SAMPLE TRAINING TOPICS AND HANDOUTS

Here are some sample topics for use in training advocates and other community providers about multi-abuse trauma issues, along with suggestions for handouts to use with each topic. These are examples only! Nothing here is carved in stone – feel free to be creative with these topics and come up with some of your own.

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Topic: Brown Bag Series – Issues 101

Invite community programs to provide in-house cross-training for the staff at each others’ agencies. Experts may include advocates from domestic violence and sexual assault programs, mental health providers, substance abuse treatment counselors, child welfare caseworkers, indigenous providers or anyone else with expertise that you want to learn from. The cross-trainings could be provided as a series: Domestic Violence 101, Sexual Assault 101, Substance Abuse 101, Mandated Reporting 101, Historical Trauma 101, etc. Add a sweetener to this series by arranging for continuing education credits (CEU’s) to be offered to staff in attendance at the various agencies.

Topic: Multiple Layers of Trauma

Explain the concept of multi-abuse trauma. Give examples of active abuse and coping abuse, and discuss how these different forms of abuse interact with each other to make safety, sobriety and wellness more difficult to achieve. Explain how co-occurring issues such as psychiatric illness, disabilities, social oppression, poverty and homelessness can complicate the picture, and discuss ways the social service system can avoid further traumatizing individuals.

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From Real Tools: Responding to Multi-Abuse Trauma
Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
Handouts
Multiple Layers of Trauma
Trauma: The Common Denominator
Multi-Abuse Trauma Graphic

1+1=10 Tons of Trouble
Other Issues: What Else Impacts Safety and Sobriety?
Instruction Sheet for 10 Tons of Trouble Exercise
Abuses Endured by a Woman During Her Life Cycle (Wheel)

The various Power and Control Wheels can also be helpful in illustrating the abuses of power involved in multi-abuse trauma.

Topic: Examples of Abuse

Discuss the different types of abuse that can happen to people with multi-abuse trauma issues. Examples include domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, societal abuse and oppression based on misperceptions about gender, race or ethnic group, disability status, sexual orientation, etc. Explore common elements of these different types of abuse. Examples of common elements may include physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, spiritual abuse, economic abuse, use of privilege by a dominant group, etc.

Handouts
Examples of abuse
Manifestations of Violence
Power and Control Wheel for Women’s Substance Abuse
Lesbian/Gay Power and Control Wheel
People with Disabilities and Their Caregivers: Power and Control
Violence Against Native Women
Immigrant Power and Control Wheel

Topic: Sorting Out Messages

People with multi-abuse trauma issues may be receiving services from several different providers. For example, they may be seeing a victim’s advocate for domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking, a treatment counselor for substance abuse or dependence, a therapist or psychiatrist for mental health issues, and a social worker for assistance finding housing if they are homeless. In the process, people experiencing multiple issues may begin to acquire multiple labels. People receiving help from a variety of sources may also hear messages that seem to conflict or contradict each other.

In the skit, “Mary Has All Kinds of Troubles,” ask for several volunteers from the audience to play the part of the “helping professionals,” the part of “Mary” (the person seeking services), and the part of a volunteer who will tape labels on “Mary” while the
“helping professionals” are speaking. Following this role-play exercise use the skit and the other handouts to discuss how to help people who use our services to better navigate conflicting systems and advice, as well as the pros and cons of using labels.

Note: You will need to do some advance planning for this skit. For each role, you may want to use a highlighting pen to highlight actors’ parts in their copy of the script to make it easier to follow. (For example, you will highlight the “substance abuse counselor’s” part in the copy of the script that you give to the person playing the role of the substance abuse counselor, the “mental health professional’s” part in the script given to the person playing the role of the mental health professional, etc.) Review the script and write assorted labels such as victim, drug addict, borderline, etc., on several sheets of 8 ½ X 11 paper. These can be taped on “Mary” by the volunteer while the “helping professionals” are verbally labeling this individual. Once you make up your labels you may want to laminate them for future use.

Handouts
Skit: Mary Has All Kinds of Troubles
Sorting Out Messages
To Label or Not to Label?

Topic: Unhealthy Social Messages
Naomi Michalsen, Executive Director of Women in Safe Homes in Ketchikan, AK, shares an exercise she uses to help people understand social attitudes and their impact on the personal level. Make a list of a couple dozen or so behaviors and attitudes often seen in our society, or in movies or on television. Some examples may include:

A coach telling boys, “You’re playing like a bunch of girls.”
Assuming girls are not as smart as boys at math.
Insisting a woman’s place is in the home.
Mud flaps on a truck with a woman’s silhouette.
A billboard that says, “Come see hot young chicks” and has pictures of baby chickens.
Ads or movies or television shows with violent themes or imagery.

Someone’s partner calls frequently or drives by their house to check if they’re home.
Shoving someone during an argument.
Hitting someone during an argument.
Being forced to have sex while on a date.
Rape/sexual assault by a stranger.

For each attitude or behavior on the list, ask, “Is this harmful?” When the group has discussed whether a particular item is harmful or relatively harmless, point out how things that may seem harmless or even funny can chip away at the value that society gives women, or may increase societal tolerance for violence or abuse.

Supplies
Newsprint paper and markers
**Topic: Why Don’t They Trust Us?**

Few things are more frustrating than trying to work with someone who obviously doesn’t trust us. However, past experiences with interpersonal violence and other trauma may have made trust difficult for the people who seek our services. Discuss some of these experiences, and how they might impact a person’s ability to trust others – including advocates, counselors and other service providers, as well as institutions and authority figures. Discuss ways for helping professionals to earn the trust of the people they serve.

**Handouts**

*Trust Isn’t Always Easy*

*Gaining Trust*

**Topic: Safety Planning**

Advocates for victims of interpersonal violence encourage the people they serve to develop a safety plan. However, “safety” can mean different things for different people. For individuals with multiple issues, safety, sobriety, wellness and accessibility may all need to be priorities. Discuss how a safety plan can be modified to include issues such as recovery from substance use disorders, mental health concerns, accessibility for people with disabilities, unsafe environments in a dangerous neighborhood or prison setting, etc.

Mental health providers, substance abuse counselors, disabilities advocates and other providers may also help the people they serve develop treatment plans, recovery plans, or other types of service plans. Discuss ways to incorporate safety issues into the plans created by these other providers.

**Handouts**

*Personalized Safety Plan*

*What Does Safety Mean?*

*Mini-Safety/Sobriety/Wellness Plan (With Instructions for Use)*

**Topic: Power and Control Dynamics**

Judith Herman, M.D., author of the book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, emphasizes most interpersonal trauma is embedded in a social structure that permits the abuse and exploitation of people in subordinate groups. Use Power and Control Wheels to illustrate all the various ways power is used and abused in our society, and in our personal relationships, to dominate and control others.

In addition to educating others about interpersonal violence, the wheels can be useful for exploring issues such as mental health concerns, substance use disorders, disability issues and various kinds of social oppression, with an eye toward ways power dynamics can
impact an individual’s ability to address these issues. The Wheels can also be used to explore the use and abuse of power in various settings ranging from intimate relationships to schools, social service agencies, other institutional settings and communities.

Use the “equality” wheels and community collaboration and accountability wheels as a basis for discussion of ideal behaviors and responses in personal relationships, institutions and the community.

**Handouts**
- Power and Control Wheel
- Abuse of Children
- Children Coping With Family Violence Wheel
- Power and Control Model For Women’s Substance Abuse
- People with Disabilities and Their Caregivers: Power and Control
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Trans: Power and Control
- Immigrant Power and Control Wheel
- Power and Control Wheel for Women Involved in Street Prostitution
- Violence Against Native Women: Battering
- Bullying Power and Control Wheel
- Power and Control in Dating Relationships
- Abuses Endured By A Woman During Her Life Cycle
- Equality Wheel
- Nurturing Children
- Mental Health System Power and Control: Empowerment
- People with Disabilities and Their Caregivers: Equality
- Natural Life-Supporting Power Wheel
- Ideal Institutional Response

**The Benefits of Collaboration**

Discuss the advantages when providers from different agencies/disciplines cooperate for the benefit of the people we mutually serve. Depending on the target audience, the Wheels can also be used to demonstrate characteristics of successful collaborations.

**Handouts**
- Advocacy Wheel
- Successful Collaboration Wheel
- Coordinated Community Action Model (Wheel)
- Community Accountability Wheel
- Community Faith Leaders (Wheel)
- Judicial Responses that Empower Battered Women (Wheel)
- Domestic Violence: A Cross-Cutting Issue for Social Workers (Wheel)
**Topic: Parenting and Children’s Issues**

Children may not talk about problems they witness in the home, so it can be tempting to think they don’t notice what’s going on, or that it doesn’t affect them that much. But research tells a different story. Discuss the impact of both substance abuse and violence on their children, as well as how to create a more positive environment for children.

**Handouts**

- Children Exposed to Domestic Violence and Substance Abuse
- Abuse of Children Wheel
- Children Coping With Family Violence Wheel
- Nurturing Children Wheel
- Safety Planning Interventions for Children

**Topic: Working for Change**

Many people who have survived trauma, especially trauma caused by interpersonal violence or social injustice and oppression, find working for social change aids their own healing process. People may call their efforts working for change, service to others, or carrying the message. Discuss contributions from a variety of social movements – the women’s movement, the recovery movement, the mental health movement, the disability rights movement and civil rights movement – that have made it easier for people to get help with problems that were once denied or stigmatized. Discuss how to help survivors work for change while maintaining their own safety.

**Handouts**

- Can One Person Make a Difference?
- Writing a Letter That Gets Attention