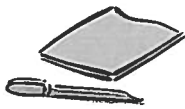


❖ Request supervision and debriefing to enhance your service delivery and to minimize re-victimization and compassion fatigue.

➤ Supervision provided by agencies should be intentional and timely in order to provide front-line staff with a safe space to air their feelings of helplessness, frustration and positive experiences.



Exit Interviews in a Trauma-Informed Manner

Exit interviews are generally a formal procedure involving paperwork in which an individual typically fills out an agency form evaluating their experience and talks with an advocate about future plans.

Supervisors need to review evaluations and be mindful of suggestions and problems in order to incorporate the voices and experiences of women and children into providing services and making services more effective and helpful.

It is important to acknowledge the emotional significance of ending a relationship. There should be a dialogue occurring between the individual and the advocate/s when an individual decides to

IMPORTANT STEPS IN EXIT INTERVIEWS

1. *Understand paperwork may not be foremost in the person mind. Talk with the person who is about to leave the shelter and/or group, highlighting her connection and contribution.*
2. *Acknowledge the many feelings she may have about no longer being involved in your program.*
3. *Discuss with kindness and sensitivity reactions children may have when they experience grief and loss.*
5. *Be mindful of the space and how it may feel to individuals.*
6. *Focus on strengths of the individual. Allow for others to celebrate their relationships. Sign cards, create affirmation cards, or have a cake at a good-bye party.*
7. *Convey your understanding of trauma, triggers and responses and validate she may experience some anxiety in leaving to a new environment.*
8. *Create a list of ways to manage and/or cope with her feelings and her children.*
9. *Find out if she needs any other assistance from you, your agency, or if you can help connect her to other needed services.*

leave the shelter and/or a support group. This dialogue is as important as the formal procedural evaluation. After all, it is the human connection that matters most. Being able to “say good-bye” in a healthy manner models respect, empathy and lets a person attach meaning to the relationships they formed and gives survivors the experience of healthy closure of a relationship.



Key Trauma Knowledge to Remember When Conducting Exit Interviews

- ❖ **A termination of a relationship involves a range of emotions, with some being positive and some negative. Some survivors might re-experience grief and loss.**
 - Advocates must remember to consider the emotions involved in ending a relationship, especially if the connection has been positive in nature for the individual.

- ❖ **An individual is leaving a space where she may have felt safer and more supported than anywhere else she has been.**
 - Validate the range of mixed feelings of sadness to excitement for what may lie ahead.

- ❖ **Residents of the shelter may feel a sense of loss as they observe the other residents leaving. Likewise, children who have connected also need to process other people’s good-byes.**
 - Advocates need to be aware and able to verbalize these experiences.
 - Provide parties, make or sign cards and even hold a group with the topic of leaving shelter.

- ❖ **Anger and ambivalence may be a part of some individual’s feelings as they leave.**
 - This may be due to being asked to leave because of inappropriate behavior/choices, or due to the fact that things didn’t turn out as a survivor wanted them to.

- An advocate's role is to maintain emotional and physical safety while respecting the individual's the right to her feelings regarding her experiences.
- ❖ **Leaving and/or moving (if the individual has resided in a shelter) can be considered another stressor for women and children which may impact their ability to organize and focus.**
 - Humans require a place to live as a basic need.
 - Advocates should frame the level of anxiety a family may be feelings.
- ❖ **Some children may not wish to go to their future destination.**
 - It is often the case that moving, staying and going are stressful for children and their feelings may show up in behaviors or stress reactions.



Tips for Trauma-Informed Exit Interview

- ❖ **Agency paperwork may not be foremost in the individual's mind.**
 - Advocates need to remember this as you are preparing for her departure. Departing a domestic violence shelter is a significant experience for most survivors, and many survivors might worry about feeling safe and supported in their new environments.
- ❖ **Acknowledge feelings and attach meaning to the relationship that has grown.**
- ❖ **Validate strengths and accomplishments.**
- ❖ **Inquire about concerns and future anticipated needs of her and her family.**
- ❖ **Inform the individual of services and programming in which she and her children may participate in after leaving shelter.**

- ❖ **Outline potential behaviors and feelings that she may experience after leaving the shelter or group.**
 - Ask her how she is feeling physically and emotionally. Is she aware of any body sensations like stomach aches, jitteriness, or energy?

- ❖ **Talk with her about what children may experience with this change.**
 - Inquire how she anticipates dealing with her children's reactions to the changes in their new situations.
 - For instance, sleep may be disrupted in the new environment, a child might have new routines that are difficult, or might need to change schools. Talk with the survivor about plans to address the feelings children will have about these new experiences.

- ❖ **Children's feelings around leaving shelter need to be addressed and supported by the advocates who have bonded with them during their stay or participation in a group.**
 - The same suggestions listed above will work in processing a good-bye with a child.
 - Some youth programs facilitate a youth exit as well, which involves safety planning.

- ❖ **Discuss safety-planning aspects with her if she is going home. Ask her what has worked for her in the past and what hasn't.**
 - Explore other possibilities with her if she is open to this.
 - Express to her that she may call the hotline for support anytime.
 - Inform her of services that she might be eligible for now or in the future.