DEFINITIONS

Child Sexual Abuse: Any sexual behavior between a child and someone who has power over the child is sexual abuse. This is true even if the child agreed to participate. The difference in age and power between a child and an older person makes informed consent impossible. Examples of sexual behaviors that constitute abuse include touching or fondling in a sexual way by an older person, asking the child to touch the older person in a sexual way, and asking the child to look at pornographic movies or magazines, undress or pose in a sexual manner for a photo.

Chronic Homelessness: HUD’s definition of a person who is “chronically homeless” is an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years. In order to be chronically homeless, a person must have been sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation – e.g., living on the streets – or in an emergency homeless shelter (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2007).

Complex Trauma: A term used by mental health professionals to refer to a condition that can result from prolonged and repeated abuse, especially if the abuse began in early childhood or came from multiple sources (Herman, 1997, 2009; Warshaw, 2010). Complex trauma involves traumatic stressors that are repetitive or prolonged; involve direct harm and/or neglect and abandonment by caregivers or ostensibly responsible adults; occur at developmentally vulnerable times in the victim’s life, such as early childhood; and have great potential to severely compromise a child’s development (Courtois and Ford, 2009). Complex trauma is also referred to variously as complex traumatic stress or complex psychological trauma (Courtois & Ford, 2009) and complex posttraumatic stress disorder (Herman, 1997, 2009).

Disability: Under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), an individual is considered to have a “disability” if she or he has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment. Examples offered by ADA of major life activities include seeing, hearing, speaking, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, learning, caring for oneself, and working. Disabilities that fall under this definition range from epilepsy, paralysis and HIV infection to a substantial hearing or visual impairment, intellectual impairment, and various learning disabilities (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2002).

Domestic Violence: Domestic violence as defined by the American Psychological Association (APA, 1996) is: “a pattern of abusive behaviors including a wide range of physical, sexual, and psychological maltreatment used by one person in an intimate relationship against another to gain power unfairly or maintain that person’s misuse of power, control and authority.” Domestic violence, simply stated, is an attempt to control the behavior of an intimate partner. Abuse is a misuse of power that uses the bond of
intimacy, trust, and dependency to make an intimate partner, man or woman, feel unequal, powerless and unsafe (IDHS, 2000).

**DSM-IV-R:** The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Revised, published by the American Psychiatric Association. The manual provides a common language and standard criteria for the classification of mental disorders, and is used in the United States and in varying degrees around the world by clinicians, researchers, health insurance companies and others.

**Empowerment Philosophy:** An approach favored by advocates who work with domestic violence and sexual assault survivors, this philosophy acknowledges competency and offers support, resources, advocacy, information and education, striving to equalize power between individuals and their environment. Emphasis is on safety and empowerment, support and access to resources, accountability for abusers and perpetrators, and social change.

**Historical Trauma:** Cumulative trauma – collective and compounding emotional and psychological wounding – both over the life span and across generations. In other words, it is trauma upon trauma that occurs in history to a specific group of people, causing emotional and mental wounding both during their lives and the generations that follow (AIFACS, n.d.).

**Homelessness:** In general, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) divides “residential instability” into two broad categories: “literally homeless” and “precariously housed” (HUD, 2007). “*Literally homeless*” includes people who for various reasons have found it necessary to live in emergency shelters or transitional housing for some period of time. This category also includes people who sleep in places not meant for human habitation (for example, streets, parks, abandoned buildings, and subway tunnels).

**Human Trafficking:** Human trafficking is best understood as modern-day slavery. Children and adults are trafficked through force, fraud, or coercion into sweatshops, domestic servitude, commercial sex, farm labor, begging, construction and many other forms of labor (Song & Thompson, 2005).

**Incarceration:** For purposes of this document, “incarceration” means being held in a state or federal prison, local jail, work camp or youth detention center.

**Intergenerational Grief:** Grief passed on from the generation experiencing the trauma to their children (the next generation) even though the children may not be aware of or have direct experience of the actual traumatic event. Unresolved grief can be passed on from parents to children to grandchildren and so on (AIFACS, n.d.).

**Internalized Oppression:** A form of oppression that occurs when individuals absorb society’s attitudes toward their group and direct those negative attitudes toward
themselves (Green, 2007). One can think of internalized oppression as the internalized police officer that keeps people in their socially prescribed place (Roy, 2007).

**Mental Illness:** The National Alliance on Mental Illness defines mental illnesses as medical conditions that disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning. Examples of serious mental illnesses include major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, panic disorder, post traumatic stress disorder and borderline personality disorder (NAMI, 2009).

**Motivational Interviewing:** An counseling approach which helps people change harmful behavior such as alcohol or drug abuse by exploring and resolving the ambivalence most people feel when they seek to make major changes in their lives (Rollnick & Miller, 1995). Emphasis is on respecting individuals’ right to make their own decisions as they are ready to do so, which makes the approach compatible with the empowerment approach favored by victims’ advocates.

**Multi-Abuse Trauma:** A term used by some advocates who serve survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. It refers to the multiple layers of oppression and trauma that may be experienced when an individual is impacted by multiple co-occurring issues that negatively affect safety, health or well-being. While advocates are not therapists or clinicians, the role of the advocate includes identifying barriers to safety, autonomy, services and justice. When multiple barriers exist, advocates should consider the possibility that the person seeking our help is a survivor of multi-abuse trauma. The term multi-abuse trauma describes not what is wrong with a person but acknowledges the many forms of harm that have happened to an individual. This framework makes it possible to understand behaviors that on the surface don’t make sense to us but make sense to those for whom we provide advocacy. It also provides a framework to explore multiple options with the people we serve.

**Neurodiversity:** The term, coined by autism activist Judy Singer, refers to a number of conditions resulting from neurological differences such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, intellectual impairments, schizophrenia and mood disorders. The emphasis in neurodiversity is placed on accepting differences, with people encouraged to focus on strengths associated with these conditions rather than focusing solely on “deficits” (Armstrong, 2010).

**Postcolonization Stress Disorder:** Condition which results from struggling with racism and cultural imperialism, as well as the imposition of mainstream culture as dominant and superior (Comas-Diaz, 2007). Psychological effects include depression, shame, rage and post-traumatic stress disorder.

**Post Incarceration Syndrome:** A set of symptoms present in many people who are currently incarcerated or recently released, caused by being subjected to prolonged incarceration in environments of punishment with few opportunities for education, job training, or rehabilitation. The symptoms are most severe in people subjected to prolonged solitary confinement and severe institutional abuse (Gorski, 2001).
**Precariously Housed:** People on the brink of homelessness. Individuals may be doubled up with friends and relatives or paying extremely high proportions of their resources for rent, and are often characterized as being at imminent risk of becoming homeless (HUD, 2007).

**Sexual Assault/Sexual Abuse:** Sexual assault and sexual abuse refer to any sexual contact without consent. Examples include rape, attempted rape, unwanted touching and child sexual abuse. The abuser could be a stranger, date, friend, lover or even a spouse or relative. Sexual abuse is often involved in domestic violence, and may be one way batterers abuse their partners.

**Sex Trafficking:** A subset of human trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age (Song & Thompson, 2005).

**Social Model Of Disability:** The social model of disability, based on a definition by the World Health Organization, identifies systemic barriers—inaccessible buildings, negative attitudes that result in prejudice and discrimination, and inadequate support—as the main factors in disabling people. The social model is held up as a contrast to the medical model of disability, which focuses on individual “deficits.” Proponents of the social model argue that while physical, sensory, intellectual, or psychological variations may cause individual functional limitation or impairments, these do not have to lead to disability unless society fails to accommodate and include people regardless of their individual differences (ASI, 2010).

**Societal Abuse:** Societal abuse refers to the disadvantages that a group experiences as a result of unjust social structures (Benbow, 2009). Examples include sexism, racism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination that grant variable human worth to individuals based on such factors as race or ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability or other status. Societal abuse is perpetuated by society through its dominant culture and values, or by its tendency to accept abusive behavior (Schwartz-Kenney et. al, 2001).

**Substance Use Disorders:** Substance use disorders involve dependence on, or abuse of, alcohol or other drugs, including the overuse or non-medical use of prescription drugs. Substance abuse is a destructive pattern of use of drugs—including alcohol—which leads to clinically significant (social, occupational or medical) impairment or distress. Often the substance use continues in spite of significant life problems related to that use. When a person begins to exhibit symptoms of tolerance (the need for significantly larger amounts of the substance to achieve intoxication) and withdrawal (adverse reactions after a reduction of the substance), it is likely that the person has progressed from abuse to dependence. Adapted by the Illinois Department of Human Services Domestic Violence/Substance Abuse Interdisciplinary Task Force from definitions developed by the American Psychiatric Association and the American Society for Addiction Medicine (IDHS, 2000).
**Trauma Informed Care:** Care by mental health and other professionals that is grounded in and directed by a thorough understanding of the neurological, biological, psychological and social effects of trauma and violence on humans and the prevalence of these experiences in persons who receive mental health services (Huckshorn, 2004).

**Type I Trauma:** Trauma caused by a single incident such as a serious car accident, a natural disaster, or a one-time episode of abuse or assault, and often involved in simple post-traumatic stress disorder as defined by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition Revised*, published by the American Psychiatric Association (Courtois & Ford, 2009).

**Type II Trauma:** Repetitive trauma such as child physical or sexual abuse, severe domestic violence or community violence that is ongoing and chronic (Courtois & Ford, 2009), and often involved in complex trauma.

**Wellness Recovery Action Plan™ (WRAP):** Used by mental health professionals, WRAP is a tool for promoting wellness and a structured system for monitoring symptoms through “Advance Directives.” An example of an advance directive: “If I cannot advocate for myself, please do this … and not this. Involve this person … and not this one.” Goals of a WRAP plan include teaching recovery and self-management skills and strategies, promoting wellness, reducing invasive therapies, decreasing the incidence of serious mental health challenges and decreasing stigma (Warshaw & Pease, 2010a).