

# COMMUNITY GAP INTERVIEWS

Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Prevention

City of Rockford, Illinois

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## Key Terminology

### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions, or threats of actions, that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.

### HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The Polaris Project explains that human trafficking occurs when a trafficker/pimp uses force, fraud or coercion to cause a commercial sex act with an adult or causes a minor to commit a commercial sex act, whether or not force, fraud or coercion is involved.

### SURVIVOR

Any person who is experiencing or has experienced domestic violence or human trafficking. (As developed and used by Rockford Alliance against Sexual Exploitation)

### SURVIVOR CENTERED APPROACH

The practice of integrating survivor lived experiences into the development of policies, practices and procedures.

### TRAUMA INFORMED APPROACH

An approach is trauma informed when it has been developed from the perspective of realizing the impact that exposure to violence and trauma have on a person's physical, psychological and emotional development and responds with aid supporting the person's recovery from the adverse impact of trauma.

### VICTIM

A person who was killed by an act or result of domestic violence or human trafficking. Please note, the term "victim" is also often used in law enforcement and the criminal justice system to describe an individual currently living in a human trafficking or domestic violence situation.

# Introduction

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The purpose of the Mayor's Office of Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Prevention is to create an effective strategic response to domestic violence and human trafficking under the areas of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships.

This document is the result of an effort to gain an understanding of the barriers and gaps preventing a complete community response to domestic violence and human trafficking and identify where our community is effectively addressing the continuum of these problems. **Over the course of ten months, interviews were conducted with over two hundred individuals representing stakeholders, service providers, law enforcement, faith leaders, medical personnel, first responders, court personnel, legal aid providers, educators, community members and survivors.**

Specifically, this document represents the findings from interviews with the following sources:

- Over 100 survivors through one on one interviews, survivor focus groups and completed survivor surveys;
  - Of the survivors asked, 100% supported services being offered in one location, such as a Family Justice Center Model;
  - The survivors surveyed spanned multiple ethnic groups, and the vast majority were comprised of Caucasians. Survivors ranged in reported age at the time of their abuse from approximately four to fifty. We feel it necessary to qualify this factor with "approximately," as some survivors cannot clearly remember at exactly what age the abuse occurred. This is their best recollection, and we report the same here.
- Ten parents of survivors;
- Over one hundred community stakeholders who work directly or interact with portions of the system's response to domestic and sexual violence;
- Former offenders; and
- Representatives from over 40 community agencies.

"Barriers" and "gaps" were defined as any idea, process, response or thing that posed an obstacle to the following: (1) the prevention of domestic violence or human trafficking; (2) the protection of survivors and their children in any stage of exiting or attempting to exit a domestic violence relationship or human trafficking situation; (3) the prosecution of these crimes; and (4) the collaboration of all necessary partners to address these issues and support survivors.

Below are the areas identified and articulated as barriers to a community mandate against domestic violence and human trafficking. **In order to create a community free from these crimes, all components of these crimes must be addressed. Specifically, necessary partners must be identified and convened to work towards defining measurable, trauma informed, survivor centered outcomes.** This document will inform the work of a task force which will drive solutions to the identified gaps.

We owe an immense gratitude to the community stakeholders who participated in brave, honest, open conversations that resulted in this document. Their self-analysis and willingness to be vulnerable through participating in open, difficult reviews of the issues facing our community and the areas for improvement in their work overwhelmed us. What encouraged us was their strong commitment to fixing our issues. What we learned from them is that this community is ready and completely capable of embarking on this journey to create an aware, effective, survivor centered and trauma informed response to family and sexual violence.

We have done tremendous work and undoubtedly saved lives. We move into a space now where we are understanding more about the reach of domestic and sexual violence in our community, from our homes, into our schools, onto our streets, hospitals, courtrooms, juvenile justice system, offices and boardrooms. Throughout the course of these interviews and in community forums and meetings across the city, over and over again, people echoed the understanding that as goes the safety of our homes, so goes our community. We can and will do better, guided by survivors.

**Prevention** Our ultimate goal is to stop domestic violence and human trafficking. Efforts in this area will look to increase awareness and community engagement.

<p><b>Identification of Vulnerable Children</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need systematic identification of children exposed to trauma and subsequent plan to provide support to interrupt the trauma. How many children have indicators of future risk for violence or susceptibility to trafficking? What systems support them? What systems need to be built to support them?</li> <li>• ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and Resiliency measurements must be administered together.</li> <li>• Develop a response to prevent and interrupt cycles of violence in family units. This must include the understanding of the role of generational poverty and economic instability, as well as historical trauma, and the impact of these factors on short and long term outcomes which form children.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community Awareness and Engagement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of shared language. Terms and components of domestic violence, human trafficking, trauma informed and survivor centered must be clearly understood to guide discussion and work.</li> <li>• Need education to correct misconceptions about domestic violence and the effects on children witnesses. Misconceptions about the issue include the following: domestic violence occurs more in lower socio-economic classes; it is caused by addiction, mental illness or unemployment; it is easy to avoid and leave a domestic violence situation; it only involves physical violence; and it's a private issue.</li> <li>• Need to correct misconceptions about human trafficking. Misconceptions about this crime include the following: it only occurs through force; it requires the transportation across borders; and, it is easy to leave a trafficking situation where physical restraint is not involved.</li> <li>• Lack of full community awareness of the prevalence of domestic violence and human trafficking, the effect of domestic violence on children, and the nexus between domestic violence and the root cause of all violent crime in our community.</li> <li>• Need education directed at and accessible to parents.</li> <li>• Disconnected / limited violence prevention efforts involving young men. We must meet young people where they are with credible mentors and voices and ask them what they need so that they may inform the systems of support which must be created.</li> <li>• Need inclusion of minority voices and open discussion of the relationship between racism and barriers to survivors of color.</li> <li>• Need specific education geared toward disabled, deaf, hard of hearing community and additional barriers this population faces.</li> <li>• Survivors need community support and for the community to believe them – survivors feel as though they have to convince people they are hurt.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Schools</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underdeveloped / incomplete school response to teen dating violence along the entire domestic violence continuum.</li> <li>• Schools need an effective, trauma informed, survivor centered Teen Dating Violence Policy which is developed with experts and based upon national best practice models.</li> <li>• Must incorporate age appropriate curriculum regarding escalation of relationship/dating violence. Boys and girls need consistent, repetitive, earlier education on healthy relationships. Need consistent awareness and prevention efforts in schools, including age appropriate curriculums on healthy relationships, sexual abuse, and trafficking dangers.</li> <li>• Lack of integration of trauma measurements with other ongoing measurements very early to identify and respond to children with social/emotional issues.</li> <li>• Teachers/staff may recognize trauma indicators but lack protocol to respond.</li> <li>• Need protocol in schools to address and honor Orders of Protection and transfer requests based upon Orders of Protection, as well as protocols to make students and parents aware of these rights.</li> <li>• Need training on identifying early warning signs of trauma, vulnerability and domestic violence in schools.</li> </ul>

**Protection** Our efforts under protection will focus on ways to identify and help those at highest risk and support survivors beyond the emergency and throughout their entire healing process.

<p><b>Vulnerable Children</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a process to identify vulnerable children and implement preventive practices to reduce the chances of future criminal activity or victimization between becoming vulnerable and the grooming process of a predator.</li> <li>• Once trauma is identified in children, we need support in place to help parents.</li> <li>• Need an intentional, short, mid and long term response to runaways, juvenile offenders, foster care children, homeless, traumatized kids, etc. to interrupt trauma and prevent future victimization and criminal activity. This may require navigators for children. Need long term teams assembled around children who experience violence to continue intervention and measure trauma and resiliency. Need agency data sharing to do this.</li> <li>• Need accessible pediatric mental health services integrated into responses to children.</li> <li>• Need a pathway for direct communication with kids to ask what they need and youth advisory councils of all demographics.</li> <li>• Need established trauma training criteria and shared language. Do we need to explore the development of state certifications to receive designation of “trauma informed?”</li> <li>• Need an understanding of how many kids in school are in homes with DV. How many kids ages 5-9 are identified in police reports?</li> <li>• We must normalize the fact that trauma exists. Normalize the need for everyone to receive assessment to determine trauma and work to increase resiliency.</li> <li>• Need services and therapy once trauma scores are measured.</li> <li>• Need to implement trauma measurements with other ongoing measurements very early, possibly during early education enrollment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Accessibility for All</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need all materials in public offices in English, Spanish, Arabic, and, ideally, Vietnamese.</li> <li>• Response to underserved and under engaged communities must include the conversation and premise that these populations face additional barriers because of language access, immigration issues, disabilities, racism, sexism, etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Short, Mid, Long-Term Survivor Support</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need a well marketed survivor network and trauma informed survivor support group with varying hours and days, led by persons trained in trauma practices and domestic violence counseling.</li> <li>• Need more affordable, safe, supportive, permanent and transitional housing where survivors can continue to receive navigation assistance and wrap around services.</li> <li>• Need acceptable emergency housing with trauma informed policies and practices which do not mimic abuser tactics of power and control. Survivors will not go to places where they feel re-victimized.</li> <li>• Need affordable or free legal representation for survivors in OPs, divorce, family court, erroneous criminal charges, understanding victim rights, etc.</li> <li>• Need a strong network of counselors, services and non-residential case managers/navigators.</li> <li>• Need consistent enforcement of trauma informed rules and regulations in shelters.</li> <li>• Response and support to survivors who are not in shelter, including agency partnerships and communication, must be strengthened.</li> <li>• Accessibility must be available through all service providers. Agencies and employees must communicate in a way all populations understand and will be understood.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need affordable, accessible housing for disabled survivors leaving shelter.</li> <li>• Residents in shelter must immediately receive referrals to and information on how to access essential services, i.e., link, cash benefits, housing assistance, etc. Navigation of the criminal, civil and services systems must be provided.</li> <li>• Need transportation to agencies to apply for assistance and child care at the shelter while these applications are made. Alternatively, there is a need for a destination where all survivor support services can be accessed in one location.</li> <li>• Need support for long term care and healing. Mental health and processing trauma should be an urgent priority, and insurance will often not cover costs.</li> <li>• Need more emergency housing.</li> <li>• Community response must reflect the abuse is a serious thing.</li> <li>• Community and systems response must not question survivor actions/behaviors. Do not judge them and imply the survivor “deserved” this. Instead, question the offender’s acts.</li> <li>• Need education and support for parents and family members of survivors.</li> <li>• Survivors need support getting over shame, fear and embarrassment.</li> <li>• Need to implement best practice where survivors can tell their story as few times as possible, rather than having to tell the story over and over to several agencies.</li> <li>• When a petitioner and respondent must be in the same court room for any court business, waiting areas must be safe, separate spaces rather than shared spaces with petitioners and respondents, providing the abuser an opportunity to access the survivor and attempt to communicate with and intimidate her or him.</li> <li>• Need affordable, accessible, quality child care.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Medical Community Response</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need an aware, trauma informed medical response to survivors only going to the hospital or doctor due to injuries, where police and the courts are not involved.</li> <li>• Need EMTs, emergency room and clinic staff trained on identifying trafficking, understanding trauma responses and implementation of a protocol in the event a survivor is identified.</li> <li>• Need EMTs, emergency room and clinic staff trained on identifying strangulation and developing protocols to ensure a survivor understands the lethal danger he or she is in if they have been strangled by an intimate partner. This protocol must include ensuring the survivor is aware of the risks of not seeking medical attention and follow up care.</li> <li>• Providers must understand effects of trauma on body and behavior.</li> <li>• All hospitals must ensure Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) conduct exams on survivors.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Disabled Community</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20% of the United States population is disabled – 1 in 5 people, and the response to this population is underdeveloped, at best. Need to address general barriers to their seeking and receiving help before we get to the domestic violence and human trafficking issues.</li> <li>• DV involves a fear of reporting, and this is enhanced by the fact that the abuser can be their personal care giver. Fear becomes, “Do I end up in a nursing home, or do I just deal with what’s going on?” Outreach and services must be created to overcome these additional barriers.</li> <li>• If the abuser is the able bodied partner, the fear is who else will want me? Reasons for staying quiet include fear of losing services, support, and ending up in nursing home. Awareness, prevention and intervention efforts must be developed with this additional barrier in mind.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's important for the places serving to communicate in a way all will understand and will be understood. Ensure a deaf/hard of hearing person can communicate and a disabled person can get around freely. Do not just expect them to write or read lips.</li> <li>• All responses to DV and HT must have trained staff on how to properly and effectively address abuse suffered by someone with an intellectual disability. They must know the right questions to ask.</li> <li>• Need awareness and education campaigns specific to this community.</li> <li>• Need shared language. For instance, use person first language, such as "She has autism," not, "She's an autistic girl," and not "special needs. There's nothing special about the needs." Need to establish trust with the deaf community, which has a lack of trust of hearing people.</li> <li>• Reasonable accommodation statement should be in every notice. Ask for two weeks' notice. Consider having one anyway, even if no one calls.</li> <li>• Need affordable, accessible housing for disabled survivors leaving shelter.</li> </ul>
<b>DCFS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All DCFS staff and policy makers must be trained in trauma informed, survivor centered principles.</li> <li>• There must be consistent implementation of protocols and screenings for youth at risk for trafficking.</li> <li>• Need systematic support and resources for child survivors.</li> <li>• Need to work to stop practice and/or dispel notion that DCFS will remove children in all domestic violence situations. Survivors fear calling police because perception is DCFS will get involved and take kids. This fear is particularly prevalent in communities of color.</li> <li>• Need a uniform response from DCFS that indicates a fundamental understanding of the dynamics of power and control and the methods abusers use to manipulate the system.</li> </ul>
<b>General</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to develop and strengthen a response to elder abuse, which is underdeveloped. Areas of elder abuse and domestic violence are often co-mingled, creating a challenge in seeing domestic violence in elder abuse.</li> <li>• Need to ensure first responders understand what they are seeing and the dynamics of the crime at scenes and document it properly.</li> <li>• Need to educate law enforcement that children are ALL victims, not criminals. They need to be identified early and provided support.</li> </ul>
<b>Courts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survivors who seek help preparing an Order of Protection at the Law Library in the Winnebago County Courthouse should be referred to the Domestic Violence Assistance Center at the courthouse, unless they are not eligible to receive guidance there.</li> <li>• Courthouse security should all receive trauma informed training on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Security should regularly patrol the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the courthouse where family law cases are heard.</li> <li>• The prohibition of purses in the courthouse disadvantages women, especially those without a car to return their purse to.</li> </ul>

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**Prosecution** The criminal justice system – police, courts and corrections - plays a vital role in dealing with both survivors and abusers. The experience both have with the system will help shape their futures.

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**Response of  
Criminal  
Justice  
System**

- Need juvenile domestic violence offender intervention and counseling services.
- Need a robust, intentional, evidence based prosecution of DV and HT.
- Need development of practices and policies that build and prosecute domestic violence and human trafficking cases without the involvement of the survivor.
- Need to assist courts, prosecutors, and law enforcement through ongoing, regular training which builds upon training already completed to date in gaining a complete understanding of abuser tactics and how they manipulate officials who are supposed to be holding them accountable.
- Local law enforcement must develop written policies and procedures guiding their response in interactions with persons with potential immigration status issues.
- A law enforcement protocol must be developed by law enforcement and local advocates to address U Visa and T Visa policies. These visas specifically protect undocumented survivors of human trafficking and domestic violence.
- Need consistency in county wide application of U Visas which ensures consistent protocol and application and that the protocol is public so that persons who may be eligible to avail themselves to the protection of the Visas may be informed of the process.
- Need to explore adoption of region wide protocol allowing interviews of children thirteen and older to be recorded at the Child Advocacy Center, which is a trauma informed practice.
- Need to ensure Winnebago County Sheriff's Police are coding all DV related incidents as DV. Any crime between intimate partners or family members with an element of power and control should be coded as DV.
- Law enforcement must discontinue dual arrests practices, and the State's Attorney's Office must ensure survivors are not being prosecuted as a result of manipulation and abuse of the system by perpetrators.
- Need a clear process, line of communication and guidance for survivors interacting with the State's Attorney's Office, police and courts. Services from these systems are often difficult to understand and access.
- Need consistent, clear communication from the criminal justice system to survivors and families regarding what is happening in the case.
- Need easily accessible, clear statistics from the criminal justice system on the rates and outcomes of the prosecution of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking related offenses.
- Advocates should be present to sit with survivors during questioning, court appearances and all aspects of interaction with the criminal justice system.
- Need all domestic violence and human trafficking cases assigned to domestic violence, trafficking and trauma informed trained prosecutors and for these cases to be heard in front of trained, domestic violence and human trafficking educated court personnel.
- Need Pre-Trial staff to understand and recognize the dynamics and dangers of domestic violence perpetrators and for the robust use of the Domestic Violence Screening Instrument – Revised (DVSI-R).
- Need to understand why the Partner Abuse Intervention Program (PAIP) is not ordered at pre-trial and discuss whether it should be.
- Need to ensure abusers are not successfully manipulating Family Court and Supervised Visitation Systems. This is not just a Rockford or Winnebago County issue. ICJIA recently called together a meeting statewide to discuss the issue, and the Center For Court Innovation held a roundtable discussion on this very topic because this is a problem nationwide. Programs and courts all over

	<p>the country are grappling with how to deal with abusers manipulating Supervised Visitation Systems. This discussion should include the perception that mothers are being held to a higher standard than fathers by the system, which includes Courts, GALs, and DCFS. Specifically, the belief is that mothers, on the recommendation of GALs and DCFS, are being ordered to supervised visitation under the same circumstances where fathers are only receiving court ordered supervised exchange. For instance, a mother with substance abuse issues or who is in a new relationship with someone who is abusing her is ordered to supervise <i>visits</i>. A father with substance abuse issues or in a new relationship with someone he is abusing is being ordered to supervised <i>exchange</i>. Children’s Safe Harbor is overwhelmed and not set up to protect survivors of DV ordered to supervised visits, and they are getting close to a 50/50 ratio of supervised visitation for moms and dads, where historically this ratio is 1 to 10. This increase has occurred over the last 8 months. To be clear, this gap highlights a perceived gap in the <i>court system</i> which merits further discussion with court system partners to gain a full understanding of the facts and circumstances surrounding this gap. Some of this discrepancy is due to the offending parent’s successful use of power and control post separation via the court system. Once abusers who use violence no longer have access to the victim physically, they will use children, courts, attorneys, service agencies, friends, family etc. to continue the cycle. They will often collude with these systems and are successful at looking like the “together parent,” compared to the traumatized victim.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children’s Safe Harbor should be utilized by all families who need their services, and efforts to expand their capacity should be explored.</li> <li>• Need an aware and effective criminal justice repose to predominant aggressor dynamics.</li> <li>• There must be a swift, consistent response to first offenders that includes the message that domestic violence and human trafficking will not be tolerated.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Law Enforcement/ First Responder Response</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need all law enforcement trained and implementing trauma informed strategies when interacting with domestic violence or human trafficking survivors.</li> <li>• Law enforcement must use shared, survivor centered language in interacting with domestic violence, human trafficking or sexual assault survivors. Need a multi-agency law enforcement strategic response to human trafficking.</li> <li>• Need law enforcement trained on identifying strangulation and developing protocols to ensure a survivor understands the lethal danger he or she is in if they have been strangled by an intimate partner.</li> <li>• Every police officer should be trained on the Trust Act and their agency protocol.</li> <li>• All persons who interact with domestic violence and human trafficking survivors must be trained in trauma informed practices and held accountable for implementation and administration of such practices when interacting with and building a response to survivors and their families.</li> <li>• Need establishment of a multi-disciplinary Domestic Violence Lethality Review Team which agrees to share information and to assemble immediately upon the death of a domestic violence or human trafficking homicide victim.</li> <li>• Police victim’s rights forms must be in languages represented in the community.</li> <li>• Need a shared system of communication the Rockford Fire Department can access at a call to determine if they are responding to a location with frequent domestic violence police calls or potential site for human trafficking.</li> <li>• Need bilingual speakers and diverse language accessibility at each location where someone may file a police report.</li> <li>• Missing statewide domestic violence and human trafficking training in the police academy.</li> <li>• Domestic Violence training for police must be on reoccurring, annual basis.</li> </ul>

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- All components and employees of the criminal justice system must develop a fundamental understanding of “Coercion.” This is compliance by a survivor to avoid consequences (be without food, drugs, shelter, care for a child, etc.), but this is confusing because it looks like consent. Education is greatly needed for all sections of the criminal justice system and EMTs.
  - Need to provide law enforcement with support in the face of repeat calls and repeat victimization.
  - Need to develop a process for law enforcement patrol officers to receive results of case so they are aware of the end results of their involvement and have an opportunity to learn from the cases.
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**Partnerships** To address these issues, our entire community must come together and actively participate in building a trauma informed, survivor centered community response to prevent domestic violence and human trafficking, protect survivors and their children and support the development of partnerships to ensure closing of gaps and implementation of best practices.

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- Currently, there is no Human Trafficking community task force and medical focused committee. Need special team to develop shared communication, strategized disruption, human services, navigators, CSOs, etc.
  - Need to identify and provide space for young male role models.
  - Need a grassroots men’s movement to be voices and leaders in this work.
  - Develop partnership for training and survivor informed eviction practices in housing.
  - Need to identify agencies and partners addressing any of the identified gaps.
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**Survivor Perspectives** The information below was gathered through one on one interviews, survivor focus groups, and conversations with survivors who sought out our office. As we are guided by their quoted words and perspectives, we believe strongly that they should not be altered or amended.

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- Having resources all under one roof is essential– leg work is tough.
- Need early education on manipulation and emotional abuse. “I let that stuff slide in the beginning because I didn’t understand.” Need to teach what a healthy relationship is, healthy boundaries. “Now I see it everywhere.”
- Trying to get help is obstacle after obstacle. Working two jobs, trying to have food and shelter for her children, and the process for help was too much.
- Her wish list is a good job, transportation, and counseling. “Give me hope.”
- “We need all of the help we need in one location.”
- “I didn’t go to the police – felt it was my fault and like he would convince police to arrest me. I was embarrassed. I moved all over the country with him – he had friends who would have vouched for him.”
- People need to do a better job at understanding and responding to cries for help. She told a doctor – he told her to try to be a better home keeper. People in the medical community and clergy need to respond with help – not sugar coat it. “If I would have stayed, I’d be dead.”
- Abuse occurred when she was 19-21. She never told her parents. Not until the “way end.” Mom had always wanted her to leave him – never liked him. She didn’t want to hear, “I told you so.”

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## Survivor Perspectives (continued)

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- "I'm still trying to get counseling, but doctors just want to medicate me." Mental health and processing trauma should be an urgent priority. Insurance will not cover.
- There is a gap in services for long term care and healing. "I need help acknowledging it happened, help healing and not have it still control me years after I have left."
- Teach about the escalation of the violence early. Boys and girls need early education on healthy relationships. "They need to know the signs early – they told me about hitting not being ok – we are taught that. No one told me calling me a bitch was going to lead to so much more."
- All services should be in one location.
- One survivor is now watching a loved one in an abusive situation and feels helpless to respond or tell them where to go for help.
  - "Loved ones of survivors need support and guidance."
  - "There must be a help learning how to live after leaving the abuser."
- "I needed a lot of support and mentorship."
- Childhood sexual abuse survivor: "The community and system need to provide better support for children – how do they find a pathway to tell?"
  - "Kids are silent – how do we find a pathway for them to tell in a safe way, because if they go back home, they have broken a code."
  - "Kids aren't aware of how this danger presents. Need to educate them on threats, not just stranger danger - the real world."
  - "Curriculum must be developed on red flags, what to watch for."
  - Courts should allow children to testify in a different room via skype, t.v., etc. This removes power from the abuser. This should be allowed in all cases of domestic violence, sexual violence and human trafficking. "How brave do you have to be to be in that room? This should never happen."
- Trafficked at 14 - ran away because of domestic violence in home.
  - If police came, they were to say they were, "just at a party."
  - Police should assure them, "You won't get in trouble, and you cannot be arrested for this." Traffickers convinced them they would be arrested and jailed.
  - They still attended school, and grades did not suffer. Tried hard in school to make sure, "things didn't seem too terrible." Were very tired in school, but told people they were working late last night, and no one questioned further.
- Awareness must occur on a broader socio-environmental and socio-economic scale.
- "We must talk about verbal abuse, what domestic violence *sounds* like."
- Need trauma informed housing where survivors are treated with dignity, like Shirley's Place.
- Organizations must get out of their silos and drop egos.
- Need passionate, capable, relevant organizations and people in this work.
- Must provide prevention/intervention programming to offenders leaving jail/prison.
- "I needed honesty and reassurance that it was going to be ok. Everything should be in one place. By the time I get to the 2nd, 3rd, 5th stop, it's overwhelming, and I talked myself out of continuing. It was too hard. I ran around all over. We need a one stop shop with survivors there to talk to us so that they can relate without being judgmental. If they cannot be there all of the time, at least on call."
- "Educate children early on abusive language, emotional abuse, and the fact that this is also domestic violence."
- "Judges must recognize emotional abuse is domestic violence and grant OPs based on facts of emotional abuse, rather than requiring evidence of physical abuse."
- "All services should be in one location."

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## Survivor Perspectives – Group I

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Survivor Focus Group  
July 23, 2018

- If police are called for a shooting, they respond quickly. Not for domestic violence.
- There should be a one stop shop for someone who wants help. People get tired – it needs to be in the same place. Right now we have to go all over.
- “The court system takes too long. There are constant continuances. He manipulates the system and keeps the power. We need more judges and courts to hear these cases.”
- The group identifies obstacles as housing and lack of a strong confidential support group where “you can relieve this and you know it won’t go nowhere.”
- One survivor has been denied housing by landlords. Believes this is because of pending case with attacker.
- Police need to be trained to realize the dynamics of DV. Officers don’t see hidden things that are part of the crime.
- There needs to be help getting back on your feet, work, getting your life back, because your life is gone. People go back because they have no help.
- Need law enforcement to check up on them when they are out of jail, follow up on them if they are let out.
- She knows women who try to leave, but they have no idea where to go – need to advertise help.
- I want to be asked what I need – what I want to do and how I want him punished. Now there is no source of income and my children cannot see their father.
- System needs to ask survivors what they want – ask us about sentencing – listen to us. Sometimes counseling/conflict resolution skills are needed – order that.
- What do survivors need to leave?
  - Protection.
  - Transportation.
  - Housing.
  - Relocation.
  - When she tells you what she needs, be able to give her a backup plan and a safety plan.
  - Encouragement.
  - Education – let them know this isn’t ok – teach them red flags such as yelling at you, calling you names will lead to abuse.
  - Teach them how to live and survive and thrive without their abuser – 24 months long term support for them and their children.
  - We can’t give them a net then walk away from them and they don’t know how to hold the net up and stay in it.
  - Child care – he takes care of the kids.
  - LONG TERM SUSTAINED NAVIGATION OF SERVICES.
  - Support for long term care and healing. Mental health and processing trauma should be an urgent priority. Insurance will not cover.
  - Teach about the escalation of the violence early. Boys and girls need early education on healthy relationships. “They need to know the signs early – they told me about hitting not being ok – we are taught that. No one told me calling me a bitch was going to lead to so much more.”
  - What do loved ones of survivors need to stay in it with a survivor, to not give up? Where is the guidance for family members?
  - I need three things – physical safety, emotional safety and financial safety.

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## Survivor Perspectives – Group II and III

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Survivor  
Focus Group  
August 24,  
2018

- Survivor support groups must be therapeutic and offer qualified counselors to run the meetings. “We open up wounds, and they tell us it’s time to leave.”
- “Recognize a trauma bond exists, and the way we interact with someone we are afraid of may not look normal. It doesn’t mean we aren’t afraid or that he wasn’t a violent abuser.”
- “Police told me to go to a shelter, and that’s not everything I needed – I didn’t feel heard – I needed so much more, and it wasn’t provided.”
- “Service providers should not control us when we try to seek help.”
- “I only had a short time to write the OP, and I couldn’t remember everything. Judges should understand the OP will not include everything – I cannot remember everything in order. And the OP process is horrible. You write down all of this abuse, and that’s traumatic - it was the first time I realized it had been happening for years. Now you stand in front of a judge, everyone is reading it, and I still get asked about it again and again. I was ashamed.”
- “Why are we in court where other cases are heard and other attorneys are in the room? Everyone should have to leave.”
- “Why am I asked how many OPs I’ve filed against him? Don’t they understand why we drop them and go back and try to make it work?”
- Education on relationship violence should be in all middle and high schools.
- “Offenders need education and help, too. I want my child’s father to be healed, even if we are not together.”
- “The schools need to have a plan on how to address a situation once they suspect a child is living in a home with domestic violence. I had a teacher who knew I was exhausted in class because I was up all night listening to the fighting in my house. She tried to help me with my school work and let me rest during the day. But that was only in one grade.”
- “DCFS needs training on trauma. There’s no consistency in investigators – some do good work, but they aren’t the greatest at understanding domestic violence.”
- Service agencies should include consulting an attorney as part of a safety plan.
- “Employees at service agencies and the system should not speak to us like it’s a task. Speak to me like you care, ask how I’m feeling.”
- “We need people coming to court with us. Going to court is scary and reminds me of all of the awful stuff that caused me to be there, and my abuser will be there.”
- Need one site with a list of all of the phone numbers on-line.
- Survivor wish list = lawyer, navigator, therapy.
- Every person we touch must be trained to understand trauma and respond accordingly.

Survivor  
Focus Group  
Nov. 8, 2018

- There is only one location to go for group therapy at night, outside of work hours. There are more options for abusers. Need more time slots after work. Currently, this survivor believes there is one option on Wednesday evenings at a local shelter.
- No master source for direction on where to go – “I googled ‘group therapy’ and found a place in Elgin. When I called there, they told me about the local option.”
- “There is no referral process. I still have no idea what to do.”
- Need more than one place for free group counseling.
- “We need a support group with other survivors you can talk with who understand my feelings, including the confusing feelings of love toward the abuser – a place where survivors who have gone through this understand.”

- “We need a group where community can be built, where people understand and don’t look at victims with judgment. A place where I don’t have to explain.”
- “We need a space where we can share experience, strength and hope and focus on a solution, hope and recovery, not just the problem.”
- There is a need for a change in, “groups where it’s very negative, and trauma is triggered, and you’re left triggered with no help or guidance.”
- People leading groups must be educated in how to lead a conversation or group and not just show a movie.
- People are being ordered into court ordered substance abuse classes where it’s not safe to talk about domestic violence. Need trauma informed, survivor centered substance abuse classes.
- “During one group session at (a local service provider), a PAIP teacher attended and said PAIP was hit or miss, and if the abuser is a good liar, he will get one over.” There’s a need to ensure PAIP classes are meaningful and effective.
- Group classes must be focused and orderly with leaders who can refocus the group if a participant, “goes off on a tangent.”
- “Faith leaders need training and to stop telling us to stay married and get counseling. I could have died.”
- Trained counselors/therapists should lead groups – “people trained in layers of trauma, PTSD, mental health issues, and people who know not to leave people triggered without help as the group closes.”
- Need a list of therapists, community resources and books on help for domestic violence survivors, in any stage. One survivor asked a local agency for a book recommendation to help rebuild self-esteem and was told to google it on YouTube.
- “The system punishes survivors and doesn’t help us rebuild. They see us and treat us as the bad guys.”
- Teens need education on how to love themselves and what abuse looks like. “If I saw something and had learned the signs, I would have recognized them and been able to understand that was happening. I didn’t recognize red flags because I never learned what they were. Abusers, too – they do what they learn.”
- Start in kindergarten and train teachers to recognize signs of effects on kids living in homes where DV is present.
- Survivors need allies and help not feeling ashamed.
- The judicial system should be aware of abusers’ use of parental alienation to hurt survivors.
- We do not see consistency in responses from police and judges.
- “Applying for an OP takes a lot of courage. It’s not, ‘just go down and get one.’ I was happy to see the DVAC, but the woman there didn’t sit with me while I wrote it or ask me if I wanted her to.”
- “Police start in on you and want to know in detail what just happened to you. They want every detail, NOW. I just survived something. I can’t think. And the injuries on the outside don’t always show internal injuries. My eye looked fine, but it turned out that my socket was cracked. Police need help understanding this is what is going on and how to handle this situation better.” (Incident occurred August 2017)
- “The use of weapons and my LAP responses should be considered in bail.”
- “My ex had 4 or 5 OPs against him before me. The courts should consider this history and make sure weapons are confiscated.”
- “The State’s Attorney’s Office doesn’t communicate with survivors, and it takes months to authorize charges. I cooperated fully, and no one told me what was happening or gave me notice of his court dates so I had an opportunity to attend.”

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survivors should be notified of OP service. (One woman wasn't notified in case from 9/18)</li> <li>• "Get everything you need from me in the interview with police. Don't serve me with a subpoena to testify. My statement should be enough. Get enough information to get a conviction without me. Don't put me in a courtroom with all of these people asking me personal questions."</li> <li>• "There should be a private DV Division in courts. It's embarrassing to have all of your history and story in front of a room full of strangers."</li> <li>• "Don't ask me to state my address in court."</li> <li>• "If you read my statement out loud in court in front of people, someone in the room may be triggered."</li> <li>• Help for abusers "far outweighs" help for survivors. "I can't afford to get away from him. I am paying school fees, activity fees, counseling, attorney...I called (a local service provider) to ask for legal help or a referral, and they told me to call the Bar Association. If I call a DV agency, they should have names and direction of who can help me."</li> <li>• Legal help is essential and missing.</li> <li>• Employers should have policies and tell their employees about them. "I didn't know I could get protection, coverage, benefits if I had to take time from work to find housing because I was fleeing."</li> <li>• "People coming out of jail have help. Where are the programs and resources to help women trying to leave, to find a job, to cope? I am expected to go back to life, work, day to day and just smile and cope. There are triggers everywhere."</li> <li>• The Illinois Crime Victims Act should be more accessible.</li> <li>• There's a heavy financial burden with job loss, missed time. Help is needed.</li> <li>• "Stop giving us the run around in courts and the system. There's a lack of education in everyone responding. I have to make 17 phone calls, and none of you communicate, and you make me feel like an inconvenience."</li> </ul>
<p><b>Additional Survivor Input</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not miss the overlap with domestic violence/human trafficking and other issues, such as homelessness and racism.</li> <li>• "The criminal justice system does not understand domestic violence. I went before a judge to ask for the charges to be dropped because the thought of him being released WITHOUT my help was horrific. I knew he would be released, and if I didn't ask for it, it would be terrible. Not once did that judge or State's Attorney or anyone else ask why, three days after calling police, why I was standing before them asking for it to be dropped. Why didn't they pull me aside and ask what I needed?"</li> <li>• "When I tried to call police and reach out for help, I was criminalized – once, I was arrested because he convinced them I was the aggressor. Finally, I stopped calling and tried going to hospitals when he injured me, but they always released me without getting me services."</li> <li>• We need to get out of the space of crisis when we talk about helping survivors. What is the long term response?</li> <li>• "When he strangled me and I called the police, I told them I didn't want to press charges, because if I did I knew I wouldn't be safe – he would hurt me for pressing charges. And I knew the State could pick it up and prosecute him without me – there was enough evidence – the police took pictures. DCFS indicated him. The judge gave me an order of protection. I was pregnant, and I just wanted to get through my pregnancy and be safe – they had enough to pick it up without me. But they didn't, and when I tried to call them and talk to them, they acted like they didn't have time for me. They weren't compassionate and were offended when I asked why they were not pursuing the case."</li> <li>• Survivor wish list = housing, education, emotional/psychological help, life skills, long term navigational support, transportation, child care, believe us.</li> <li>• "Do not do this work without us – let survivors be the voice of the liberation of our experience."</li> </ul>

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## Conclusion

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In addition to identifying gaps, simultaneous efforts have been underway to identify best practices and begin building solutions and responses to areas identified. Many of the very people who agreed to this self-analysis are already working with us to bridge these gaps. We have begun researching and identifying best practices which can be integrated here to fit the needs of our community. The establishment of the Family Justice Center will address many gaps. There is expertise, unwavering commitment and tenacity to come together, put aside ego, and do this work. There is a knowing that we will succeed, together.

***To the survivors***, we ask for your trust and assure you that your words are not useless. That you are the voices driving and informing the change in our community. That your words inform our work and lay the foundation for what must be done. That we need your voices, and we will listen. That we will not do this without you. It is our sincere hope that when you see this document, you will know that we hear you, the community is listening, and we are with you.

We have a daunting task in front of us, and it will take a heavy lift from all corners of this community. We will need to believe in ourselves, but you are examples and an inspiration to us all. You have taught us how to survive against overwhelming odds, to never give up, that there is always hope, and we are stronger together. Thank you.