

# MODEL PROTOCOL

## On Working with Friends and Family of Domestic Violence Victims

WASHINGTON STATE COALITION

**WSCADV**

AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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Washington State Coalition  
Against Domestic Violence

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# MODEL PROTOCOL ON WORKING WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

By Connie Burk, Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse

## INTRODUCTION

The topic of “survivors and their friends or family members” is enormous. It can include everything from recommending a book to a caller on the crisis line worried for her friend’s safety, to mobilizing a congregation to support a survivor, to facilitating a conversation between a survivor and her estranged mother. This work can be prevention: working with groups of friends to build strong relationships that can help undermine the isolation that is often part of abusive patterns. It can be an intervention: safety planning with a person who wants to reach out to an abused sister. This work can be ongoing or just one phone call. This work can fit easily into the tools we have for addressing domestic violence and it can deeply challenge our ideas about how to support survivors.

In a 1999 National Institute of Justice-funded participatory action research project conducted in eight cultural groups in King County,<sup>1</sup> when asked what services they felt were needed, survivors did *not* request more formal services such as shelter, policing or even support groups. Instead, they consistently requested that their family members, clergy, teachers and other community members know about domestic violence and be prepared to act in thoughtful and truly helpful ways.

There are several reasons for the anti-violence movement to develop strategies to support survivors’ connections with friends or family:

1. **Survivors turn to people they already know for support before they try to access service agencies.** Many times, that support from friends or family is not very helpful to survivors. While being more culturally relevant and accessible than our services, friends or family are often not well equipped to increase survivors’ safety or to support self-determination. We could play a significant role in helping that natural support to be effective. One excellent example of such a strategy is the Asian Pacific Islander Women and Family Safety Center’s Natural Helper Model. In this model, community members are trained and supported to be “natural helpers”: people in the community who have domestic violence information and basic support skills and can connect any survivor they meet in the course of their daily life to appropriate resources and support.

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<sup>1</sup> “Cultural Issues Affecting Domestic Violence Service Utilization in Ethnic and Hard to Reach Populations,” by Kirsten Senturia, Ph.D., Marianne Sullivan, MPH, and Sandy Ciske, MN from Public Health Seattle & King County, and Sharyne Shiu-Thornton, MA from University of Washington, 2000. The full report can be viewed at <http://www.metrokc.gov/health/dv/>.

2. **Survivors and their families require deeply rooted, varied and complex support networks that cannot be replaced by any service system.** Domestic violence services necessarily occur within a controlled environment. For the most part, our services happen in confidential spaces, for short periods of time, and with a focus on responding to crisis. Our efforts are limited by funding, time and access, and we are in the position of having to decide who is eligible for our services.

Our boundaries require that advocates cannot develop personal relationships with survivors. Despite the enormous commitment, caring and energy that we as advocates put into our work with survivors, our relationships are professional, and therefore time-limited, support-limited and issue-limited. We do not become a survivor's friend who can lend our car or take care of a dog when the survivor goes out of town. Survivors' experiences occur beyond the limits of our professional relationships—independent of our work hours and services. When survivors are no longer accessing our services, they will continue to access friends or family for support and resources.

3. **By including friends or family members as allies, they can help to change the culture that supports abuse.** At the Northwest Network, for example, while supporting individual survivors through advocacy, education and organizing, we also work to build the community conditions necessary to support loving, equitable relationships. We work for the transformation of social institutions so that our churches, schools, economic structures, civil and criminal legal systems, health care, local governments and other systems are designed to create the conditions necessary to support loving, equitable relationships. This is a big project, and it will require the eventual participation of our entire community. Other programs and communities articulate their vision for social change in different ways—but we all agree that we are working not only to support survivors but also to end domestic violence.

For the short term, working with friends or family can often mean addressing immediate safety concerns for the survivor and her children. Can a friend store some documents? Can a sister offer childcare during a court date? Addressing immediate safety can mean figuring out which family members are supportive and which family members are not. For survivors who are completely isolated from support, the question can be: “What steps can I take to reconnect with people in my life or to make new connections?”

For the long term, working with friends or family includes supporting survivors as well as members of their support networks to set boundaries and negotiate for their needs. Since batterers work systematically to isolate survivors and undermine their relationships, survivors often have not been in a position to make decisions in their own or their family's best interest. In the course of surviving abuse, they may have acted in ways that have damaged their relationships with friends or family. In order to repair these relationships and re-establish connection, survivors may need to take responsibility for

past actions (e.g., stealing money from her parents or leaving her children with a friend for longer than she negotiated) or reconcile with family members who have minimized their experience of abuse in the past.

So, with a topic so broad, where should a person start? Below are guidelines to begin considering this issue. This protocol includes examples of a number of ways programs can engage friends and families, checklists for first steps with a range of service strategies, resources to review and additional information that can be helpful when beginning to look at this issue (see Appendix I).

While the series of protocols developed through WSCADV has focused on agency policy and procedure recommendations, such as those proposed for working with battered women impacted by substance abuse, this document will be different. In the following pages, we will present guidelines to help programs identify important challenges when working with friends or family, and begin to plan their work in this regard.

Community engagement programs that primarily organize in their communities to address domestic violence have led the way in developing strategies for working with friends and family. These groups have found that working with friends or family challenges their programs and advocates to develop highly specific strategies and procedures that can adapt to meet needs that are specific to each survivor and her/his community and support network. These procedures must be responsive to survivors as they exist in the full context of their lives—with an awareness that a survivor is a person who is a member of a neighborhood, ethnic and cultural community, religious community, particular age group, on and on. These strategies succeed when members of the groups that survivors, friends or family connect with are active participants in their development.

This work is exciting—it takes the anti-violence movement into people’s homes, congregations, work sites and schools. As we engage more and more people in the project of supporting survivors and ending violence, we begin to change the current societal conditions that tolerate domestic violence. *But, ultimately, the most compelling reason to engage friends and families is because they already are the people who are primarily supporting survivors.* And while it’s not possible for the anti-violence movement to make enough shelters, crisis lines or advocacy programs to replace the support that families give to survivors, we can work to make that organic support as effective, sustainable and helpful as possible.

# GETTING STARTED

## Basic Principles

1. **Keep survivor self-determination in the forefront.** Self-determination is the ability of individuals to make the choices that allow them to exercise control over their own lives, to achieve the goals to which they aspire and to acquire the skills and resources necessary to participate fully and meaningfully in society. As we know, batterers undermine their partner's self-determination in order to exert power and control over their partner's lives and to exploit their partner's emotional, spiritual and physical resources. The WAC defines advocacy-based counseling as having "...the primary focus on safety and on empowerment of the client *through reinforcing the client's autonomy and self-determination.*" That is to say: Advocates work to fortify people's self-determination so that those people may empower themselves and create safety for themselves.
2. **Safety for everyone involved is important.** Safety planning may include identifying and limiting risks for people surviving abuse, friends, family, community members, advocates and people who abuse. As with all aspects of advocacy, advocates should never disclose confidential information regarding a program participant to anyone, including a friend or family member, without the express written permission of the program participant.
3. **Evaluate possible consequences of strategies in specific situations.** It is important that advocates are empowered to reflect upon and modify the strategies they are using in their work with friends and family. Any particular strategy will make sense in some instances and be problematic in others. As in safety planning, most strategies will have some positive and some negative possible outcomes. An advocate can share critical thinking skills with a survivor so that she can be better equipped to evaluate the possible outcomes of a strategy in a specific situation. Survivors can safety plan to help minimize any possible negative outcomes. Also, advocates will want to consider whether a particular strategy is sustainable over time for a community—for example, grand gestures of support in a small community, like building a Habitat for Humanity home for a survivor, may inadvertently reinforce the idea that "domestic violence doesn't happen very often." Perhaps, in this case, advocates would want to include information about the prevalence of domestic violence during the wrap-up party.

## What steps can we take in our program to begin or enhance our work with friends or family?

Beginning or expanding work with friends or family members requires programs to consider and incorporate an ever-expanding array of issues into their advocacy repertoire. These include logistical concerns such as where to meet, how will transportation be arranged, whether or not to provide food and accompanying safety concerns. Additional issues include possible competing survivor and community expectations about

appropriate support, such as who should approach a particular community member to ask for assistance, or who should be included in a particular support network. These are only a few of the questions that come up when increasing our work with friends or family.

Strong boundary-setting and negotiation skills are particularly critical to long-term success in building and sustaining support networks. Through boundary setting, people clarify what they will and will not offer, what they can and cannot accept. Negotiation is the means by which people identify possibilities and come to agreements about how, what, when and where support will be offered and received. Even in the best of situations, people can find it difficult to ask for, offer, give and receive support between friends or family. The isolation, violence, economic uncertainty and general crisis that are the hallmarks of domestic violence can make the boundary setting and negotiation needed for sustainable support particularly difficult.

Survivors may need to make urgent and significant requests of members of their support networks. Family members may feel that they cannot turn down a request made by a survivor, even if they are uncomfortable about its possible consequences to their own resources, safety or living situation. Friends or family may have strong and inflexible opinions about what choices a survivor should make. A survivor may feel trapped into choosing an option expected by her friends because she feels “ beholden ” to the friends for resources or support. Support people may need to set clear limits about what kinds of support—listening, money, car rides, childcare, etc.—they are able to provide. And, at the same time, survivors may need to set clear limits regarding the extent and nature of advice or feedback they want from friends or family members. Strategies that assist survivors in building these skills are particularly helpful when working to build connection with friends and family.

Many domestic violence agency policies were developed to ensure the safety of survivors, staff and volunteers. Consequently, safety alone may be prioritized over a survivor’s self-determination and community connection—critical steps that lead to freedom, self-sufficiency and safety. Some program policies have unintentionally limited the ability of survivors to build, sustain and access their support networks. For example, policies that prohibit residents from contacting their abusers or family members in all circumstances, require that survivors attend program activities with no options around rescheduling or restrict support group members from contacting one another outside of group are common at many direct service domestic violence agencies.

Some requests from survivors or their friends and family may be outside the scope of what your program can offer. It is important to be clear about the limits of your services when callers request that you take a role that is beyond your program’s services or conflict with program policies. When friends or family members make such requests, it may be easy to feel defensive or to experience such requests as inappropriate. While our agency’s current policies and best practices may mean we cannot accommodate a particular request, we can learn as much about the request as possible. By staying open and learning about the motivation and rationale behind the request, we can often create an

alternative solution that falls within our policies or generate ideas that can later help us expand the scope of our work.

Domestic violence programs that are expanding their work with friends or family have an opportunity to examine organizational policies with the goal of supporting survivors' connection with their support networks. Agencies can adapt program policies as the organizational knowledge and skills learned while working with friends or family increases. Additionally, programs may be motivated to develop flexible policies and procedures in regard to friends or family to both eliminate barriers that prevent survivors from accessing or continuing services, and also to become more culturally relevant to a particular local community. For example, a program procedure may start out prohibiting family members from accompanying a survivor to an intake and then over time change the practice to allow survivors to bring a support person.

In order to build organizational capacity to effectively adapt and respond to such a wide range of emerging issues, it is important that organizations budget for ongoing training, technical assistance and consultation. Ongoing training expands advocates' skills while providing important opportunities to discuss particularly challenging examples of this work. Technical assistance helps to build the organizational infrastructure to sustain ongoing work with friends or family. Consultation with programs that have already developed programs that engage survivors' support networks can offer valuable insight, strategies and "lessons learned." Such consultation can build advocate morale as staff members increase their capacity to support survivors without having to "reinvent the wheel" with each programmatic advance.

Below you will find a series of "first step" checklists organized around direct service domestic violence program areas such as crisis intervention, community advocacy and emergency or transitional housing programs. Many of these steps can be started with a limited initial outlay of organizational resources. Some of them require a greater commitment of time, planning and money.

To begin, organizations can spend staff time discussing the "guiding principles" found at the start of this document. By encouraging dialogue, agencies can:

- build a solid foundation for their work with friends or family members;
- identify the knowledge and skills that already exist within the organization; and
- get everyone on the same page in regard to expectations, philosophies and initial strategies.

Agencies should conduct a simple internal review (see Appendix II) to learn what informal work with friends or family members is already happening within the agency. These activities can be shared at staff meetings where advocates can plan how to incorporate them more formally into their daily work.

## Community Organizing/Engagement Programs

☑ **Make a clear decision** to work with friends and family members. You may need to review your organizing activities to effectively incorporate friends and family members in your community engagement strategies.

☑ **Affirm confidentiality:** Advocates should never disclose information regarding a program participant to anyone, including a friend or family member, without the express written permission of the program participant.

☑ **Be prepared:** Survivors and friends and family may make requests that are beyond your organization's resources or inconsistent with your analysis. Be clear about how advocates will respond to such requests.

☑ **Build strong, thoughtful co-advocacy relationships:** By building equitable relationships between shelter programs and programs that work in a specific marginalized community, and between DV/SA advocates, community organizers and service providers in other fields, we can more comprehensively meet the needs of survivors in our diverse communities and create solid, safe strategies for working effectively with friends and families. Building these relationships requires our programs to identify, examine and leave behind old practices that undermine strong co-advocacy.

☑ **Practice praxis process:**<sup>2</sup> Make sure you build in time to reflect on the actions, strategies and concepts that frame your work with friends and family. Opportunities to discuss, reflect and propose changes to your current strategies based on your experience working with friends and family often strengthen efforts, build excitement and inspire new ideas.

☑ **Document your work:** Often programs do not document the strategies and analysis that they have developed. Build in time for organizers/advocates to describe exercises, discussion topics, reactions of participants, models and other strategies after each event or activity. When we postpone recording our challenges and successes, the information can fall through the cracks.

☑ **Develop policies for distributing materials:** Your organization may be asked to distribute your outreach materials, papers, organizing tools, descriptions of program models or other materials. Having clear practices around material distribution will ensure that your program can respond quickly to requests. (Examples: How and when can materials be duplicated? Are some materials only distributed in conjunction with a training?)

☑ **Develop policies for consultation and training:** Your organization may be called upon to share your program models and provide training on your work with friends and

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<sup>2</sup> Definition of *praxis*: "The action and reflection of people upon their world in order to transform it." Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1970. See further explanation in Appendix III.

family. Having clear practices around developing collaborations, scheduling trainings, writing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and charging for your consultation services will allow your program to quickly respond to consultation requests and be the most effective in assisting programs that are eager to develop their work with friends and family.

## **Crisis Line or Advocacy Phone Lines**

**The agency makes a clear decision** to work with friends or family members on the crisis line. This caller may be the most important resource for support or safety planning that a survivor has; every call by a friend or family member is an opportunity to support a survivor of domestic violence.

**Affirm confidentiality:** Inform the caller that advocates will not disclose information regarding a program participant to anyone, including a friend or family member, without the express written permission of the program participant, unless required to by law.

**Develop a set of guiding questions for talking with concerned family members.** The questions should identify opportunities for advocates to gently interrupt victim blaming with concerned friends or family members. Additionally, advocates can offer information and referrals, share safety planning strategies and help the caller evaluate their boundaries in relation to the survivor (e.g., “Is your friend safe right now?” “Have you been threatened by the abuser?”).

**Friends or family resource book:** Develop a resource book with community referrals and information that could assist a friend or family member who is concerned for a loved one. The resource book can also be a physical reminder that making space to assist callers who are friends or family members is important.

**Invite calls:** Review outreach materials, website text and brochures, asking the question: “Is it clear that friends or family are welcome to call our hotline?” “As a friend or family member, would I feel invited to call and discuss a concern?”

**Develop materials:** Create educational materials such as a small workbook for friends or family members. This workbook could contain information about power, control and exploitation, safety planning, basic resources in your community, tips for active listening, and simple talking points about domestic violence. Mail the workbook to callers who are interested in receiving one.

**Be prepared:** Friends or family members may make requests that are beyond the program’s resources or policies. Be prepared to discuss the ways the agency can assist friends or family and the survivor. For example, friends or family may want you to call the survivor directly and offer her services.

**Practice praxis process:** Make sure you build in time to reflect on the actions, strategies and concepts that frame your work with friends and family. Opportunities to discuss, reflect and propose changes to your current strategies based on your experience working with friends and family often strengthen efforts, build excitement and inspire new ideas.

**Get help:** When planning your budget, include funding for training advocates and volunteers and for consultation with programs experienced in working with friends or family members.

## Community Advocacy

**Make a clear decision** to work with friends or family members.

**Affirm confidentiality:** Advocates should inform the survivor that they will not disclose information regarding a program participant to anyone, including a friend or family member, without the express written permission of the program participant, unless required by law.

**Invite calls:** Review outreach materials, website text and brochures, asking the question: “Is it clear that friends or family are welcome to call our hotline? “As a friend or family member, would I feel invited to call and discuss a concern?”

**Develop materials:** Create educational materials such as a small workbook for friends or family members. This workbook could contain information about power, control and exploitation, safety planning, basic resources in your community, tips for active listening, and simple talking points about domestic violence. Survivors could use this workbook to talk to a friend or family member about domestic violence.

**Be prepared:** Survivors may make requests that are beyond the program’s resources or policies. Be prepared to discuss the ways the agency can provide services the survivor. For example, callers may want you to call the survivor directly and offer her services or a family member may want to accompany the survivor to the shelter.

**Practice praxis process:** Make sure you build in time to reflect on the actions, strategies and concepts that frame your work with friends and family. Opportunities to discuss, reflect and propose changes to your current strategies based on your experience working with friends and family often strengthen efforts, build excitement and inspire new ideas.

**Get help:** When planning your budget, include funding for training advocates and volunteers and consultation with programs experienced in working with friends or family members.

## Community Education

- ☑ **Friends and family are important:** At every education event, discuss the ways in which friends or family members can play a crucial role in supporting survivors. Use stories to illustrate safe and effective ways friends or family members have reached out to loved ones. Make friends or family a year-long focus of community education.
- ☑ **Invite calls:** Review program outreach materials, website text and brochures, asking the question: "Is it clear that friends or family are welcome to call our hotline?" "As a friend or family member, would I feel invited to call and discuss a concern?"
- ☑ **Develop materials:** Create educational materials such as a small workbook for friends or family members. This workbook could contain information about power, control and exploitation, safety planning, basic resources in your community, tips for active listening and simple talking points about domestic violence. Distribute the workbooks at various community education events.
- ☑ **Practice praxis process:** Make sure you build in time to reflect on the actions, strategies and concepts that frame your work with friends and family. Opportunities to discuss, reflect and propose changes to your current strategies based on your experience working with friends and family often strengthen efforts, build excitement and inspire new ideas.
- ☑ **Get help:** When planning your budget, include funding for training advocates and volunteers and for consultation with programs experienced in working with friends or family members.

## Shelter Program

- ☑ **Make a clear decision** to support residents' relationships with friends or family members.
- ☑ **Affirm confidentiality:** Advocates should inform the survivor that they will not disclose information regarding a program participant to anyone, including a friend or family member, without the express written permission of the program participant, unless required to by law.
- ☑ **Review shelter rules and procedures:** Review policies with the following questions: Does this rule encourage stable relationships between a resident and her friends or family? Can the goal of this rule be met in a way that supports connection with friends or family members? If not, should the goal and/or the rule be adapted to respond to the need of survivors to build strong connections with supportive friends or family members?

For example, examine policies that have the potential to limit or restrict residents from contacting or meeting with friends and family members or otherwise maintaining or

building strong relationships outside the shelter. These policies may unintentionally undermine supportive relationships. By reviewing rules and procedures, programs may find new opportunities and avenues that encourage support from friends or family, while still meeting the needs of group living and supporting the safety of everyone in the residential setting.

**Locate a safe, accessible meeting place for families.** If your program does not have a facility that can host visits from friends or families, locate a meeting place in your community where a resident can spend informal and private time with friends or family members.

**Share skills with survivors.** Talk with residents about their current relationships with friends or family or the relationships that they would like to build in the future. Share information about negotiation skills, boundary setting, making requests, talking to support people about the experience of domestic violence and safety planning with or about friends or family.

**Develop materials:** Create educational materials such as a small workbook for survivors to use with their friends or family members. This workbook could contain information about power, control and exploitation, safety planning, basic resources in your community, tips for active listening, and simple talking points about domestic violence. Survivors could use this workbook to talk to a friend or family member about domestic violence.

**Be prepared:** Residents may make requests that are beyond the program's resources or policies. Be prepared to discuss the ways the agency can provide services to the survivor.

**Build strong, thoughtful co-advocacy relationships:** By building equitable relationships between shelter programs and programs that work in a specific marginalized community, and between DV/SA advocates, community organizers and service providers in other fields, we can more comprehensively meet the needs of survivors in our diverse communities and create solid, safe strategies for working effectively with friends and families. Building these relationships requires our programs to identify, examine and leave behind old practices that undermine strong co-advocacy.

**Practice praxis process:** Make sure you build in time to reflect on the actions, strategies and concepts that frame your work with friends and family. Opportunities to discuss, reflect and propose changes to your current strategies based on your experience working with friends and family often strengthen efforts, build excitement and inspire new ideas.

**Get help:** When planning your budget, include funding for training advocates and volunteers and for consultation with programs experienced in working with friends or family members.

## Transitional Housing

- ☑ **Make a clear decision** to support residents' relationships with friends or family members.
- ☑ **Affirm confidentiality:** Advocates should inform the survivor that they will not disclose information regarding a program participant to anyone, including a friend or family member, without the express written permission of the program participant, unless required to by law.
- ☑ **Review transitional housing rules and procedures:** Review policies with the following questions: Does this rule encourage stable relationships between a resident and her friends or family? Can the goal of this rule be met in a way that supports connection with friends or family members? If not, should the goal and/or the rule be adapted to respond to the need of survivors to build strong connections with supportive friends or family members?

For example, examine policies that have the potential to limit or restrict residents from contacting or meeting with friends and families or otherwise maintaining or building strong relationships outside the shelter. These policies may unintentionally undermine supportive relationships. By reviewing rules and procedures, programs may find new opportunities and avenues that encourage support from friends or family while still meeting the needs of group living and supporting the safety of everyone in the residential setting.

- ☑ **Locate a safe, accessible meeting place for families.** If your program's transitional facility prohibits visits from friends or families, locate a meeting place in your community where a resident can spend informal and private time with friends or family members.
- ☑ **Share skills.** Talk with residents about their current relationships with friends or family or the relationships that they would like to build in the future. Share information about negotiation skills, boundary setting, talking to support people about the experience of domestic violence and safety planning with or about friends or family.
- ☑ **Develop materials:** Create educational materials such as a small workbook for survivors to use with their friends or family members. This workbook could contain information about power, control and exploitation, safety planning, basic resources in your community, tips for active listening, and simple talking points about domestic violence. Survivors could use this workbook to talk to a friend or family member about domestic violence.
- ☑ **Be prepared:** Residents may make specific requests that are beyond the program's resources or policies. Be prepared to discuss the ways the agency can provide services to the survivor.

**Build strong, thoughtful co-advocacy relationships:** By building equitable relationships between shelter programs and programs that work in a specific marginalized community, and between DV/SA advocates and service providers in other fields, we can more comprehensively meet the needs of survivors in our diverse communities and create solid, safe strategies for working effectively with friends and families. Building these relationships requires our programs to identify, examine and leave behind old practices that undermine strong co-advocacy.

**Practice praxis process:** Make sure you build in time to reflect on the actions, strategies and concepts that frame your work with friends and family. Opportunities to discuss, reflect and propose changes to your current strategies based on your experience working with friends and family often strengthen efforts, build excitement and inspire new ideas.

**Get help:** When planning your budget, include funding for training advocates and volunteers and for consultation with programs experienced in working with friends or family members.

## **RESOURCES ON WORKING WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY**

**Abused Deaf Women’s Advocacy Services (ADWAS):** 206-726-0093 (TTY only),  
206-726-0017 (fax)

**Asian & Pacific Islander Women and Family Safety Center:** 206-467-9976

**Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA):** 206-322-4856

**Chaya – services for Southeast Asian women:** 206-325-0325

**Family Violence Prevention Fund, “Community Engagement Makes the Difference”  
report:** [www.endabuse.org](http://www.endabuse.org) (“Children & DV Toolbox” section)

**Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse:**  
206-568-7777

***Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire:** paperback edition 2000 (originally  
published 1970)

# **Appendix I:**

## **Frequently Asked Questions and Program Examples**

from the Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse

### **Who is the “Program Participant”?**

Program participants may include crisis or advocacy callers, support group attendees, shelter or transitional housing residents, advocacy and legal program participants or other participants. These callers may or may not be survivors of domestic violence; these callers may be friends or family members.

### **Working with friends or family in the domestic violence program**

Some examples of how advocates might work with friends or family include:

- A shelter resident plans to ask her friends or family for support and wants help from an advocate to set up a place to meet.
- A person contacts the agency for information, assistance with safety planning, resource referrals or other assistance regarding a friend for whom they have a concern.
- A clergy member calls requesting that an advocate meet with a congregant who is experiencing domestic violence.

### **How can advocates work with friends or family members of domestic violence survivors?**

Advocates have many opportunities to work with friends or family members of survivors. The following three examples discuss ways that an advocate may be asked to work with a survivor and their friends or family and suggested approaches to responding to each scenario. Each example includes suggestions for:

- **The advocate’s role**
- **Possible activities for the survivor, advocate or agency/program**
- **Typical characteristics of the approach**

<p><b>Example 1: The advocate is contacted by a survivor currently receiving services. The program participant (a survivor) wants help from the program to engage her friends and family for support.</b></p>	
<p><i>Advocate role</i></p>	<p>Work with survivor to identify support network, and to identify possible ways that the network could help her become more self-determining, less isolated and safer.</p>
<p><i>Possible activities</i></p>	<p>For the survivor, may include skill building around reconciliation with estranged friends or family, accountability, boundary setting and talking about the abuse, so that she can figure out how to effectively reach out to friends and family.</p> <p>May include an array of education opportunities, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the survivor supported to educate friends and family about her/his own experience</li> <li>• an advocate educating a survivor’s friends and family about safety planning or about how sexism, racism, heterosexism support violence</li> <li>• an advocate working with a survivor and their support network to increase skills in boundary setting and negotiation, so that each can be more aware of their own and each other’s needs and boundaries</li> </ul> <p>Assess the risks of involvement with friends and family on individual basis.</p>
<p><i>Some characteristics of this approach</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directed by survivor.</li> <li>• The survivor remains main contact to friends and family.</li> <li>• The advocate works to increase options, share information, identify and make plan to eliminate barriers to strengthening, repairing or creating meaningful connections with potential support people or individuals transitioning out of the support person role.</li> </ul>

<b>Example 1 (continued)</b>	
<i><b>This approach typically requires</b></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policies and advanced experience with confidentiality. The survivor should know that she is the primary contact for her support network. The survivor should be informed that the agency will not release information without the express permission of the participant to anyone, unless required to by law.</li> <li>• Policies about doing advocacy “outside the office or shelter spaces.” Meetings with friends and family may need to take place in the survivor’s home, church or other location. Policies and procedures may address a range of issues including: how advocates will decide on appropriate places to meet with friends and family, managing safety concerns for advocates, and logistical concerns such as reimbursement for mileage.</li> <li>• Training for advocates and materials for survivors relevant to boundary setting, communication, reconciliation with estranged family members, accountability, safety planning.</li> <li>• Clear policies that define the bounds of what activities advocates can support or participate in. For example, policies that respond to illegal or inappropriate action proposed by survivors or their support networks, such as vigilantism.</li> </ul>

**Example 2: A friend or family member contacts a program.**

**A person contacts the program for information, assistance in safety planning, resource referrals or other assistance regarding a friend, community or family member for whom they have a concern.**

<p><i>Advocate role</i></p>	<p>Work with caller to clarify their concern, provide information, referrals, ideas about safety planning, and answer questions about domestic violence, systems such as CPS or shelters and next steps.</p> <p>The advocate should be prepared to interrupt “victim blaming” and attitudes that may undermine the caller’s goal of effectively supporting a survivor of domestic violence (i.e., undermining self-determination for the survivor).</p> <p>The advocate should consider the safety and self-determination of the caller’s friend (the survivor) as well as the caller.</p>
<p><i>Possible activities</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May involve helping caller make a plan to talk with survivor about her or his concerns.</li><li>• May involve skill building around boundary setting, talking about “taboo” topics with a friend, accessing community resources, safety planning and other skills. (What topics are considered taboo depends on the particular community or family. For example, one common taboo is talking about sex and sexual abuse. In some families, criticizing someone’s relationship is itself taboo.)</li><li>• May involve talking with the caller about “victim-blaming” beliefs that would be a barrier for the caller to effectively support their loved one.</li><li>• May talk to caller about their own limitations and boundaries on the support that they can provide to their friend.</li><li>• May talk to them about survivor coping strategies (drinking, using drugs, etc.) and their possible impact on his or her friend.</li><li>• May involve supporting the caller to plan for the loved one rejecting their attempts to help or be supportive.</li><li>• May involve helping caller to assess their own safety and create a safety plan.</li></ul>
<p><i>Some characteristics of this approach</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Short-term connection with friend or family member.</li><li>• No direct contact with survivor, unless the survivor contacts the organization on her own.</li></ul>

<b>Example 2 (continued)</b>	
<i><b>This approach typically requires</b></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A willingness to listen openly, learn from and respectfully critique the caller’s perspective.</li> <li>• Plan for when a caller asks agency to contact the survivor. (Will the agency do so? If yes, under what circumstances?)</li> <li>• Easy to understand materials that describe the experience of domestic violence and steps people can take to be supportive.</li> <li>• Easy to understand materials with local resources and contacts.</li> </ul>

<b>Example 3: The advocate is contacted by a community leader.</b>	
<b>A rabbi calls requesting an advocate meet with a congregant who is experiencing domestic violence.</b>	
<i><b>Advocate role</b></i>	Act to support the safety and self-determination of domestic violence survivors in a manner that is culturally relevant and respectful.
<i><b>Possible activities</b></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform the clergy member about the organization’s confidentiality policy.</li> <li>• Meet with the congregant in private at the clergy’s office.</li> <li>• Inform the congregant of the organization’s confidentiality policy.</li> <li>• Work with congregant to assess situation and develop a support plan that may include: accessing agency services, developing a support plan with family members.</li> <li>• Assess the risks of involvement of friends and family.</li> </ul>
<i><b>Some characteristics of this approach</b></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While a community leader may initiate contact, the advocacy and support plan is directed by the survivor.</li> <li>• The survivor remains main contact to community supports, friends and family.</li> <li>• The advocate works with survivor and friends and family to increase options, share information, identify and make plans to eliminate barriers to strengthening, repairing or creating meaningful connections with potential support people or individuals transitioning out of the support person role.</li> </ul>

<b>Example 3 (continued)</b>	
<i><b>This approach typically requires</b></i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long-term participation in and demonstrated commitment to a particular community’s institutions (such as faith communities).</li> <li>• An “insider” perspective on the community involved.</li> <li>• Experience working in small and/or marginalized communities, or experience supporting survivors who are members of small and/or marginalized communities.</li> <li>• Communication between community leaders and advocates. An understanding of the way that each organization (such as domestic violence agency and congregation) works, their policies, line of leadership and decision-making, flexibility and bottom line.</li> <li>• Because of confidentiality practices, the survivor should know that she is the primary contact for her support network and the organization will not release any information without the express permission of the participant to anyone unless required to by law.</li> <li>• Policies about doing advocacy “outside the office or shelter spaces.” Meetings with friends and family may need to take place in the survivor’s home, synagogue or other location. Policies and procedures could address such issues as: how advocates will identify appropriate places to meet with survivors and their support networks, minimizing safety concerns for advocates, and logistical concerns such as reimbursement for mileage.</li> <li>• Training for advocates and materials for survivors and their supports regarding boundary setting, communication, reconciliation with estranged family members, accountability, safety planning, etc.</li> </ul>

## **Appendix II:**

### **Informal Review of Current Work with Friends or Family**

from the Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse

- In what ways are we being asked by survivors to work with friends or family, or to support their relationships with friends or family?
- What, if any, formal programs exist to respond to such requests?
- What are our informal practices in responding to such requests?
- What contact do we have directly with friends or family members of survivors?
- What practices do we have in place to encourage friends or family to contact us for help and support?
- What rules, policies and practices does our program have in place to support survivors' connection with friends, family and community?
- What rules, policies, and practices limit survivors' connection with friends, family and community?
- Are survivors supported to develop skills related to building and sustaining connection with support networks?
- Are issues such as boundary setting and negotiation incorporated into our education programming (community, staff, support group)?

## **Appendix III: Praxis Definition**

by Connie Burk

Praxis:

**Action➔**

Reflection➔

**Action➔**

Praxis is a complex activity by which advocates can create support strategies, learn from survivors' experience, develop practice and procedures, and become critically conscious of the impact of their work.

Praxis comprises a cycle of action-reflection-action.

That is to say: We do something thoughtfully and carefully. We take time to think about it, ask questions about it, notice what effect it had, see what the costs of it were, see if it moved us closer to our vision, and identify the next thoughtful thing we can do based on it. Then we act again and reflect again.

Characteristics of praxis include self-determination (as opposed to coercion), intentionality (as opposed to reaction), creativity (as opposed to "one size fits all" solutions), and rationality (as opposed to chance).