

# *Partnering to Increase Service Access*

## Collaboration Charter

### Introduction:

During planning year one, there is a core group comprised of all primary partner agency staff allocated to the collaboration grant. The Strategic Plan will be developed by this group and will be based upon results of the community needs assessment and the intersection of the primary partner agencies shared areas of interest, influence, and presence.

The first year's activities will include building and deepening the relationships among all primary partners, creating a shared vision and mission statement, identifying the goals of the needs assessment, developing the collaboration charter defining the various roles and responsibilities for collaboration members, and planning and implementing community needs assessment activities.

During this process and as the partnering agencies identify training and technical assistance needs, these needs will be met through cross-agency initiatives which may include training, and the sharing of information pertaining to domestic violence, sexual assault, caregiver abuse, civil, legal, and service needs of individuals with a range of disabilities and individuals who are members of the D/deaf community.

The strategic planning process will be developed in collaboration with all primary partner agency staff and will include the design and implementation of a community needs assessment, and summarizing the results.

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### Agencies Represented in This Collaboration:

1. Advocacy, Inc. – Texas State Protection and Advocacy Organization
    - a. Mary Faithfull – Executive Director
    - b. Jeff Garrison-Tate – Policy Services Manager
    - c. Faye Kuo, Deaf Rights Attorney
  2. DAWCAS – Deaf Abused Women and Children Advocacy Services\*
    - a. Vonnie Basham – Program Director
  3. SafePlace - Disability Services ASAP (A Safety Awareness Program)
    - a. Wendie Abramson – Program Director
    - b. Michelle “Shell” Schwartz – Training Manager
    - c. Heather Kamper – Training Specialist
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\* During the Planning Year of this grant project, Vonnie Basham participated as a representative of DAWCAS on the collaboration. In November of 2007, DAWCAS will dissolve and will no longer provide services. SafePlace is hiring two staff to better meet the needs of the d/Deaf community and there is a possibility that the staff that are hired for these positions may join the collaborative in the future.

### **Vision Statement:**

We envision that people who are D/deaf or have disabilities live free from domestic and sexual violence and other forms of abuse.\*

\*This statement does not reflect the world as it is, but rather our values and beliefs about the world as it should be and our work leads us closer to this...our dream. Our work is about believing in the vision and living the dream.... **(Adopted by team on 4.16.07.)**

### **Mission Statement:**

To advance policies, practices and services that ensure culturally aware, sensitive and fully accessible responses to members of the disability and D/deaf communities regarding domestic, caregiver and sexual violence. **(Adopted by team on 4.24.07.)**

### **Values:**

The following values were identified as important factors to our work together:

- Access to opportunity
- Accessibility
- Awareness including self-awareness
- Constitutional and civil rights to self-determination and equal access
- Cultural competence
- Access to education and information
- Empowerment
- Inclusion
- Independence
- Information about options
- Inter-dependence
- Language / communication access
- Respect
- Right to ask
- Safety in the community
- Sensitivity

### **Decision-Making Process:**

Internal and external conversations between two partner agencies and among representatives of each partner agency is acceptable. However, project decisions will not be made without input and representation from all partnering agencies.

The vision and mission statements will provide the team with a check and balance in decision making processes and will guide the overarching purpose of the collaborative. Members of the collaborative will strive to use a consensus-based model for decision making, especially for decisions impacting the goals, values and direction of the collaborative. Staff members representing the core partnering agencies (Advocacy, Inc., DAWCAS\* and SafePlace) will participate actively in decision making processes. Before decisions are finalized, representatives

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\* Until November 30, 2007

from each of the partner agencies will have the opportunity to give input and share any concerns. The exception to each team member giving input is when a team member misses a project meeting and there are representatives from all partners present to make a decision so that the project timeline is not held up.

When it appears that there are polarized views/opinions about an issue or legitimate concerns are raised, the “*Gradients of Agreement Scale*” (see attached) will be used as a tool to gain a sense of member’s opinions on various issues impacting project decisions, which may range from endorsement to opposition. At any point during discussion where there appears to be disagreement or conflict, any team member may suggest that the *Gradients of Agreement Scale* be used as a check in to measure and clarify the strength and rationale of opinions by each team member and as a tool to support decision making. It is the facilitator’s responsibility to lead these discussions and help the group identify, address, and attempt to resolve any concerns posed by team members. When concerns appear to be resolved, the facilitator will ask the group if there is consensus for the decision. If there are objections or concerns that just can not be resolved for consensus for a decision, the facilitator will call for a vote. Each agency will have one vote and the following persons have the authority to vote as representatives of their agency: Wendie Abramson will vote as the SafePlace representative, Vonnie Basham will vote as the DAWCAS representative\* (checking in with the DAWCAS Board President on controversial issues), and Mary Faithfull will vote as the Advocacy, Inc. representative. The majority vote is the determining factor when consensus can not be reached in these situations.

### Conflict Resolution:

When conflict occurs between partnering agencies, that conflict will be discussed and resolved between the representatives of those two agencies. If both parties agree, a neutral third party or another team member may be asked to help facilitate their dialogue.

Respectful and ethical communication practices will be used in managing disagreements and conflicts between two individuals or two agencies. Partners agree that when there is a difference of opinion, each will provide opportunities for the other to express their thoughts or opinions. As mentioned in the decision making section of the charter, the *Gradients of Agreement Scale* can be used to determine the relative difference in opinions impacting the conflict and to help clarify and move toward resolving concerns/conflicts. Partners will attempt to negotiate and make compromises so that there is a satisfactory outcome of both parties involved in conflict.

### Confidentiality Protocol:

Confidentiality standards for this collaborative will be maintained collectively according to mutual respect, accountability, and integrity. No identifying information will be disclosed unless by consent in the form of a signed release provided by the participant and only with identification of a clear purpose of sharing the information. Any personal experiences of abuse shared by focus group participants and interviewee’s will remain strictly confidential among the members of this collaboration.

Collaborative members recognize and have discussed that there are certain regulations and legal requirements that impact each member organization and the confidentiality requirements to which

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they are held. For example, attorney and client privileges between clients of Advocacy, Inc., non-disclosure laws between domestic violence and sexual assault programs about acknowledgment of whether any person is receiving or has ever received services, and requirements for mandatory reporting to Adult Protective Services.

Confidentiality and a safe environment must be established among collaborative members and needs assessment participants (in focus groups and individual interviews) so that openness and honesty about the needs related to domestic and sexual violence supports and services can be identified through this project. In the course of conducting the needs assessment and later during the implementation phase of this project, participants will be informed that their participation does not mean that they are a client of AI, DAWCAS\* or SafePlace.

However, we do recognize that each participant could seek out the services of any participating agencies independent of participation in needs assessment and implementation activities, or independent of referral by collaborative members, or as result of referral information systematically provided to each focus group and interview participant.

The remainder of this section spells out the roles of the protection and advocacy organization should rights violations and/or current abuse be identified in the course of conducting project activities.

#### Confidentiality and Advocacy, Inc. (AI)

Advocacy, Inc. is the Texas protection and advocacy organization and is a core member of this project's collaborative. Because of AI's role, collaborative members understand that there are legal implications and possible consequences of Advocacy, Inc.'s involvement with focus groups and interviews should specific rights violations be identified.

However, AI will not use this project as a vehicle to look for or identify rights violations and they will not use the collaboration as the vehicle for bringing about an investigation. Should AI staff become aware of a rights violation as a result of their participation in throughout this project, they will first contact the offending organization to offer information and technical assistance and work with them to bring about a corrective action. If the organization refuses their assistance and refuses to improve accessibility, AI may begin an investigation independent of this collaborative and initiate a legal case against that organization from within their own agency. However, specific referrals to Advocacy, Inc., will not be offered should a participant disclose a rights violation in the course of needs assessment or implementation activities. Again, each participant will be systematically provided with referral information for victim service and disability advocacy organization including AI, DAWCAS\* and Advocacy, Inc.

AI may also begin an investigation if a complaint is received outside of the collaboration although that complainant may also be participating in a needs assessment or implementation activity. Should this be the case, AI will not ask for or use needs assessment or implementation data nor reveal to the collaborative members that a case has been initiated or is in progress. Advocacy, Inc. will not reveal a complainant or discuss information regarding an investigation or legal action

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related to potential rights violations with 1) a collaborative member, 2) a partnering agency, 3) a needs assessment participant, or 4) a partnering agency or participant in the implementation phase for this initiative. AI's role in this project is one of building relationships and collaboration and coordination with partnering agencies.

Collaborative members clearly understand that AI's role and legal mandate is to take action and be an enforcing entity when the rights of individuals with disabilities and who are D/deaf are violated. This has been communicated and documented within this charter and during project and team meetings. AI's role as a rights enforcer will be initiated only if other corrective actions and offers of assistance are not successful.

#### Confidentiality and data collection and sharing

SafePlace will have primary responsibility for organizing and analyzing needs assessment data. Project partners will be provided general information only on results of the needs assessment and data analysis and conclusions will be organized and shared in aggregate and through reports that are general in nature. Advocacy, Inc. will not create individual attorney and client relationships with participants within the context of collecting needs assessment data nor conducting implementation activities. DAWCAS\* and SafePlace will not establish service provider and client relationships within the context of collecting needs assessment information nor in the context of conducting implementation activities. We recognize that participants may independently of assessment and implementation activities contact AI, DAWCAS\* or SafePlace and of their own initiative begin a client and provider relationship. We also acknowledge they made do so as result of referral information for victim service and disability advocacy agencies systematically provided to each focus group and interview participant.

#### Communications:

Partnering agencies agree that the preferred method of communication in-between meetings is by email regarding --but not limited to-- the following tasks: reminders including meeting dates, times and locations; topics for the next meeting; and circulation of information requiring more immediate response or feedback or input in-between meetings. To ensure timely response when the communication is urgent, team members agree to send email using read receipt and identifying urgent or time sensitive mail in the subject line. The text of "please reply" will be used to indicate urgency as well as use of exclamation point to tag mail needing an immediate response. When email communication is not sufficient for the matters at hand, partnering agency representatives will communicate by telephone or in-person. Deciding upon telephone or in-person conversations is at the discretion of individual collaboration team members wanting to discuss an issue that they believe is too complex to delve into via email. Relevant information from telephone or in-person meetings will be summarized for partnering agencies at the next scheduled meeting of the collaborative.

SafePlace will be responsible for scheduling and paying for sign language interpreters for all project meetings. The preference is to use interpreters representing Communication Services for

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the Deaf (CSD). In emergency situations or when interpreters are not available from CSD, SafePlace will contract with Communication by Hand for interpreter services.

All external communication and publicity surrounding the project will be managed by SafePlace as the lead agency. SafePlace will communicate with OVW and Vera on grant related and technical assistance matters. SafePlace's existing external communications protocol for media requests will be followed. SafePlace may route media requests specifically related to the D/deaf community to either DAWCAS\* or Advocacy, Inc. for a response. Media requests relevant to the civil and legal rights of people with disabilities may be routed to Advocacy, Inc. for a response.

## Meetings:

The formal collaboration meetings will take place once or twice each month during the planning year. At a minimum, one break will be offered for every 2 hours of meeting time. Meetings during the planning year will be facilitated by Shell Schwartz. Once the project's strategic plan is developed and approved by OVW, a meeting plan for the implementation year will be devised by the team. Preparation for each meeting agenda will reflect the project's work plan, current goals, action items for previous meetings, and input from the key agency representatives. SafePlace, as lead agency for the project, will be responsible for developing meeting agendas and distributing to all members prior to collaborative team meetings. Team members from all of the collaborative partners may request that items be included on the agenda. Process notes will be taken during each meeting to document who attended, discussions that transpired, and the intentionality of why and how decisions were made. Process notes will include an executive summary and will be distributed to all team members. Heather Kamper will serve as the Process Historian. The collaboration meetings will rotate between SafePlace and Advocacy, Inc. as DAWCAS offices are located on the SafePlace campus.

## Key Terms/Acronyms:

**Caregiver abuse:** refers to what happens when a caregiver begins to exert their will over the will of the person with a disability. It can involve any kind of abuse or maltreatment. It is the abuse of power in a relationship where the individual with a disability should have the right to absolute safety in her/his environment.

**Caregiver:** refers to one or more persons (professional or non-professional) assisting another person with tasks which the individual would typically do for themselves if they did not have a disability (Litvak, 1991).

**Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART):** is the instant translation of the spoken word into English text using a stenotype machine, notebook computer and real-time software. The text appears on a computer monitor or other display. This technology is primarily used by people who are late-deafened, oral deaf, hard-of-hearing, or have cochlear implants. Culturally deaf individuals also make use of CART in certain situations. CART is also often referred to as real-time captioning.

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**Domestic or Family Violence (DV):** Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation. Domestic violence occurs within intimate relationships and abusers can be spouses, partners, boyfriends/girlfriends, family members or caregivers. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic or psychological actions or threat of actions that influence another person. Abusers use different tactics to achieve power and control including actions that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, or injure someone.

**ICF-MR:** An Intermediate Care Facility for Individuals with Mental Retardation is an institution (or distinct part of an institution) that: 1) is primarily for the diagnosis, treatment, or rehabilitation of individuals with mental retardation or related conditions; and 2) provides, in a protected residential setting, ongoing evaluation, planning, 24-hour supervision, coordination, and integration of health or rehabilitative services.

**ILC:** Independent Living Centers are typically non-residential, private, non-profit, consumer-controlled, community-based organizations providing services and advocacy by and for persons with all types of disabilities. Their goal is to assist individuals with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential within their families and communities. ILCs also serve as a strong advocacy voice on a wide range of national, state and local issues. They work to assure physical and programmatic access to housing, employment, transportation, communities, recreational facilities, and health and social services. These are just a few of the services offered. There are nearly 500 ILC's in the USA.

**P & A:** The Protection and Advocacy (P&A) System and Client Assistance Program (CAP) comprise the nationwide network of congressionally mandated, legally-based disability rights agencies. P&A agencies provide legal and other advocacy services, under all Federal and State laws, to all people with disabilities (based on a system of priorities for services). All P&As maintain a presence in facilities that provide services and care for people with disabilities, where they monitor, investigate and attempt to remedy adverse conditions. These agencies also devote considerable resources to ensuring full access to inclusive educational programs, financial entitlements, healthcare, accessible housing, productive employment opportunities and voter access. The CAP programs provide information and assistance to individuals seeking or receiving vocational rehabilitation services under the Rehabilitation Act, including assistance in pursuing administrative, legal and other appropriate remedies. Each state has a designated federally funded, federally mandated, P&A.

**SANE:** A Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner is a registered nurse who has advanced education and clinical preparation in forensic examination of sexual assault victims. In the 1990s, SANE programs began to address the inadequacy of the traditional model for sexual assault medical evidentiary exams. Victims are often re-traumatized when they come to hospital emergency departments for medical care and forensic evidence collection. Where they exist, SANE programs have made a profound difference in the experience and quality of care provided to sexual assault victims. SANEs offer victims prompt, compassionate care and comprehensive forensic evidence collection.

**Sexual Violence / Assault (SA):** Sexual violence or assault is any form of unwanted or nonconsensual sexual activity. Sexual assault is a form of violence that uses sex to intimidate, humiliate, control or instill fear in another person. This includes any forced or unwanted sexual

activity, rape, incest and sexual abuse. Sexual assault can occur by use of threat or force or under any circumstance where a person is incapable of consenting. Sexual assault is a crime.

**State Hospital:** One of 11 facilities located throughout Texas that house individuals with mental illness and other disabilities and provide mental health services for individuals who have been referred by their local outpatient MHMR center for intensive in-patient psychiatric care. The focus of treatment in these facilities is stabilization of acute psychiatric illness and discharge to the community. Most individuals who receive services through a state hospital stay only a few days before discharge to the community. However, some individuals are housed for longer periods of time and receive either adolescent or adult forensic psychiatric services.

**State School:** One of 13 residential facilities run by the State of Texas that currently primarily house people with profound mental retardation and individuals who have multiple disabilities. Contrary to its name, the focus of such facilities has changed over the past century and now these schools serve primarily as housing with a decreased focus on education. This shift in residents came as a result of the 1965 Texas Mental Health and Mental Retardation act that supported individuals with mild mental retardation and other developmental disabilities to live with their families and in the community. These schools are run under the Federal ICF-MR program (see above for definition).

**Terp:** Terp is a word used as an abbreviation for ‘interpreter’ and refers to a sign language interpreter.

Action Implementation Plan  
Year 1 – January – December 2007

Month	Activity and Milestones	Member(s) Responsible
October 2006	Grant Awarded – 1 year planning grant Governance Team meets	WA, MF, VB
November 2006	Schedule travel for new grantee orientation	SS
December 2006	New Grantee Orientation, San Jose, California	SS, VB, MF
January 2007	Updates to project staff from Orientation Meeting	SS
February 2007	Discuss overarching purpose of collaboration, process for meetings Begin work on our vision and mission statements Develop “Interest Survey” and prepare presentation for State Independent	All  All  HK, VB

	Living Council (SILC) conference	
March 2007	Revisit collaboration structure (governance, communication, conflict resolution, decision making and meeting facilitation).	All
	Revise collaboration structure to reflect 1 team during planning year rather than 2 separate teams (governance/implementation).	All
	Continue work on vision statement and began work on mission statement.	All
	Present at SILC conference Compile Interest Survey data	HK,VB VB
April 2007	Adopt vision and mission statement. Identify additional team member from Advocacy, Inc.	All MF
	OVW/Vera Site Visit II	WA, VB, MF, HK, SS
	Develop binders for each team member	HK
May 2007	All Site Meeting, Providence Rhode Island	WA, SS, MF, FK, VB
	Adopt needs assessment goals.	All
	Identify and elect "Confidentiality Goddess"	All
	Submit project mission/vision to OVW	WA
	Attend Priority Setting meetings at Advocacy, Inc.	WA, MF, JT
June 2007	Participate in conference call for Texas Council on Family Violence sponsored Allies to Survivors with Disabilities network	WA, SS, VB
	Project Directors conference call	WA
June 2007	Finalize format for process notes and begin regular distribution	HK
	Develop and adopt collaboration charter	All
	Develop work plan for Community Needs	All

	Assessment Complete Collaboration Factors Inventory	WA, SS, VB, MF
July 2007	Develop Community Needs Assessment Protocol	SS, HK, WA,
August 2007	Training on facilitating focus groups  Continue Needs Assessment Plan development  Project Directors conference call	VB, MF, FK SS, HK, WA VB, MF, FK, WA  WA
September 2007	Submit continuation application to OVW	WA
October 2007	Needs Assessment plan to Vera and OVW for review	VB, MF, FK, WA
November 2007	All Site Meeting in St. Louis, MO	VB, FK, HK, SS, WA
December 2007	Develop recruitment flyers and submit to Vera/OVW Begin recruitment for Needs Assessment activities	HK, SS, WA  All
January – April 2008	Implement Community Needs Assessment	All
May-June 2008	Organize and analyze results of Needs Assessment	SS, HK, WA, FK, VB
June 2008	Draft and submit Strategic Plan to Vera and OVW Identify communities for additional Needs Assessment Activities	WA  All

WA = Wendie Abramson

VB = Vonnie Basham

MF = Mary Faithfull

HK = Heather Kamper

FK = Faye Kuo

SS = Shell Schwartz

JT = Jeff Tate

## Member Agency Descriptions:

### Advocacy, Inc.

Advocacy, Incorporated is an organization whose primary mission is to advocate for, protect and advance the legal, human and service rights of people with disabilities according to Advocacy Inc.'s federal mandate as a protection and advocacy organization.

### DAWCAS (Deaf Abused Women and Children Advocacy Service)\*

DAWCAS provides victim services to people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf/Blind, and Late Deafened. DAWCAS serves people of all ages, races/national origins, and sexual orientations.

### SafePlace

SafePlace exists to end sexual and domestic violence through safety, healing, prevention and social change. The Disability Services Program works to ensure accessible victim services to individuals with disabilities provides personal safety education to individuals with disabilities and works to improve disability services organizations' response to survivors of violence who have disabilities.

## Member Agency Roles and Responsibilities:

### SafePlace:

SafePlace will act as the lead agency for this project and will manage and coordinate the day-to-day activities of the grant. These activities include coordinating and facilitating meetings, scheduling sign language interpreters, managing communications among the partnering agency staff (including process notes), administering grant funds, providing fiscal, administrative, and program accountability and serving as the lead in managing information gathered from the community needs assessment. SafePlace project staff will collaborate with other partners to design and conduct the community needs assessment, take the lead in summarizing the results for the collaboration, and developing and implementing the project's strategic plan. SafePlace will provide information, knowledge and technical assistance as needed related to domestic violence, sexual assault and providing sensitive and accessible victim services to survivors of violence. At least one agency representative will participate in the Texas Council on Family Violence's "Allies to Survivors with Disabilities" network. SafePlace will work with team members to identify technical assistance needs and participate in technical assistance provided by Vera Institute of Justice and ensure that at least one representative attends all grantee meetings hosted by Vera. SafePlace will take a lead role in drafting the collaboration charter and creating work plans.

### Advocacy, Inc.:

Advocacy, Inc. will collaborate with other partnering agencies to plan and implement the community needs assessment and develop a comprehensive strategic plan based on the findings of the community needs assessment. Advocacy, Inc. will work with the partnering agencies to design, conduct and summarize results of the community needs assessment and develop and implement the project's strategic plan. Advocacy, Inc. will provide information and knowledge and

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\* Until November 30, 2007.

technical assistance related to the civil and legal rights of people with disabilities and the D/deaf community to collaborating partners throughout the project. As necessary, Advocacy, Inc. will participate in other activities such as defining key terms, creating a vision and mission statement, creating work plans, developing the collaborative charter, participating in technical assistance offered by Vera Institute of Justice and ensuring that at least one representative attends all grantee meetings.

### DAWCAS\*:

DAWCAS will collaborate with partnering agencies to develop a needs assessment and strategic plan to address gaps and barriers related to needed services for survivors of violence with disabilities and who are D/deaf. DAWCAS will work with the partnering agencies to design, conduct and summarize results of the community needs assessment. DAWCAS will also provide information, knowledge and technical assistance related to the D/deaf community to collaborating partners throughout the project. As needed, DAWCAS will conduct other activities such as defining terms, creating a vision and mission statement, developing the collaborative charter, creating a work plan, participating in technical assistance services offered by Vera Institute of Justice, sending a representative to attend grantee meetings, compiling Interest Survey data and sharing the information with team members, and participating in the Texas Council on Family Violence's "Allies to Survivors with Disabilities" network. DAWCAS staff will also serve as the collaborations monitor for issues related to confidentiality (i.e., confidentiality Goddess is Vonnie Basham).

## Adoption of Charter

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Date of Adoption

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Mary Faithfull – Executive Director  
Advocacy, Inc. Representative

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Vonnie Basham – Program Director  
DAWCAS Representative

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Wendie Abramson – Program Director  
SafePlace Representative

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\* Until November 30, 2007. At that time, (if needed) another member of the collaboration will be chosen to act as the collaboration monitor for confidentiality issues (i.e., Confidentiality Goddess).