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Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence Program Standards

2013

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Starting structure based on committee input 04.19.13

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## Guiding Principles

Provide access to physical and emotional **safety** for survivors of domestic violence and their children in a **continuum of care** environment.

Dedicate our program to **empowering** survivors of domestic violence by partnering with them to strategize for their safety, to provide access to supportive services and safe accommodations, to make available opportunities for education and healing, and to advocate for victims to assist them in reaching self-defined goals.

Respect the **privacy and confidentiality** of survivors and their children by collecting only essential, necessary information, by keeping records and client information confidential to the fullest extent of the law, and by respecting their personal belongings.

Honor the language and spirit of local, state, and federal **laws, regulations, and grant requirements** that govern domestic violence service provision, provided that they are conducive to victim safety, client confidentiality, and abuser accountability.

Respect the **culture and customs** of survivors, staff, and volunteers by honoring differences and by making reasonable accommodations that allow everyone to participate in the program to the fullest extent possible.

Foster a **trauma-informed**, welcoming environment for survivors and their children that recognizes the impact of abuse and promotes self-sufficiency, independent decision-making, and safer futures.

Partner with local governmental and community organizations to foster effective **collaborations** that improve survivors' access to services and justice and that enhance victim safety and abuser accountability.

Revised by committee 04.19.13 and again on 05.10.13

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# Non-Residential Program Standards

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## Hotline & Crisis Response

**Hotline** refers to crisis intervention, information and referral provided 24 hours a day, every day of the year, by any means of communication, by qualified, trained staff members or volunteers. Comprehensive domestic violence programs are required to receive and respond to crisis calls on a 24-hour basis (COMAR 01.04.05A1).

### Service Standards and Guidelines

1. A domestic violence hotline must provide 24 hour crisis access to domestic violence services.
2. The hotline number must be widely distributed, listed, advertised, and be available from local information services within the domestic violence program's service area. The domestic violence program should engage in culturally appropriate and linguistically specific marketing of the hotline number, which considers the key demographics of the community.
3. To ensure 24 hour hotline accessibility, domestic violence programs must ensure that they have the capacity to adequately respond to the volume of calls so that callers can get through.
  - a. Callers should not reach a busy signal.
  - b. Staff should always be available to pick up the phone. A special ring tone can signal to staff that a hotline call is coming through and must be picked up.
  - c. If callers must be placed on hold, an appropriate message they could receive is, "Please stay on the line. If this is an emergency, please hang up and call 911. Hold for the next available advocate."
  - d. Having callers leave a voicemail is not ideal and returning calls can jeopardize the privacy and safety of callers. Efforts should be made to avoid having callers leave a voicemail. If callers must leave a voicemail, messages must be checked promptly. Instruct callers to indicate the safest number and time to return the call.
  - e. In case of emergency, such as losing power or failure of hardware, domestic violence programs must have a backup plan to be able to receive hotline calls that protect a caller's privacy.
4. Victims who are deaf or hard of hearing, who have Limited English Proficiency (LEP) must be accommodated on the hotline through the availability of bilingual staff, language line interpretation, TTY, and/or Relay. Language interpretation access is available at a reduced rate to domestic violence programs through MNADV.
5. The hotline must be answered in a manner that identifies the purpose of the hotline and that discloses the limits to confidentiality early in the call. Everything that is shared on the hotline must be kept confidential, except for imminent danger to oneself or others,

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or suspected child abuse. Should hotline workers have to report to authorities, they should inform the victim first and solicit the victim's cooperation to promote empowerment. The use of caller ID and call recording equipment is in conflict with the spirit of anonymity. Programs must inform callers of the use of such equipment.

6. Hotline workers may want to call victims back, in order to follow-up later, in case the call is disconnected, etc. To promote victim safety and to protect their privacy, hotline workers should ask callers for permission to call back. If permission is given, hotline workers should obtain one or more "safe" numbers where the victim can be reached. Additional safety precautions include: the best day and time to reach them, if it is safe to leave them a message, and what to do if someone else answers the phone.
7. When providing callers with referral information, hotline workers should be well-informed about the services to which they are referring. The referral resources should be updated continually. When referring to a service provider, hotline workers should use warm hand-off techniques. If a caller is asking hotline workers to assist in service coordination, hotline workers must obtain and document a verbal information release for the caller's information to be shared. A separate release should be obtained for each service provider.
8. The hotline must be answered by a program staff member or volunteer who has had domestic violence crisis intervention training.
  - a. Domestic violence programs should offer training on agency policies and procedures including how and when to address confidentiality, how to introduce oneself to callers (ex: first name only or a pseudonym), the process for obtaining information for data collection and call sheets, how to handle homicidal or suicidal callers, how to screen or refer for shelter services, and how to handle Lethality calls.
  - b. Hotline workers should receive a minimum of thirty hours of domestic violence and crisis intervention training. This training must include the following topics:
    - i. General domestic violence training (History and Framework of Domestic Violence; Empowerment Advocacy; Victim-Centered Safety Planning; Protective and Peace Orders; Child Witnessing and Teen Dating Abuse; Elder Abuse and Abuse of People who have Disabilities; Minority Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities; Religion, Ethnicity, and Culture; Vicarious Trauma and Burnout)
    - ii. Crisis intervention (listening, establishing rapport, needs assessment, suicide prevention, etc.)
    - iii. Screening and assessing for danger and/or lethality and to provide safety planning
    - iv. Availability of legal remedies (peace/protective orders, criminal charges, immigration, etc.)
    - v. Referrals and community resources
  - c. Training resources include: MNADV's 4 day Advocate Training, House of Ruth MD's Comprehensive Intimate Partner Violence Training, Dr. Campbell's Danger Assessment, National Center for Suicide Prevention Training, etc.

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9. Programs offering hotline services must provide emergency crisis intervention and advocacy. These services include, but are not limited to:
  - a. **Assessment and Establishing Contact:** Crisis intervention begins by establishing contact, listening to the person tell about what happened, determining what the crisis is, assessing risk and/or danger, and setting up time for future activities geared towards alleviating the crisis.
  - b. **Providing Information, Intervention, and Support:** Then crisis intervention focuses on implementation, which includes identifying tasks and who will carry out tasks to solve specific life problems, modifying previous ways of dealing with the situation, identifying strengths, and learning new skills.
  - c. **Review:** Lastly, crisis intervention includes the termination of the interaction and requires the hotline worker to review the intervention from the start of contact to the present with an emphasis on the tasks accomplished, existing or potential skills to be developed, resources and referrals established, and planning for future ongoing contact. Resources and referrals should be given using a warm hand-off approach. For follow-up, consider safety.
10. The hotline administrative procedures including data collection and record-keeping should be in accordance with the organization's standards outlined in the Administrative section. The Hotline should have written procedures regarding: confidentiality, assessing risk; record keeping and record purging; assessing and responding to crisis (ex: suicidality); and self-disclosure on the hotline (ex: hotline workers providing their first name or a pseudonym to protect their privacy).
11. The hotline service should be evaluated for effectiveness on an ongoing basis. There must be a way to measure the success of calls, for example by asking an exit question or another means of measuring caller satisfaction.

[Break Out Boxes]

## Warm Hand-Off Sample Language

(adopted from California Mental Health Services Authority)

*It sounds like you're going through a really difficult and scary time right now. I work with someone who specializes in situations like yours, who may be able to brainstorm some new strategies with you, and I would like to ask them to speak with you. Is it all right if I put them on the line?*

## CONFIDENTIALITY

### What is the Law?

Maryland COMAR Regulations 07.02.07.02 defines child abused as physical or mental injury to a child by a caregiver, parent, or other household or family member. Child neglect is defined as failure to give proper care and attention to a child, including leaving a child unattended, or mental injury by a caregiver, parent, or other household or family member.

According to Maryland Family Law § 5-704, human service workers working in Maryland must notify Child Protective Services if they have reason to believe that a child has been subjected to

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abuse or neglect. In case of abuse, they may also report to law enforcement. An oral report should be made as soon as possible by phone or in person, followed by a written report within 48 hours of the call. In cases of suspected abuse, the written report should also be submitted to the State's Attorney's office. The report should contain the name, age, address, and whereabouts of the child; the name and address of the parent or caregiver; the nature, extent, and cause of current or prior abuse or neglect; and the information for the person who is being abusive or neglectful to the child. Form DHR/SSA 180 should be completed for each child affected.

Mental health providers and facilities that treat mental disorders are mandated by Maryland Courts and Judicial Proceedings Annotated Code § 5-609 to warn and protect intended victims of their patients. If a hotline worker is made aware of a caller's intent to inflict imminent violence towards a specific victim(s) based on something that they say, then the hotline worker has a duty to warn and protect the intended victim(s). There are several options available by law: 1) seek to have the caller committed; 2) attempt to diagnose the caller and document a treatment plan that is intended to prevent the violence from occurring; or 3) notifying law enforcement, and possibly the intended victim(s), of the nature of the threat, the name of the caller, and the name of the intended victim(s).

In all of these cases, hotline workers have immunity as long as they report in good faith.

## How Should We Say It?

*Hi, my name is Sarah. I am here to help and listen but, before we talk, I want you to know your rights and limits of what we can talk about. Everything you talk about on this call is confidential, unless you tell me that you're going to hurt yourself or someone else, or if you tell me that a child is being harmed. If you choose to tell me any of these things, we can report it together. Does that make sense to you? If so, where would you like to begin?*



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# Residential Program Standards

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## Standards for Administration

Notes/Ideas to include in Administrative section in the future:

Confidentiality

Data collection

Files double-locked

Computers have safety pre-cautions

Don't email victim's name or info without password protection

Report aggregate data only: never reveal a victim's identity by any means

Rules for record-keeping (ex: 5 years; depends on funder)

Preliminary items to address in future identified by committee 06.10/13