

Rural Sexual Violence Response National Conference

Transforming—Ourselves. Our Community. Our Response.



Focus Groups for Social Change

Bree Adams Bill, Praxis Program Director

Diane Docis, Praxis Senior Program and Training Specialist



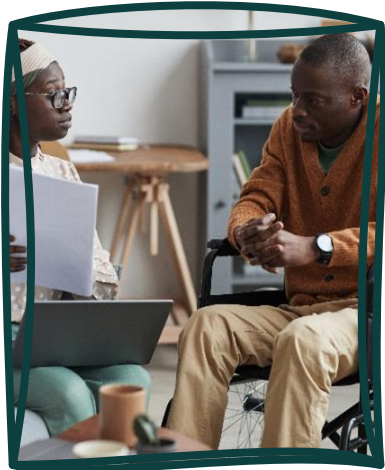
About MNCASA

MNCASA is a statewide coalition driving transformative culture change to address sexual violence through advocacy, prevention, racial justice, and systems change.

We envision a world free of sexual violence in which all human beings are treated with dignity and respect and communities are transformed through safety, healing, and partnerships.



Our Work



ADVOCACY

We provide leadership and resources to advocates in providing services to all victims/survivors in their communities.



PREVENTION

We work to prevent harm and address root causes of sexual violence using an anti-oppression lens.



RACIAL JUSTICE

We work toward a Minnesota where BIPOC survivors have access to safety, affirmation, and systems they can trust and use.



SYSTEM CHANGE & POLICY

We invest in community-focused work alongside our efforts to transform systems, prioritizing underserved communities.

Praxis Presenters



Bree Adams Bill
Program Director



Diane Docis
*Senior Program and
Training Specialist*



Learn. Act. Transform.

Mission:

Praxis advances transformative change to end gender-based violence and establish equity.

Praxis Programs & Initiatives

Rural
Comprehensive
Training & Technical
Assistance

The Advocacy Learning Center

Institutional
Analysis
Programming

The Strengthening
Rural Advocacy
Project

Partner on special projects

Our Time Together

- Working Agreements
- Social Change Advocacy
- Focus Groups
- Creating Change
- Closing

Praxis's Working Agreements



Working Agreements (1)

Praxis works to end gender-based violence by eliminating all forms of oppression and creating equity in the world as well as within our organization. Promoting equity necessitates challenging interpersonal manifestations of oppression. The purpose of the Working Agreements is to guide peer-to-peer interactions and organizational practices for all staff and board members.

Working Agreements (2)

The Agreements rely on individual reflection, truth-telling, transparency and loving acknowledgment of the ways in which we all have power and privilege, by:

- **Honoring Ourselves**
- **Honoring Others**
- **Honoring Our Communities**
- **Honoring Our Spaces & Places**

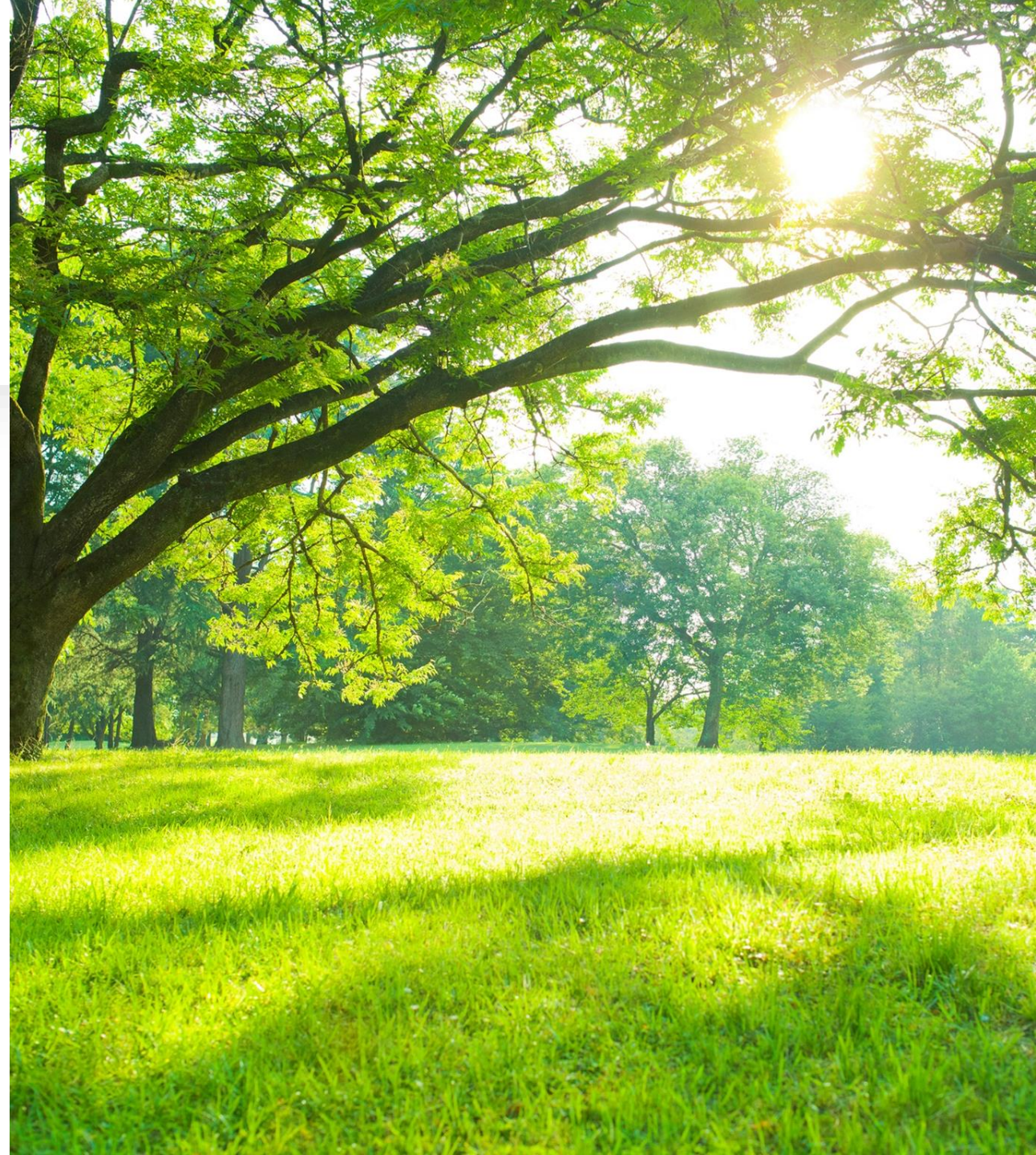
Working Agreements (3)

- We agree to respect and embrace our differences and our similarities
- We agree to promote balanced participation and open discussion
- We agree to assume good intentions and assume the best of each other
- We agree to be fully present and focus on the work at hand
- We agree to attend to our needs by nurturing ourselves mind, body and spirit

Working Agreements (4)

- We agree to disagree respectfully
- We agree to do our best to be good allies
- We agree to name oppression when it surfaces and to not repeat oppressive misinformation after we have learned otherwise
- We agree to respect each other's privacy
- We agree to start and end on time

**What do you enjoy
most about
summer?**



Defining Social Change Advocacy



Individual Advocacy

- Acting to make change on behalf of **individual** survivors



Institutional (Systems) Advocacy

- Acting to change an institutional response on behalf of **groups** of survivors



Community Advocacy

- Acting to change aspects of our **society/culture** that generate and/or maintain gender-based violence



Harness Collective Power

Understand the violence as oppression

Change root causes of oppression

Work collectively with survivors

Focus on survivors' experiences & needs

A Movement Toward Justice

The movement towards justice requires that the:

- Truth be told
- Harm be repaired
- Conditions that give rise to injustice & violence be eradicated

--Archbishop Desmond Tutu

What is a Focus Group?



Defining Focus Groups



GROUP INTERVIEW



TOPIC-SPECIFIC



PURPOSE

Types of Focus Groups

Program staff

- Advocates
- Social services

Community members

- Survivors
- Experts

System practitioners

- Forensic nurses
- Child welfare workers

Survivor Considerations

Address general topics

Focus on experiences with programming & interventions

Recognize how culture plays a role in experience

Attention to intersecting social problems

Participant Considerations

Share their experiences and the impact of that experience on their lives

Are free to share what matters the most to them

Develop awareness and knowledge of others' experiences

Why Focus Groups?



Transformative for Survivors

Liberating

Reflective

Intersectional

Centering

Connection

Healing



Transformative for Community

Insightful

Collaborative

Centering

Evaluative



Where to begin?



Planning Areas

Recruitment

Accessibility

Costs

Roles and responsibilities

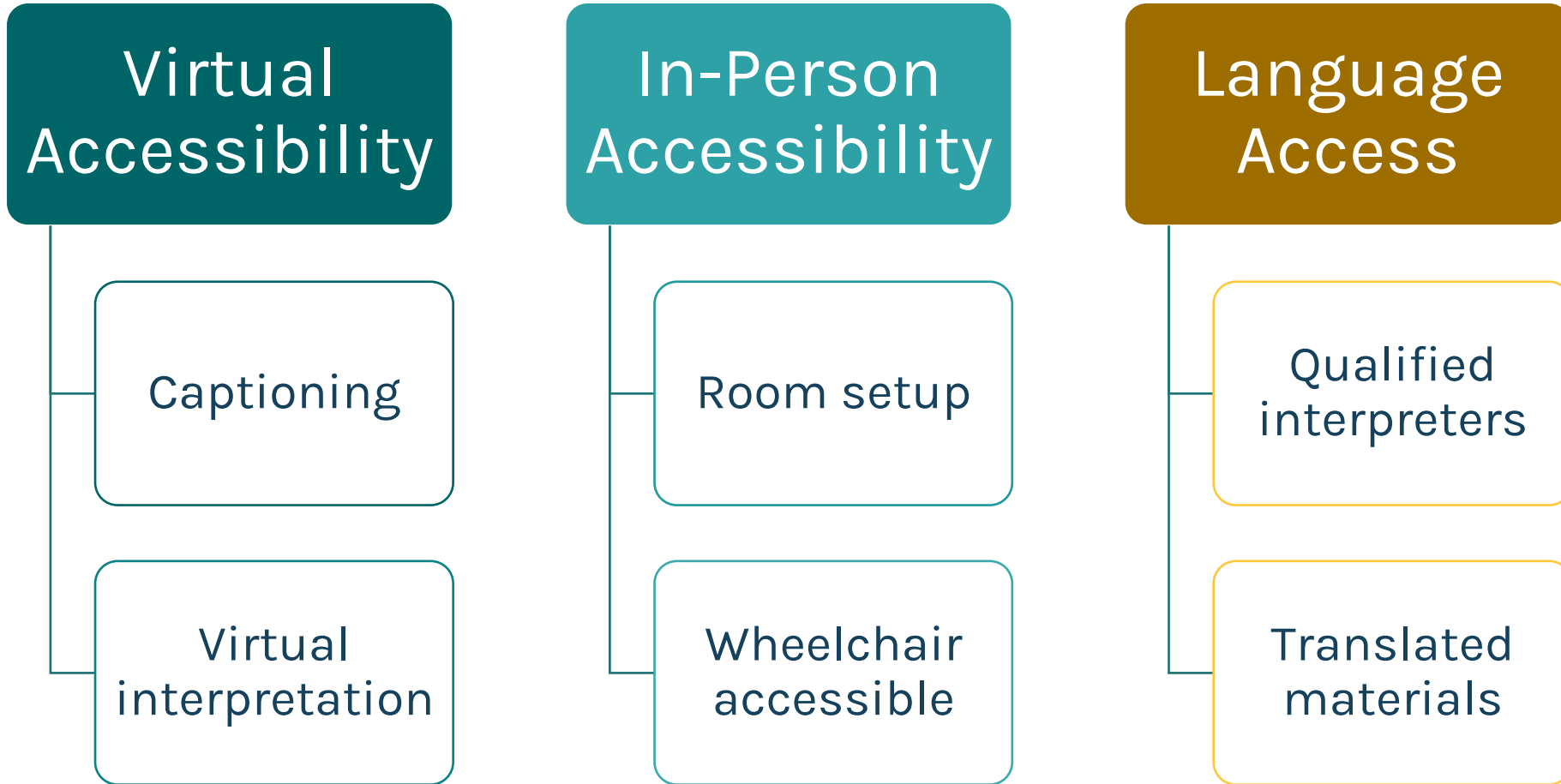
Implementation

Recruitment

- Ideal group size: 5-8 people
- Who: depends on focus
- Who: marginalized communities in your area
- Consider outreach options



Accessibility



Costs

Participants' time

Travel and childcare

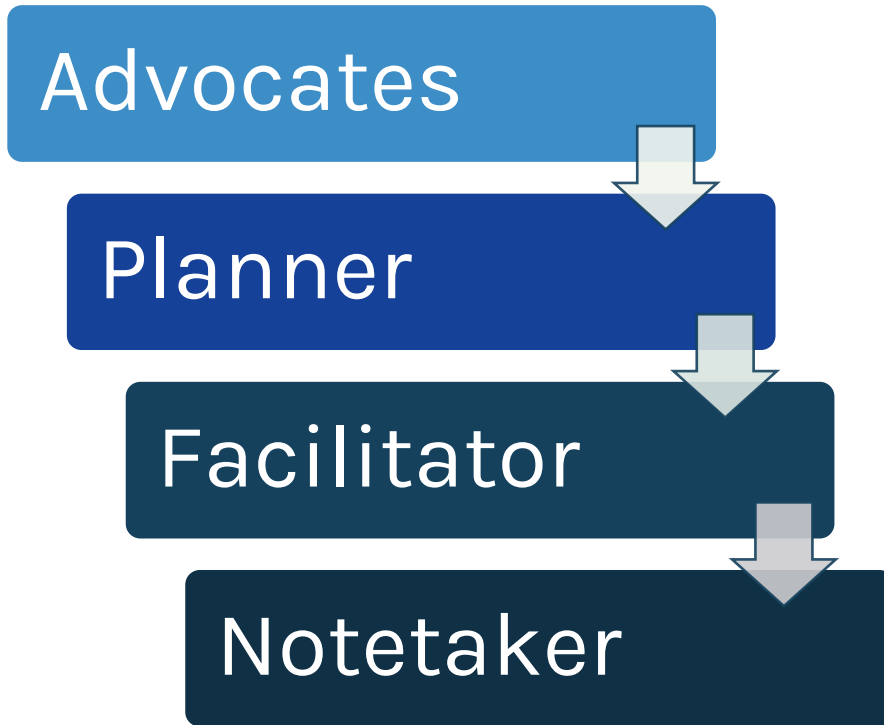
Food and beverages

Interpreters

Translation materials



Roles and Responsibilities



Other Considerations

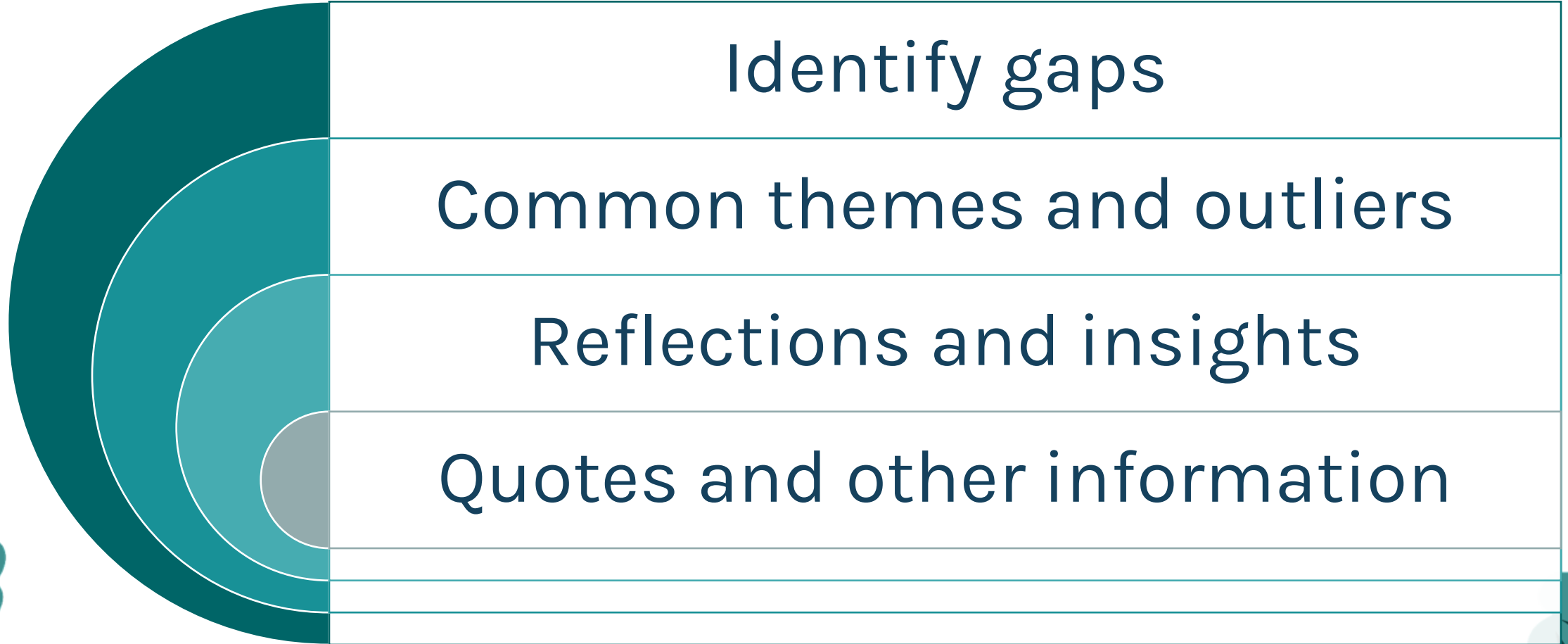
- Participant safety and wellbeing
- Location
- Time



Creating Change



Focus Group Debrief



What's next?

Develop summary

Share summary

Strategize for change



Support Survivor Involvement

- Stay connected
- Share with them how their insights contributed to change
- Share opportunities for creating change



Activism can be a path to justice, meaning, healing.



Questions?

Thank you

P R A X I S



Join our mailing list:
info@praxisinternational.org



Survivor Focus Group Facilitator Guide

Opening the Focus Group

Who are we?

- ✓ Introduce facilitator, note taker, advocate(s), and interpreters, if applicable

Why are we here?

- ✓ Explain project: We are here to learn about how different systems have been helpful or unhelpful in their response to survivors and their children.
- ✓ Your part in the project: We want participants to be “co-researchers” with us as we explore how the system may improve advocacy services and enhance safety for people who have experienced gender-based violence. Your individual and collective voices are important to the development of our responses and how we work towards ending gender-based violence in our community.

What will be asked about?

- ✓ Your experiences, both negative and positive, interacting with systems
- ✓ The impact the response had on your and your children’s lives
- ✓ What was helpful and not helpful
- ✓ Recommendations you have for change
- ✓ We are not asking you to share any of the details of the violence that you have experienced.



Explain Informed Consent Agreement; collect signed forms. Emphasize:

- ✓ Your participation is voluntary. Anyone can leave anytime. There are no right or wrong answers. Be candid. It is okay if you disagree with each other or have had different experiences.
- ✓ Comments are confidential. No identifying information will be shared outside of the group. No names will be attached.
- ✓ Notes [or a recording] will be taken. (If recording, ask if there are any objections. Be prepared to not have permission to record the session. If even one person objects, do not record.)
- ✓ An advocate is available for support during and after the focus group.
- ✓ Explain process for collecting compensation (now or at the end of the discussion).
- ✓ Explain what will happen with the notes and/or recording afterward.

Discuss ground rules/working agreements:

- ✓ Use first name (or pseudonym) only
- ✓ One person speaks at a time
- ✓ The identity of other participants, any comments you hear or situations you observe while participating in the group should not be shared with anyone else.
- ✓ We would like to hear from every participant, but you can decide not to respond to any question.
- ✓ To ensure all voices can be heard, we apologize in advance if we need to interrupt you to move on to another person or question.
- ✓ Session will last about **[90 minutes or however long you planned]**
- ✓ Any questions before we begin?



- ✓ So that we get more comfortable with each other, let's go around the table and introduce ourselves. Please give your first name only (or pseudonym), and tell us your favorite (flower, food, television show, etc.).

Facilitating the Focus Group

Asking questions: The following are examples of questions that can be asked during a survivor focus group. They are provided as cues to the facilitator. They are not intended to be a script to follow verbatim. We hope they serve as reminders of paths you might want to follow, or should be listening for, in the discussion. Many questions have suggestions for topics you may want to ask more about. It's also possible that the group's conversation may lead you to think of other questions to explore.

Caution: remember that the purpose is to learn about the survivors' insights and experiences. Be careful not to concentrate on the wording of a question so much that you miss opportunities for dialogue with participants.

- 1) How did you first hear about the **[program name]** and what made you decide to reach out to **[program name]** for help?
- 2) How did you first connect with **[program name]** and how was that experience for you?
 - a) What worked well and what would you suggest be improved about your first contact with the program?
- 3) What was your experience with the services and support you received from **[program name]**?
 - a) Did you decide not to participate in any services? If so, what stopped you from participating in them?
 - b) What worked well and what would you suggest be improved about the services you participated in from the program or system?



- c) Were there any services that the **[program name]** did not offer, but you wish they had?
- d) Did you get the help you hoped for from **[program name]**?
 - i) If not, what were you hoping they would provide that they didn't?
 - ii) If so, what was the help you received?
- 4) What was your experience specifically working with the staff at the **[program name]**?
 - a) Was there anything staff did that was really helpful?
 - b) Was there anything staff did that was unhelpful?
- 5) What could **[program name]** do to make it easier to access and/or utilize their services?
- 6) If you are done receiving services from the **[program name]**, would you reach out to them again if you needed support in the future?
 - a) Would you recommend others to the **[program name]**? Why or why not?
- 7) Are there ways that the services you received from **[program name]** gave you support or tools to help you advocate for yourself?
- 8) Are there any ways that the services you received from **[program name]** helped you be part of working to create positive changes in your community?
- 9) If you could say anything else about your experience with the **[program name]**, what would it be?

Closing the Focus Group

Thank you for being willing to share your experiences with us. This is such valuable information, and it will help make things better for survivors accessing **[program name]** services in the future. If you want to talk to someone more about what you have been through or need help dealing with your situation, contact **[program name]**. Also, please reach out to **[contact name]** at **[program name]** if you want to continue to be involved in efforts to change the way our



community responds to this type of violence. There are many ways to be involved and staff at the program will have ideas for you. Thank you again.



Participation in a Survivor Focus Group Consent Form [Sample]

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of a Survivor Focus Group to share your experiences with the **[program name]** to help identify ways we may improve our services. Your personal account of what was helpful and what may be improved – for you, your children and/or your community - is valued and important. It will help us determine what changes need to happen to improve services and enhance safety for people who have experienced gender-based violence.

The Survivor Focus Group will happen in a discussion format with other survivors. Any information you share will be strictly confidential. Your comments during the discussion group will be documented, but all identifying information (names and other identifiers) will be removed.

The notes from the Survivor Focus Group will be used to create a summary of the group's input, which will be used to inform the **[program name]** about how to improve the way it provides services to survivors and how to enhance its work to end gender-based violence. The summary will include themes and key insights and may also incorporate direct quotes. No names or other identifying information will be included in this summary or with the quotes. The notes will be permanently deleted after the summary is written. The summary may be shared with other programs, our consultants, and/or the community as we explore how to strengthen our organization.

Please read this form and let us know if you have any questions. We encourage you to ask any and all questions before signing this form. Your signature serves as an agreement to this form's content.

By signing this form, you agree to participate in the Survivor Focus Group.

Specifically, you agree to:

- 1) Participate in one Survivor Focus Group at **[time]** on **[date]**.
- 2) Respect the privacy of the other focus group members by not discussing what they share outside the session.
- 3) Participate and share information as you are comfortable.



Signing this form also acknowledges that you understand notes will be taken during the Survivor Focus Group and that these notes will not contain any information that would identify you personally.

Benefits and Risks of Being in the Survivor Focus Group

Benefit: This is an opportunity to provide your insight, experiences, and suggestions to help shape how **[program name]** may better help people experiencing gender-based violence and their children in the future, as well as strengthen their ability to end gender-based violence.

Risk: We will primarily ask you to discuss your experiences accessing and receiving advocacy services from **[program name]** and your ideas about how **[program name]** can improve their work to end gender-based violence. Since participants will be talking about personal experiences during the discussion group, sensitive issues may arise. There is a risk that you or others may become upset or that the discussion may trigger painful memories, thoughts, or feelings. You may leave the group at any time to speak to one of our advocates and/or talk with them at any point after the Survivor Focus Group is over.

Risk: We commit to keeping your identity confidential, but there is a risk that others may not. If you wish, you may use a pseudonym or a made-up name for yourself and your children so that you will not be identifiable to those in the group whom you do not know. Again, any information from the Survivor Focus Group will be kept without identifying information or names.

Risk (remotely held groups only): This focus group will be conducted through an internet-based video conference, and while there is always a possibility of a security breach, we have taken all precautions to ensure the video conference is secure and safe. If a breach should occur, the video conference will be ended immediately, and we will reach out to you individually to make sure you are okay. If you use the video during the focus group, participants will be able to see what is behind you when you are on camera. Even if you do not use video, participants will be able to hear background noise. You are welcome to stay off-camera during the Survivor Focus group and/or muted when you are not speaking. If you would



like to participate from an alternate location, we can help you make arrangements.

Your Participation is Voluntary

Your decision to participate in the Survivor Focus Group is completely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with **[program name]**. If you decide to take part in the Survivor Focus Group, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Upon completion of the discussion, you will be provided a **[cash or gift card]** stipend for your participation. You will be asked to sign a receipt that you received this amount. Light refreshments will be provided.

Contacts and Questions

The person facilitating the Survivor Focus Group will be **[name, organization, city, state]**. If you have questions or any concerns about your rights or treatment as a participant in this group, you can contact **[facilitator name, contact information]**.

Statement of Consent

I have read and understand the information above and give my consent to participate in this Survivor Focus Group. I agree to maintain the privacy of other group members. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Name (please print) _____

Signature _____ Date _____



Planning Focus Groups with Survivors

Recruitment Plan	Notes
○ Where and how can we best reach participants?	
○ How will we include participants that have been historically marginalized?	
○ What individuals or organizations should we partner with to recruit?	
○ How will we know what each participant needs and expects to participate (food allergies, accessibility needs, childcare, interpretation, etc.)?	
○ What recruitment materials do we need and what will they say? Do they need to be translated?	
○ How will we make it clear that participants will not be required to describe the details of the violence they have experienced?	
Logistics	Notes
○ How will we decide to hold a virtual/remote or in-person focus group?	



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is the language access plan (interpreters, translation of materials, sound enhancement, captioning) for those with limited-English proficiency, or Deaf individuals, or those who are hard of hearing? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Any safety, wellbeing or privacy concerns with the space (virtual or in-person)? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is the space physically accessible (including building entrance, room setup and bathrooms)? Service animal relief area? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is the location easy to reach? Parking available? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is there space for food/snacks? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How and where will we provide support and advocacy before, during and after the focus group? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What materials need to be prepared (consent forms, stipend receipts)? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How will we take notes and/or record? 	
<p>Compensation</p>	<p>Notes</p>



○ How much and in what form (cash, gift card, other) will we provide a stipend for each participant? How will we disperse the stipend?	
○ Will we provide or reimburse for transportation?	
○ Will we provide childcare on site or a stipend?	
○ What food will we provide for adults and children?	
○ What receipts are required for accounting?	
Roles	Notes
○ Who will facilitate and do they reflect the communities we want to learn from?	
○ How will facilitators be prepared or trained?	
○ Will facilitators use any materials or handouts?	
○ How will we open the focus group (explain the purpose, intended use of information, confidentiality, consent, etc.)?	



<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ What questions or areas of discussion will guide the facilitator?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How will we keep the discussion focused on participants' experiences with our program?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Who will take notes and how?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How will we prepare notetaker (quotes, transcription, summary of discussion, etc.)?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How will we handle requests for copies of notes taken during the focus group?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How will we stay connected to survivors following the focus group? Particularly for survivors who may desire ongoing advocacy?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How will we invite survivors to participate in opportunities to provide more input, or volunteer, or be involved in social action?	