

Building Sustainable and Fruitful Partnerships between Community Health Centers and Domestic Violence Advocacy Organizations

Community health centers and advocacy programs are natural partners given their shared mission to improve the health, wellness, and safety of their clients and to prevent violence before it begins.

Including each other as part of your multidisciplinary care teams is a crucial step in supporting intimate partner violence (IPV) and human trafficking survivors in your community.

What is a domestic and/or sexual violence advocacy organization?

Domestic/sexual violence advocacy organizations work with communities to support survivors of domestic and sexual violence and human trafficking in times of crisis and need. More than just emergency shelters and 24 hours hotlines, advocates work with survivors and their families to promote safety and heal from violence in many different ways.

Looking to identify a DV program in your area? Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **800-799-SAFE (7233)**.

Ask your partner DV organization what services they provide to survivors. Many advocacy organizations offer:

- ✓ Drop in support and safety planning
- ✓ Emergency and short term shelter
- ✓ Advocacy for longer term housing
- ✓ 24-hour hotlines for crisis safety planning
- ✓ Legal support or representation
- ✓ Court accompaniment
- ✓ Support groups and access to mental health services
- ✓ Health/wellness promotion
- ✓ Case management
- ✓ Police/criminal justice advocacy
- ✓ Financial/economic advocacy and support

What is a community health center?

Community health centers are community-based and patient-directed organizations that deliver free or low cost comprehensive primary health care services. Health centers also often integrate access to pharmacy, mental health, substance abuse, and oral health services in areas where economic, geographic, or cultural barriers limit access to affordable health care services.

- Looking to identify a community health center in your area? Visit findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov

Many community health centers offer:

- ✓ Primary care and wellness services for the whole family
- ✓ Pharmacy
- ✓ Reproductive and sexual health options: birth control, emergency contraception, pregnancy options counseling
- ✓ HIV and STI testing, treatment and care
- ✓ Perinatal and post-partum care
- ✓ Substance dependency support
- ✓ Mental and behavioral health services
- ✓ Provide health services regardless of patients' ability to pay and charge for services on a sliding fee scale.
- ✓ Health care enrollment specialists
- ✓ Operate under the direction of patient-majority governing boards of autonomous community-based organizations.
- ✓ Language access and other culturally responsive services

This tool was developed by the National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence, a project of Futures Without Violence. For more information, visit: www.IPVhealthpartners.org





DV Advocacy Partner

Improve health and wellness for DV/SA/HT survivors



Warm referral from DV agency to health center



Community Health Center Partner

Improve health and safety through CUES



Warm referral from health center to DV agency.

How does this partnership benefit our health center staff and patients?

Establishing formal partnerships is crucial to providing trauma-informed care for survivors.

- **Rely on the expertise of your partners** – For health center staff, know that advocates are experts in the specific needs of survivors for safety and self-determination.
- **Improve health outcomes** – For people who are surviving an abusive relationship or living with trauma from previous abuse, the sooner they are connected health and advocacy support services, the sooner they will be able to address underlying reasons for their health issues.
- **Adopt a trauma informed care approaches** – working with your partner organization/health center will promote trauma informed care systems within your own health center.

Just as you will be able to rely on your partners, they will get a lot of value from being connected to you!

How do we partner with our local domestic/sexual violence advocacy organization?

Starting out:

- Meet with the leadership** of your partner organization/health center
 - Determine shared values and goals of the partnership: Why are we doing this?
 - Share information about each other’s services: What services do you provide to your patients/clients? How will your two agencies be able to support each other’s staff and patients/clients?
 - History: Have your organizations collaborated before? What came of that effort?
 - Logistics: How often will you be meeting? In person? Over the phone? Create a plan for consistent communication to discuss the partnership and patient care.
- Host **cross-trainings** where staff visit each other’s locations to learn about services so everyone can be able to describe what the other agency can offer patients/clients.
- Develop a **procedure for bi-directional warm referrals** to between your health center and your advocacy partner.

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- D. Revisit your **Memorandum of Understanding** with the advocacy organization leadership and update it based on determined goals, referral procedures and any new elements of your partnership.

Next steps

- **Coordinated Care:** As you and your advocacy partner refine your referral procedures through experience, you may find that it would be helpful to bring each other into certain patient's care plans. How will you communicate with each other and work together to support the health and safety of individual patients/clients?
- **Monthly Health Celebration:** In efforts to improve access to accurate health information and streamlines direct linkages to healthcare services for survivors, health center staff can lend their expertise at monthly health celebrations at your partner advocacy organization for survivors. Learn more about this strategy from [The Women's Healthcare Clinic of Los Angeles through the Domestic Violence Health Care Partnership](#).
- **Track Your Successes:** Is there a way that you can document how many warm referrals your health center's providers are offering to survivors? Is there a way to track how many of them actually utilize your advocacy partner's services? What about referrals from your advocacy partner to your health center? This data can be immensely important when needing to demonstrate the use of the partnership, program development, and even state policy.

Shoot for the stars!

Across the country, domestic violence agency - health care partnerships are developing creative and innovative models that have pushed their collaborative efforts even farther. Explore with your advocacy partner ways in which you can enhance your shared goals and vision! Here are some ideas:

- **Visiting Health Provider:** Can your health center support a health provider to visit the advocacy organization every two weeks to provide basic health care to survivors using their services?
- **Advocacy-Based Health Services:** Can your advocacy organization work to offer health services on site? What would it take to have advocates specially trained in substance dependency, HIV testing, or sexual health education?
- **Mobile Health and Advocacy:** Many health centers and advocacy organizations offer mobile services. How can you coordinate and utilize your partner's mobile services?
- **Co-Located Advocate:** Is there a way where you can structure your health center space and budget to be able to have an advocate from your partner advocacy organization come and provide services to survivors at the health center on a weekly basis? Find out more about successes of this model from the [Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence's Oregon Guide to Healthcare Partnerships](#) and [Kaiser Permanente in partnership with STAND! in the STAND! Kaiser Permanente 2017 Community Report and Replication Plan](#)
- **Long Term Sustainability:** As you and your partner continue to build your relationship, there are systems changes that can be made to ensure success and sustainability of the partnership and both of your agencies. Learn more about ideas for sustainability from domestic violence agency – health care [partnerships in California through the Domestic Violence Health Care Partnership](#).

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