survivors by requiring:
 - That survivors be notified what is happening with their information and who has access to it
 - Written releases are required if personal information is to be shared outside of the confidential relationship
 - Agencies must determine if there is another way to meet survivor needs without releasing confidential information

Domestic Violence Survivors Confidentiality

- ▶ Consent to release confidential information must be:
 - Informed
 - Written
 - Reasonably time limited
 - Signing a release cannot be a condition of service nor can consent be presumed because a survivor chooses to use services

THANK-YOU!

- For more information, contact your local domestic and/or sexual violence agency

michigan.gov/domesticviolence

- Michigan's Resource Directory
- Interactive Map Selector

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