Navigating the Criminal Justice System within a Support group

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Raphael House of Portland

- Emergency Shelter
- Transitional Housing Program
- Advocacy Center
- Youth Program
- DVRU/DVERT Response

Who We are
What is DVERT?
A voluntary program for victims of domestic violence in Multnomah County, Oregon

- Emphasis on providing a coordinated, multidisciplinary response
- Victim interested in prosecution and/or holding the offender accountable
- Highest risk / highest lethality cases

The Domestic Violence Enhanced Response Team
- Offender Accountability
- Victim Safety
- Focus limited resources on highest risk for recidivism and/or lethality
- Work closely with partners to achieve victim safety and offender accountability
- Increase capacity of professionals to effectively respond to high risk DV
Why a support group?

- Similar issues/themes relevant to survivors who are prosecuting
- Lack of understanding about how to navigate the CJS
- Guilt
- Witness tampering
- Lack of support from friends and family
- Need for restorative process/to heal

Enhancing DVERT Services with a Support Group
“Experiencing one’s self as being enhanced and empowered through the very process of counting on others for help.”

~ Irene P. Stiver
Women’s Growth in Connection: The Stone Center Writings
Facilitator Goals for Support Group
Setting the stage

• Planning
• Structure
• Guidelines
• Marketing

Support Group ~ Best Practice
- First names only
- Limited notes – can be subpoenaed
- Document topic covered and attendance only
- Require signed release of information to disclose above information
Advise group participants about what you are mandated to report and how that would look.

Discuss their responsibilities of confidentiality to the group and its members.
Location of Group
Room Set Up
Member intake
Co-facilitation
Snacks
Sign In Sheets
ROI’s
Handouts~Curriculum
Breaks

Facilitator Considerations
Structure of a Group

- **Group Guidelines**
- **Check In**
- **Topic**
- **Share Time**
- **Check Out**
- Co-facilitation
- Group Management
- Flexibility within the boundaries

Relational Skills in Group
Different types of groups

- Psycho-educational
- Educational
- Peer
- Therapeutic
- Other (Activity driven)
Power and Control Wheel
- Reflection
- Self esteem

Cycle of Violence
- Pattern
- Planning

Abuser Tactics
- Responsibility
- Prevention

Empowerment through Information
Participants

Come to group

Isolated

And create connections

Empowerment Through Peer Support
The core of connection
Planning for change
Building an army

The Life Cycle of a Group
Five Core values

- Safety
- Trustworthiness
- Choice
- Collaboration
- Empowerment

Support Group ~ Best Practice
Five core components

1. Provide survivors with information
2. Adapt group to meet survivors’ trauma and mental health-related needs
3. Create opportunities to discuss responses to trauma
4. Offering resources and referrals
5. Reflecting and evaluating our practice.

Trauma Informed Care
Ask yourself...

1. How might this make someone feel? What are some ways this group can support survivors to manage feelings?
2. How is the information provided?
3. How is the survivor experiencing the interactions? How can I support?
“Personal empowerment can be viewed only through the larger lens of power through connection,

through the establishment of mutually empathic and mutually empowering relationships.”

~Janet L. Surrey
Women's Growth in Connection: The Writings of the Stone Center
• Provide information/education about the CJS
• Empower victims in decision-making
• Create mentor relationships (survivors act as peer mentors)
• Provide emotional support regarding issues specific to survivors who prosecute
• Improve relationships with District Attorney’s Office
• Retention in prosecution process

CJS Group-Goals
“All you have to do is show up”

Compounding Issues -
• Trauma
• Family
• Job
• Services
• Children
• Other systems

Going through Prosecution Takes its Toll
Recruitment
Established relationships - pros and cons
Co-facilitation
Structure
Who shows up helps guide group
People at different stages of prosecution
Curriculum
Themes change as needs change
Not always CJS related
Healing is not always linear
Evaluations

How the Group Works
• Each of these topics can stand alone

• Topics may be used in any order

• These are examples only! Nothing is carved in stone. Be creative with these topics or come up with your own
Topic 1: Navigating the CJS

Exercise 1:
- Ask group what comes to mind (one word or short phrase) when they hear the phrase “Criminal Justice System.”
- Using ‘ideas storm’ format, write answers on flip chart, even if you do not agree with all the statements.

Exercise 2:
- Ask participants to share personal stories if comfortable. What was prosecution like for you? What are your questions/concerns about prosecuting?

Exercise 3:
- Discuss CJS flow chart and how DV crimes go from reporting to prosecution. Key players (police, DA’s, etc.). Hand out the flow chart and Terms/Definitions sheet.

Group Topics
Topic 2: Breaking the Cycle of Violence

Exercise 1:
- Discussion: What’s one thing your abuser used to tell you about yourself that you knew wasn’t true?

Exercise 2:
- Discuss cycle of Violence and share personal experiences with these phases.
- Discuss breaking cycle and how abusers attempt to continue cycle during & after prosecution
- Safety Planning – witness intimidation and tampering tactics.

Exercise 3:
- Discuss where you want to be one year from now.

Group Topics
Topic 3: Recognizing and Responding to Triggers

Exercise 1: Discuss triggers. Ask participants if they have heard of triggers and share experiences about triggers.

Exercise 2: Define triggers for the group. Distinguish between panic attacks and trigger responses.

Exercise 3: Discuss grounding techniques and how they can be used for containment of triggers.

Exercise 4: Walk participants through several grounding activities (guided meditation, visualization, breathing, etc).

Group Topics
• Safety Planning
• Gratitude
• Boundaries
• Self-care
• Needs
• Rights
• Identifying Strengths
• Affirmations
Affirmation Cards
• Issues and barriers in addition to abuse
• It’s a layering of experience/trauma/strengths
• Recognizing multiple challenges and strengths creates opportunity to help survivors learn coping skills with prosecution and other life challenges

The onion theory
Different places in the journey
Different levels of mentorship

Mentorship and Co-facilitation
From Surviving to Thriving

Survivors’ Testimonials
Conclusions and Recommendations

- Safety and Confidentiality are special considerations for survivors prosecuting
- Be flexible in your approach and planning
- Work respectfully within the partnerships
- Be knowledgeable about the criminal justice system
- View all your work through a trauma informed lens
- Buy pizza
Questions are guaranteed in life; Answers aren't.