

Strategic Plan

Equal Access to Safety Initiative
Hampden County, Massachusetts

Spring 2010

Build Collaboration

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Assessment of Strengths and
Areas in Need of Improvement

Strategic Planning

Strategic Plan

The Equal Access to Safety Initiative Hampden County, Massachusetts

Section 1: INTRODUCTION

The Equal Access to Safety Initiative is a collaboration between Goodwill Industries of the Pioneer Valley (Goodwill) and the YWCA of Western Massachusetts (YWCA). The Initiative is funded by a three year grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women to enhance services for people with disabilities and Deaf people in Hampden County, Massachusetts, who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Senior staff members from the YWCA and Goodwill comprise the Initiative Team. They carry primary responsibility for this project. A full time project manager staffs the project.

Goodwill Industries of the Pioneer Valley <http://www.ourgoodwill.org/> is a provider of vocational rehabilitation services. In addition Goodwill offers residential and family support services; a day service option for adults with developmental disabilities; and a full range of workforce development services designed to assist individuals motivated to work but with barriers to employment.

The YWCA of Western Massachusetts <http://www.ywworks.org/> is a leader in providing services to battered women, pregnant and parenting teens, at-risk youth, and victims of sexual assault. The programs and services reflect a commitment to the provision of safe shelter and supportive service options for women and children. Services include two battered women's shelters, rape crisis programs, housing and legal advocacy, young parents programs, family violence programs, youth and young women's programs, employment and training programs, mentoring programs, and sexual assault prevention education programs.

The Team met for a number of months to build an effective, mutually beneficial collaboration. As a part of the planning process significant time was spent on developing understanding of shared mission, vision, goals, values, and assumptions. The Team has worked to build the foundation for a strong, long-term collaboration. This has included significant sharing of information about each organization, communication, confidentiality,

decision-making, and areas of potential concern. In addition, key terms to be used by the collaboration have been defined. Mandated reporting requirements in Massachusetts and other mandates were reviewed for potential implications for the project.

A. The Vision for the Initiative

We envision an inclusive service delivery system that provides a safe, accessible, respectful environment for people with disabilities and Deaf people who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

B. The Mission of the Initiative

The mission of the Equal Access to Safety Initiative is to enhance services for people with disabilities and Deaf people who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault so that each organization, both individually and collectively, responds effectively to their needs.

This will be accomplished by enhancing services for people with disabilities and Deaf people who have experienced domestic violence and sexual assault through:

- Cultivating a culture and environment that responds in a respectful and inclusive manner.
- Creating policies and practices that focus on responsiveness, accessibility, safety and the promotion of seamless services.
- Fostering collaborative and cooperative relationships between members of the collaboration.
- Integrating each discipline's knowledge and expertise.
- Eliminating physical, attitudinal, cultural and programmatic barriers that prevent people from accessing services that are timely, supportive and responsive.
- Ensuring the delivery of appropriate assistance at whatever point a person enters the system.

Section 2: Needs Assessment Plan, Implementation and Report

A. Needs Assessment Purpose

In order to understand and effectively meet the needs of people with disabilities and Deaf people who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault, the Initiative Team has undertaken a Needs Assessment. The purpose of the Needs Assessment has been to gather practical information on existing policies, procedures, practices, knowledge, and attitudes at the YWCA and Goodwill that impact the people with disabilities and Deaf people

we serve who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Information from program participants, staff, board, and stakeholders has informed us of strengths and areas in need of improvement at Goodwill and the YWCA.

The information gathered in the Needs Assessment will be used to develop a strategic plan with manageable and achievable goals in keeping with our Initiative goals. The focus of the Initiative is on the YWCA and Goodwill. It is on organizational change within the two organizations and on the relationship between the two organizations.

Each organization views strong collaborations between the organizations as a means to meeting participant needs in a safe, accessible, and welcoming environment, as well as furthering their organizations vision, mission, and goals. The Needs Assessment is another step in building the strong foundation for the work of this collaboration.

B. Needs Assessment Goals

Each organization in the Initiative has a long-standing commitment to a participant-centered approach to service delivery, and to policies and procedures that focus on the needs of participants. Both organizations are committed to providing appropriate, responsive, safe, accessible quality service, including embracing new approaches to service delivery and systems change. Both organizations are committed to respecting differences, including but not limited to language, race, gender, religion, age, ethnicity, sexual identity, socio-economic status, abilities, and disabilities. This includes treating participants, colleagues, and others with respect and acceptance. In working toward our goals for the Needs Assessment, Strategic Plan, and Implementation following the Strategic Plan, these commitments will always be kept in the forefront.

Goal 1:

Identify programmatic and physical barriers to receiving timely, appropriate, quality services at each agency, as well as strategies that support and facilitate access and increase responsiveness.

Goal 2:

Identify cultures and attitudes of each organization that support or limit a welcoming, accessible, safe, and supportive environment for survivors with disabilities.

Goal 3:

Identify the existing policies, procedures, practices - strengths and areas in need of improvement - and those that are missing at each organization to provide timely, appropriate quality services.

Goal 4:

Identify knowledge and attitudes at:

- Goodwill related to domestic violence and sexual assault;
- YWCA related to disability, Deaf culture, and accessibility;
- Both agencies related to the intersection of these issues.

Goal 5:

Identify how the YWCA and Goodwill can work together most effectively to serve survivors with disabilities within the context of the greater social service system in Hampden County, Massachusetts.

C. Content of the Needs Assessment Plan

The Needs Assessment Plan included:

- Background information
- An overview of methods used in collecting information
- Information on who was recruited to participate in the needs assessment process and how many actually participated
- How safety considerations, access considerations, confidentiality, mandatory reporting, and the consent process would be addressed
- Storage of information gathered in the needs assessment process
- Focus group, interview and survey questions and tools for program participants, board members, staff, volunteers and interns
- Information on mandated reporting

D. Content of the Needs Assessment Report

The Needs Assessment Report included:

- A brief overview of the Needs Assessment Plan
- A brief overview of Needs Assessment Methodology
- Focus group, interview and survey participation
- Key findings from the Needs Assessment
- Conclusions

E. Content of the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan includes:

- An overview of the Needs Assessment Methodology
- An overview of Needs Assessment Participation
- A summary of the Needs Assessment Key Findings
- An overview of Short-Term Implementation Initiatives
- An overview of Long-Term Implementation Initiatives
- Conclusions
- Appendix: Work Plan

Section 3: Needs Assessment Methodology

A. Introduction

Approval of the Needs Assessment Plan developed by the Initiative Team was received from the Office on Violence Against Women. Shortly thereafter the Team started implementation of the Needs Assessment Plan. The Equal Access to Safety Initiative used three methods for gathering information from agency staff and program participants: focus groups, interviews, and surveys. Safety considerations, access considerations, confidentiality, mandatory reporting, and the consent process were all addressed in recruiting people to participate in the process and during the information gathering.

Program Participants:

The Equal Access to Safety Initiative used focus groups and interviews to gathering information from YWCA and Goodwill program participants. Program participants included survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault served by the YWCA and people with disabilities served by Goodwill. An effort was made to include a cross section of individuals served in different programs at both agencies.

We did not specifically recruit for nor design focus groups or interviews for people with disabilities or Deaf people who have experienced domestic violence and / or sexual assault aside from one Deaf woman who is a survivor living in the YWCA shelter who was offered an individual interview. She was asked the same questions asked of other survivors from the YWCA with additional questions specific to providing services for Deaf people at the shelter.

Agency Staff, Board, Volunteers, and Interns:

The Equal Access to Safety Initiative used three methods for gathering information from agency staff, board, volunteers, and interns: focus groups, interviews, and surveys. An effort was made to include a cross section of staff from different programs at both agencies working in Hampden County. The interviews included Team members from both the YWCA and Goodwill and senior managers from both organizations. Focus groups included every level of staff. Surveys were sent to staff, volunteers, and interns in Hampden County as well as to board members.

B. Consent, Confidentiality, Mandatory Reporting, Safety, and Access

Consent, confidentiality, mandatory reporting, safety, and access were addressed in the opening remarks of each focus group or interview. The remarks received prior approval from the funder.

- A passive consent process was used. People were asked for verbal consent at the beginning of the focus group or interview. Passive consent was clearly outlined by the focus group facilitator or interviewer in their opening remarks.

- Confidentiality was reviewed in the opening remarks for each focus group and interview. It was explained that no identifying or personal information would be collected and that the facilitation team would keep all information confidential. Focus group participants were asked to keep information discussed confidential.
- No personal information was collected. The focus group recorder did not note specific identifiers. The Initiative Team members received information collected in the broadest possible terms, minimizing identifiers as much as possible. No identifying information has been included in any aspect of the Needs Assessment Report. No individual identifying information was shared.
- Massachusetts has very strong mandatory reporting requirements. All staff at both agencies are mandated reporters. Mandated reporting requirements were reviewed in the opening remarks of all focus groups and interviews. People were provided information and phone numbers to self-report abuse or neglect. There were no disclosures during the Needs Assessment implementation that required mandating reporting so no mandated reports were filed.
- All program participant focus groups and interviews were held at the agency where they received service and were accessible for the individuals attending. All staff focus groups were held at the YWCA and were accessible for the individuals attending. All staff interviews were held at the agency where the individual works and were accessible for the interviewees. R.S.V.P. forms allowed people to request accommodations.
- No one was allowed to observe any focus group or interview. No personal care attendants were allowed to attend.
- To the best of our ability, sites selected for focus groups and interviews were where people could feel safe. We understand that each individual self-determines safety. No one requested adjustments be made for safety for a focus group or interview.
- Language interpretation and American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters were made available when needed.
- All written materials, questions, and scripts were in language intended to be appropriate for the program participants.
- All program participants received a \$10.00 Wall-Mart gift card for attending a focus group or interview. Staff were not offered a gift card.

C. Focus Group, Interview and Survey Participation

Altogether we spoke directly to one hundred and fifty-seven (157) people.

1. Program Participants:

Ninety-nine (99) of the one hundred and fifty-seven (157) people we spoke with directly were program participants; one hundred (100) program participants were projected, meeting our goal.

- Focus Groups: Thirteen (13) participant focus groups were projected with a total of ninety-eight (98) participants projected; ninety-two (92) participants came. Eleven (11) of the groups were held as scheduled. At two (2) of the groups an insufficient number of people attended. Both of these were converted to interviews.

- Interviews: Two (2) interviews were projected with one individual at each. Five (5) interviews were held. Three (3) consisted of one individual each. Two (2) consisted of two individuals each.
 - Surveys: There were no surveys for program participants.
2. Agency staff, volunteers, interns and board members:
 Fifty-eight (58) of the one hundred and fifty-seven (157) people we spoke with directly were staff; fifty-three (53) staff was projected, exceeding our goal.
- Focus Groups: Forty-two (42) staff were projected to participate in focus groups; forty-seven (47) participated, exceeding our goal.
 - Interviews: Eleven (11) staff were projected to participate in interviews and eleven (11) did, meeting our goal.
 - Surveys: Survey responses were received from sixty-eight (68) staff, volunteers, interns and board members combined for a fifty-four percent response rate, a disappointing response.

Section 4: Key Findings

Through a Needs Assessment the Equal Access to Safety Initiative identified six key findings. It should be noted that there is some overlap between findings.

1. Policies/ Procedures/ Intake/ Mandated Reporting

There is a need for clearer policies and procedures to better meet the needs of survivors with disabilities and Deaf people and to increase application of those that currently exist. We need to aid staff in using the mandated reporting requirements to support survivors with disabilities and Deaf people. We need to refine our intake procedures to more fully understand the needs of survivors with disabilities and Deaf people.

2. Accessibility/Barriers

We found that there are areas for improvement in both agencies in accessibility of services to support full participation for survivors with disabilities and Deaf people. Barriers to access include physical, environmental, communication, attitudinal, and programmatic in varying degrees in different programs within each agency.

3. Welcoming/Safe

We found that survivors were able to disclose violence or abuse in their lives if they felt safe and welcome at the agencies which includes being respected, listened to, acknowledged, and allowed to proceed at their own pace without judgment. Generally, program participants feel safe at both agencies. Generally, program participants feel welcome at both agencies, with some variability in specific programs.

Confidentiality

Balancing privacy and confidentiality to the satisfaction of program participants, staff, funders and legal entities is always a challenge. Both agencies would benefit from ongoing

dialogue on how to maintain this balance and how to communicate these challenges to program participants and staff.

4. Knowledge/Training/Awareness

We found a lack of knowledge and awareness at both agencies on: abuse; disabilities; risk-assessment; accommodations; mandated reporting; communication skills; confidentiality; policies and procedure; responding to disclosure; sexual harassment prevention in the workplace; as well as the programs and services offered by the other agency in addition to their own. Additionally, there is a need for opportunities for experiential learning. All should be incorporated into orientation and offered on an ongoing basis.

5. Other

Staff managers, staff leaders, and board members at both agencies expressed strong support for the Initiative goals but are realistic as to the challenges of implementing organizational change.

Section 5: The Strategic Plan

Utilizing Key Findings, Implications and Potential Solutions from the Needs Assessment the Team considered a range of possible short-term and long-term initiatives. Discussion included a review of the Initiative Vision and Mission. The initiatives selected all fall directly with the Equal Access to Safety Initiative mission of providing a safe, welcoming, accessible, respectful environments for people with disabilities and Deaf people who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual violence YWCA. They are all within the grant parameters. The selected initiatives will build a strong foundation for future work together. They are feasible with current resources. They can realistically be done well and within the time-frame of the grant.

A. Short Term Initiatives in Brief:

The Equal Access to Safety Initiative Team (Collaboration Team) met throughout the Needs Assessment process to discuss what they were hearing from program participants and from staff. Utilizing key findings, implications and potential solutions from the Needs Assessment Report, the Team considered a range of possible short-term and long-term initiatives. Discussion included a review of the Equal Access to Safety Initiative vision and mission and a renewed commitment to systemic change in the partner organizations. All of these were kept in mind in considering potential Strategic Planning Initiatives.

The Equal Access to Safety Initiative Vision is:

We envision an inclusive service delivery system that provides a safe, accessible, respectful environment for people with disabilities and Deaf people who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

The Mission of the Equal Access to Safety Initiative is:

To enhance services for people with disabilities and Deaf people who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault so that each organization, both individually and collectively, responds effectively to their needs.

A renewed commitment to the Equal Access to Safety Initiative was also made by agency CEOs. The work of the Equal Access to Safety Initiative is shared with the Board, senior staff and key stakeholders of both agencies on an ongoing basis. This will continue throughout the Implementation Phase of the project to increase the likelihood of successful outcomes.

Through a strategic planning process, five short-term initiatives were selected to be completed during the remaining time on the grant. The Strategic Planning Initiatives are a direct response to the Needs Assessment Findings described in depth in Section #3 of this Plan. Consideration was given to initiatives that could realistically be done well and done within the time-frame of the grant while creating sustainable systems change in each agency and simultaneously enhance the collaboration between the agencies.

The five Initiatives are:

Initiative #1: Mandated Reporting

Initiative #2: Policies, Practices, Intake, Safety Plans, Handbooks, Supplemental Resources

Initiative #3: Knowledge, Training, Awareness

Initiative #4: Communication Access

Initiative #5: Enhancing Collaboration / Serving Survivors

Initiative #1 - Mandated Reporting:

The Collaboration Team will review Mandated Reporting requirements through the lenses of disability, domestic violence, sexual assault and safety for participants and staff. Recommendations will be made for changes following a review of current policies and practices. Changes will be incorporated into staff and participant orientations and trainings. Each organization will have a better understanding of the perspective of the other agency and how mandated reporting impacts the culture of each organization.

Initiative #2 – Policies, Practices, Intake, Safety Plans, Handbooks, Supplemental Resources:

The outcomes of Initiative #2 will address policies, practices, intake, safety plans, handbooks and supplemental resources within each organization and cross organization for people with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault. They will provide staff with clearer direction on working with participants. They will also provide staff with improved direction in working with each other within their agencies and between agencies. They will impact safety, welcoming, and accessibility of the environments at both organizations independently and together. The work of Initiative #1 will be woven into Initiative #2 as they are interrelated.

Initiative #3 – Knowledge, Training, Awareness:

The outcomes of Initiative #3 will institutionalize the work of Initiatives #1 and #2. Through new knowledge, training, and awareness staff will begin to change behaviors. The organizations will become more welcoming, safe, respectful and accessible. Through training and cross-training current and future staff at both agencies will benefit from the

work of the collaboration. Staff at both agencies who have not been involved in the project will have new and different opportunities to learn from each other and get to know each other.

Initiative #4 - Communication Access:

The outcomes of Initiative #4 will include a variety of changes in communication to increase access for program participants and staff. Activity #1 will entail review and modification of select agency materials for alternative formats. Materials will be changed to easily understood language. Some will be printed in Braille. Activity #2 will identify and purchase adaptive/assistive technology to increase access to services for people with disabilities and Deaf people who are victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault. Activity #3 will increase access to American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters who have an understanding of disabilities and domestic violence/sexual assault by providing a mini-training specifically for interpreters in the region. Through these activities people with disabilities who are victims will have increased access to services.

Initiative #5 - Enhancing Collaboration / Serving Survivors:

The outcomes of Initiative #5 will institutionalize the relationship and the sharing of expertise between agencies in the Collaboration. The agencies need to increase collaboration and communication between the agencies in order to meet the needs of survivors with disabilities. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) will be developed for: working collaboratively, information and knowledge sharing, and case consultation.

Additional Comments:

All of the Initiatives are interconnected, each dependent on the foundation of the others. All are centered on the Equal Access to Safety Initiative mission of a *delivery system that provides a safe, accessible, respectful environment for people with disabilities and Deaf people who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault.*

The initiatives are ambitious and will require extensive work by the Collaboration Team and other staff. The Initiatives will increase staff knowledge, awareness, tools, techniques resources, and communication in providing services to participants who are disabled and/or Deaf people who are victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault. The agencies will be welcoming, safe, respectful, and accessible for participants and staff to the extent possible within the timeframe. The Collaboration Team remains committed and enthusiastic given the potential outcomes.

B. In-Depth Overview of Short Term Initiatives

Work Plan:

Appendix A includes an in-depth work plan for all short term Initiatives. The work plan includes detailed steps, time-line, deliverables, and who will be responsible. All initiatives are tied directly to the Needs Assessment completed by the Equal Access to safety Collaboration Team during the winter of 2010.

INITIATIVE #1: Mandated Reporting

❖ Initiative #1 - Activity #1 – Mandated Reporting

Justification:

Mandated Reporting is a legal mechanism for the protection of vulnerable adults. It can be a disempowering process for survivors. In Massachusetts all agency employees are mandated reporters. The Needs Assessment findings indicate a need to aid staff in understanding how to provide support for survivors during the Mandated Reporting process. Staff also would benefit from learning techniques for increasing survivor empowerment, where appropriate, given how disempowering the process can be.

Both agencies include basic information on mandated reporting in their orientation and have annual training on mandated reporting. There was some confusion for most Goodwill staff between reporting an incident through mandated reporting and responding to the needs of a participant who has become the victim of abuse. This means that responding to the emotional and support needs of victims is done more informally, dependent on the knowledge and good intentions of the staff involved. YWCA staff are well versed in mandated reporting for child abuse and neglect. They are not familiar with reporting requirements for vulnerable adults.

Key activities and who will be involved:

The Collaboration Team will convene a work group with representatives from the partner agencies. The full Collaboration Team will be updated on a regular basis as to activities and outcomes. The work group will research and review Massachusetts Disabled Person's Protection Commission (DPPC) vulnerable adults mandated reporting statutes. They will review internal mandated reporting policies and practices in light of what has been learned. They will also review national work of OVW grantees around balancing mandated reporting requirements through the lens of safety and domestic violence/sexual assault, and to consider best practices.

YWCA representatives will meet with a DPPC representative to explore applicability and potential conflicting mandates from the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF) and other YWCA state funders. They will invite DPPC and others to present training for select YWCA staff on mandated reporting requirements, identification, and response for vulnerable adults. The YWCA will use existing training materials to train select Goodwill staff on best practices for responding to emotional needs at the time of filing a DPPC report based on YWCA domestic violence/sexual assault expertise.

Policy and practice recommendations will be developed by the work group. Discussions will include how this knowledge can change the cultures of the organizations. It will also include discussion of how to institutionalize culture changes. The work group will present policy and practice recommendations to the Collaboration Team, CEOs, and other stakeholders for

review, discussion, and approval. Upon receiving approval, staff and participant orientations, trainings, handbooks and other materials will be revised as needed to include changes. This will be done in partnership with work groups of Initiative #2 and Initiative #3. Revised orientations, trainings, and handbooks will incorporate the approved mandated reporting recommendations. Orientations and trainings on revised policies and practices, handbooks, and other materials will be piloted with current staff and participants in partnership with work groups of Initiative #2 and Initiative #3.

Desired outcomes:

- Orientations, trainings, handbooks and other materials at each agency will be revised as needed to increase knowledge and awareness on State mandated reporting of vulnerable adults.
- Goodwill direct care staff will have increased knowledge and awareness on State mandated reporting of vulnerable adults as well as how to respond to the emotional needs of a participant who has become the victim of abuse. Responding to the emotional needs of participants will be addressed in greater depth in Initiative #3.
- YWCA staff will have knowledge and awareness of mandated reporting for vulnerable adults. They will also have knowledge and awareness of disabilities, signs of abuse and neglect for people with disabilities, as well as the State mandated reporting process for vulnerable adults. Implementation will be through the work groups of Initiative #2 and Initiative #3.

Evaluation and Monitoring:

- The project manager will monitor the work and the timeline.
- The revised agency orientations and trainings at each agency (Initiative #3) will include information on revised policies and practices for mandated reporting. There will be a pre-test and post-test of the pilot orientations and trainings at each agency.
- Following the pilot orientations and trainings, staff at each agency will monitor change through supervision, case reviews, and staff meetings.
- Each agency will debrief internally after any report is made to DPPC. They will discuss what they did well, what they didn't do well, and what training is needed. An action plan will be developed following the debriefing based on how it went.

Systems Change and Sustainability:

- Policies and tools will exist at both agencies for situations when a participant with disabilities or a Deaf participant discloses abuse or neglect after a mandated report has been made; currently none exist.
- Revised policies and tools will be incorporated into staff orientation at each agency. It will also be incorporated into staff trainings and supervision where appropriate.

Grant Deliverables:

- See Initiative #3 - Knowledge, Training and Awareness for orientation and training deliverables.
- A report will be made to the funder on any other key changes, additions, and outcomes.

INITIATIVE #2: Policies, Practices, Intake, Safety Plans, Handbooks, Supplemental Resources

- ❖ **Initiative #2 - Activity #1– Revise or create sections of policies, practices, intake, safety plans, staff and participant handbooks , and supplemental resources that promote: accommodation, welcoming and safe environments, and with linkage to appropriate services**

Justification:

The Needs Assessment documented a need for clearer policies and practices to better meet the needs of survivors with disabilities and Deaf people and to increase application of those that currently exist. Staff at both agencies are unaware of policies and practices for responding to the specific needs of people with disabilities and Deaf people who disclose abuse and of any existing policies and practices that could guide them. At Goodwill this could be the correct way to respond to someone who has disclosed violence or abuse beyond mandated reporting. At the YWCA it could be policies to guide staff in how they respond (body language/tone of voice/facial expressions, etc.) to an individual who comes to the agency who has a disability or is a Deaf person. YWCA staff also need practices to guide them in how to ask if someone needs an accommodation including during intake and assessment and what to do if an accommodation is needed.

Key activities and who will be involved:

The Collaboration Team will convene a work group with representatives from the partner agencies. The full Collaboration Team will be updated on a regular basis as to activities and outcomes. Each agency will identify policies, practices, safety plans, intake materials, staff and consumer handbooks, and supplemental resources for review for gaps. Confidentiality policies and practices will be included in the review. The work group will then review those of the other agency to see where revisions or new sections are needed. Consultants with expertise will assist in the reviews. Other OVW grantees will be contacted for best practices. Sally Mason, or another expert approved by OVW, will be invited to Springfield as a resource person for looking at policies and practices at the YWCA that might limit access to welcoming and safe environments. The work group will draft revisions or create sections of policies, practices, intake materials, staff and consumer handbooks, and supplemental resources utilizing the information gathered. Input will be sought from people with disabilities and survivors (current / past participants). The drafts will be shared with Collaboration Team and other stakeholders as needed. New sections and changes will be submitted to OVW for approval where required. New sections and changes will be shared with the Initiative #3 – Activity #1 work group for incorporation into orientation and training to institutionalize changes.

Desired outcomes:

- Policies, practices, and safety plans will be reviewed, edited, and modified at both agencies to ensure they guide staff in responding in a timely, appropriate way to the needs of people with disabilities and Deaf people who disclose abuse beyond mandated reporting requirements.
- Staff at both agencies will have tools that give them suggested steps to follow in decision-making for situations in which people with disabilities or a Deaf person discloses are needed at both agencies beyond mandated reporting requirements.
- Current YWCA policies and practices will be reviewed and revised to make accommodations possible for people with disabilities or Deaf people who disclose abuse.
- Pilot training with core group of staff: Staff at both agencies will have information, beginning at orientation and reinforced annually, on existing policies and practices.
- Pilot training with core group of staff: Staff at both agencies will be made aware of existing violence/abuse workplace policies and how they should be applied.
- If State funder approval is received modifications will be made in the YWCA intake process, on intake forms, and assessment questions to include questions on the need for accommodations at the YWCA. State funder approval is required for these changes to be made.
- Current Goodwill policies and practices will be reviewed and revised to assist staff in responding to the emotional needs of the participants and where to find resources.

Evaluation and Monitoring:

- The project manager will monitor the work and the timeline.
- There will be a pre-test and post-test of the pilot training.
- Following the pilot training, staff will monitor change through supervision, case reviews, and staff meetings.

Systems Change and Sustainability:

- With better information staff will be more likely to fulfill expectations, feel more confident, and reduce the feeling that they are scrambling.
- By making staff at both agencies aware of existing violence/abuse workplace policies and how they should be applied it will reduce the likelihood of behaving in ways that are not allowed in the policies. With increased awareness that is reinforced staff will be less tolerant of unacceptable behaviors. Changes in behavior will lead to changes in organizational culture.

Grant Deliverables:

- New and revised sections of policies, intake materials, handbooks, safety plans, and supplemental resources will be submitted to OVW for review and approval where required.
- See Initiative #3 - Knowledge, Training and Awareness for training deliverables.
- Report to OVW on any other key changes, additions, and outcomes.

❖ INITIATIVE #3: Knowledge, Training, Awareness

Three activities fall within Initiative #3. All pertain to increasing knowledge and awareness. Activity #1 will focus on enhancing current orientations and trainings offered within partner agencies to their own staff. Changes to the orientations and trainings will include recommendations that have come from Initiative #1 on Mandated Reporting and from Initiative #2 on Policies, Practices, Intake and Safety Plans. Activity #2 will focus on the creation of basic staff training at the intersection of domestic violence/sexual assault and disabilities. The training will be presented to YWCA and Goodwill staff together, providing an opportunity for shared learning and for staff to get to know each other. Activity #3 is to increase knowledge of trauma and trauma-informed services vis-à-vis participants and staff. It will include a training for Goodwill staff and YWCA staff together on trauma, utilizing existing YWCA training curricula and materials. By providing the training to YWCA and Goodwill staff together, there will be an additional opportunity for shared learning and for staff to get to know each other.

❖ Initiative #3 - Activity #1 - Enhance current orientations and trainings offered by partner agencies

Justification:

The Needs Assessment documented a lack of knowledge and awareness at both agencies on: abuse; disabilities; risk-assessment; accommodations; mandated reporting; communication skills; confidentiality; policies and procedure; responding to disclosure; sexual harassment prevention in the workplace; as well as the programs and services offered by the other agency in addition to their own.

Key activities and who will be involved:

The Collaboration Team will convene a work group with representatives from the partner agencies. The full Collaboration Team will be updated on a regular basis as to activities and outcomes. The work group will review and analyze current staff orientations and trainings for gaps utilizing the expertise of the other partner agency. They will also review and analyze funder-mandated staff trainings presented by funders and others. They will then revise orientations and trainings offered by the partner agencies, utilizing the expertise of the other agency. Evaluation tools for orientations and trainings will be developed with the assistance of a consultant. Revisions or additions to curricula will be sent to OVW for review and approval. The revised orientations and trainings will be piloted in each agency. Following evaluation of the pilots the orientations and trainings will be revised as needed.

Desired outcomes:

- The YWCA will have developed and piloted training on: disabilities and Deaf culture; how to respond to people with disabilities or Deaf people who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault or abuse; how to ask about or making accommodations; and trauma and trauma-informed services for those who have not had training.
- Goodwill will have developed and piloted training on: how to support participants who are victims of domestic violence or sexual assault; responding to disclosure; victimization risk-assessment; trauma; and how to provide trauma-informed services. An MOU will be developed that will allow partner agencies to attend trainings of partner agency at no cost. The MOU will be sent to OVW for review.

Evaluation and Monitoring:

- The project manager will monitor the work and the timeline.
- There will be a pre-test and post-test of the pilot orientations and trainings.
- Following the pilot orientations and trainings, staff will monitor change through supervision, case reviews, and staff meetings.
- Increased knowledge and awareness gained through trainings and orientations will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. Review and content revision will also be ongoing.

Systems Change and Sustainability:

- Institutionalization of revised orientations and trainings.
- An MOU will be developed that will allow partner agencies to attend trainings of partner agency at no cost.
- With new knowledge and awareness from the orientations and trainings it is anticipated that staff at both agencies will be more responsive to the needs of survivors with disabilities. This will result in improved services at both agencies.
- By integrating the training into the core training for new staff as well as for current staff at both agencies the knowledge and awareness will be sustained over time, resulting in ongoing systems change.

Grant Deliverables:

- Revisions or additions to curricula will be sent to OVW for review and approval.
- The MOU will be sent to OVW for review.
- Report to OVW key changes, additions, and outcomes.

❖ Initiative #3 - Activity #2 - Create basic staff training at the intersection of domestic violence/sexual assault and disabilities

Justification:

Through the Needs Assessment we learned that there are significant gaps in knowledge and comfort level at both agencies in working with survivors of abuse who have disabilities and/or are Deaf. Staff want training that begins at orientation and is reinforced on an ongoing basis as well as through coaching and experiential learning experiences. It was evident that YWCA staff are knowledgeable and have received training on how to work with

victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, and how respond to disclosure. They have not received training on and do not feel comfortable with: information about disabilities; defining disabilities and Deaf culture; or how to respond to people with disabilities or Deaf people. Similarly it was evident that Goodwill staff are knowledgeable and have received training on disabilities, working with people with disabilities, and making accommodations. They have not received training on how to work with individuals who are victims of domestic violence or sexual assault; responding to disclosure; victimization risk-assessment; trauma; or how to provide trauma-informed services. As a result they are not looking for these or considering them as part of their daily work with participants.

Key activities and who will be involved:

The Collaboration Team will convene a work group with representatives from the partner agencies. The full Collaboration Team will be updated on a regular basis as to activities and outcomes. A consultant with expertise will be hired to assist the work group in the development of training at the intersection of domestic violence/sexual assault and disabilities. Existing materials and curricula will be researched and reviewed including those developed by other OVW grantees. The consultant will also assist in the development of a tool to evaluate the training. The training will be sent to OVW for review and approval. It will then be piloted, evaluated, and revised base on the evaluations.

Desired outcomes:

- Basic staff training at the intersection of domestic violence/sexual assault and disabilities will have been developed, piloted, and evaluated will be provided to Goodwill and YWCA staff together.
- Information will be made available to staff at both agencies of services and resources available at the partner agency and how to access them. It will include information on services and resources on abuse and sexuality at Goodwill; on services and resources disabilities and accommodations at the YWCA.

Evaluation and Monitoring:

- The project manager will monitor the work and the timeline.
- There will be a pre-test and post-test of the pilot training.
- Following the pilot training, staff will monitor change through supervision, case reviews, and staff meetings.

Systems Change and Sustainability:

- The training will become a core training for all staff. It will be provided with a combination of staff from both agencies. By having staff from both agencies participating together in the training they will learn information together, learn from each other, and learn about the other agency. This will increase the likelihood of calling on each other as a resource and therefore of sustaining the partnership.
- With new knowledge and awareness from the training it is anticipated that staff at both agencies will be more response to the needs of survivors with disabilities. This will result in improved services at both agencies.
- By integrating the training into the core training for new staff as well as for current staff at both agencies the knowledge and awareness will be sustained over time, resulting in ongoing systems change.

Grant Deliverables:

- Curriculum for the basic staff training at the intersection of domestic violence/sexual assault and disabilities will be sent to OVW for review and approval.
- Report to OVW on key changes, additions, and outcomes.

❖ Initiative #3 - Activity # 3 - Increase knowledge of trauma and trauma-informed services vis-à-vis participants and staff

Justification:

Through the Needs Assessment we learned that Goodwill staff are knowledgeable and have received training on disabilities, working with people with disabilities, and making accommodations. They have not received training on how to work with individuals who are victims of domestic violence or sexual assault; responding to disclosure; victimization risk-assessment; trauma; or how to provide trauma-informed services. As a result they are not looking for these or considering them as part of their daily work with participants. Not all YWCA staff are trained in trauma informed practice. This initiative will provide an opportunity to expand their knowledge of trauma and how to provide trauma-informed services.

Key activities and who will be involved:

The Collaboration Team will convene a work group with representatives from the partner agencies. The full Collaboration Team will be updated on a regular basis as to activities and outcomes. A Collaboration Team member and other YWCA staff will develop and present a mini-training on trauma and trauma-informed services for Goodwill Collaboration Team members and a small number of Goodwill staff and YWCA staff together utilizing existing YWCA training curricula and materials. The curricula will be sent to OVW for review and approval before delivery. Upon funder approval, Sally Mason, or another expert on trauma and trauma-informed services, will be invited to Springfield to present information. The work group will identify and talk to local or regional experts in providing trauma-informed services for survivors who with disabilities. Members of the work group and the Collaboration Team will attend regional and national trainings to increase skills and bring back expertise in trauma and trauma-informed services. The knowledge gained will be incorporated into all Initiatives.

Desired outcomes:

- Policies and practices at both agencies will reflect an awareness of the impact of trauma on people with disabilities who are survivors of domestic violence/sexual assault.
- Knowledge about trauma will be incorporated into all aspects of service delivery at both agencies.

Evaluation and Monitoring:

- The project manager will monitor the work and the timeline.
- There will be a pre-test and post-test of the pilot training.
- Following the pilot training, staff will monitor change through supervision, case reviews, and staff meetings.

Systems Change and Sustainability:

- By having staff from both agencies participating together in the training they will learn information together, learn from each other, and learn about the other agency. This will increase the likelihood of calling on each other as a resource and therefore of sustaining the partnership.

Grant Deliverables:

- Curricula for the training on trauma will be sent to OVW for review and approval.
- Report to OVW on key changes, additions, and outcomes.

INITIATIVE #4: Communication Access

❖ Initiative #4 - Activity #1 – Accessible Materials

Justification:

Through the Needs Assessment we learned that individuals and circumstances can require individualized communication methods for accessibility to accommodate for things such as language, including Deaf culture; cognitive functioning; learning styles; and mental health. Neither agency has reviewed brochures, written materials, or websites to ensure they are accessible or in easily understood language. Additionally, some people cannot read; some people cannot read English; some people cannot comprehend what they read; some people let the agency know; others do not. Whatever the reason, all limit access to information and to communication.

Key activities and who will be involved:

A Collaboration Team member from the YWCA will carry primary responsibility for the activities in consultation with the full Collaboration Team and other agency staff as needed. Each agency will identify key materials for review. The Team member will bring information to the monthly Collaboration Team meetings for discussion and review. The Collaboration Team will confirm parameters of the activity, including what types of documents and materials for staff and participants will be reviewed for accessibility, including both simple language and Braille. Consultants with expertise in enhancing materials will be identified and hired. Materials and documents from each agency will be identified for enhancement. The Collaboration Team member from the YWCA will work with consultant to enhance

materials. To ensure that materials are accessible the expertise of people with disabilities and survivors (current / past participants) and staff from both agencies will be utilized. Enhanced materials will be sent to OVW for review and approval.

Desired outcomes:

- Selected materials and documents from both agencies will be in easily accessible formats for program participants and for staff.

Evaluation and Monitoring:

- The project manager will monitor the work and the timeline.
- Program participants at both agencies will be asked to provide ongoing feedback. Changes to materials will be made in response to the feedback.
- Staff, volunteers and board members at both agencies will be asked to provide ongoing feedback. Changes to materials will be made in response to the feedback.

Systems Change and Sustainability:

- Communication with program participants and potential participants will be significantly improved. As a result they will be more likely to understand, learn, and utilize the information.
- Materials will be duplicated and updated as needed.

Grant Deliverables:

- Submit documents to OVW for approval as needed.
- Report to OVW on key changes, additions, and outcomes.

❖ Initiative #4 - Activity #2 - Adaptive/Assistive Technology
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Justification:

Through the Needs Assessment we learned that neither the YWCA nor Goodwill have access to any new technology for serving the needs of Deaf people. Neither agency has explored new technology as a vehicle for increasing communication access.

Key activities and who will be involved:

A Collaboration Team member from the YWCA will carry primary responsibility for the activity in consultation with the full Collaboration Team. She will research the range of new technology options available for purchase. She will bring information to the Collaboration Team meetings for discussion and review. She, along with members of the Collaboration Team, will attend local/regional adaptive/assistive technology vendor events. The Collaboration Team will discuss what, if any, technology to invest in. Adaptive/assistive technology will be purchased for use in partner agencies if a decision is made that it will be a good investment. Before purchases are made prior approval will be requested of OVW as needed. Training will be provided to staff on using the new technology.

Desired outcomes:

- Partner agencies will have new technology in their agencies for serving the needs of Deaf people and for increasing communications access for program participants.
- Training will be provided to current staff on the new technology

Evaluation and Monitoring:

- The project manager will monitor the work and the timeline.
- A system will be developed to see if the technology is being used.
- Team members will keep track of options for adaptive/accessible technology that could benefit the collaboration for future purchase.

Systems Change and Sustainability:

- By increasing communication access, current and potential program participants will have greater access to services. Some individuals who could not access services in the past because of communication barriers will now have access.
- Safety and a welcoming environment will be enhanced at both agencies.
- Training on the new adaptive/accessible technology will be provided to new staff to ensure that it is used and used correctly.

Grant Deliverables:

- Report to OVW on purchases, receiving prior approval as needed.

❖ Initiative #4 - Activity #3 - Increase Access to ASL interpreters who have basic knowledge of domestic violence / sexual assault and disabilities
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Justification:

Through the Needs Assessment we learned that the YWCA experiences have revealed that ASL interpreters are not trained in trauma or crisis intervention. YWCA staff said that it is exceedingly important that they be trained; otherwise empathy and subtlety are lost. The training will provide the foundation for developing relationships with a specific set of ASL interpreters. With increased knowledge the quality of the interpretation will be improved, resulting in better service for program participants. It is hoped that the relationships will also increase the availability of interpreters at both agencies.

Key activities and who will be involved:

A Collaboration Team member from the YWCA will carry primary responsibility for the activities in consultation with the full Collaboration Team. She will bring information to the Collaboration Team monthly meetings for discussion and review. The Collaboration Team member will develop a mini-training for regional ASL interpreters on domestic violence / sexual assault and disabilities utilizing materials from Initiative #3/Activity 1 (Knowledge, Training, Awareness). She will recruit ASL interpreters in the region to participate in the mini-training and present the training to them. The training curricula will be sent to OVW for review and approval. B The training will be evaluated and revised as needed.

Desired outcomes:

- ASL interpreters in the region who have participated in the training will have increased knowledge and awareness of domestic violence/sexual assault and disabilities.
- As a result of improved communication program participants will feel more supported and comfortable.

Evaluation and Monitoring:

- The project manager will monitor the work and the timeline.
- Training participants will take a pre-test/post test to document change in knowledge.

Systems Change and Sustainability:

- As a result of this training local ASL interpreters will be more responsive to the needs of Deaf survivors. By increasing responsiveness the safety as well as the awareness of being respected and welcome for current and potential program participants will be increased. It is hoped that the relationships with trained ASL interpreters will also increase the availability of interpreters at both agencies.

Grant Deliverables:

- Curricula will be sent to OVW for review and approval.
- Report to OVW on key changes, additions, and outcomes.

INITIATIVE #5: Enhancing Collaboration / Serving Survivors

❖ Initiative #5 - Activity #1 – Strengthening Collaboration

Justification:

Both agencies are committed to building systemic change in their organization. Each is well aware of the benefits the other agency brings to the partnership. Each understands the importance of institutionalizing the relationship to sustain the work already done and for future change to be institutionalized. Both want to create mechanisms for direct and ongoing communication to exchange knowledge and expertise in order to provide welcoming, safe, responsive, respectful services. One of the goals of the Equal Access to Safety Initiative is to fostering collaborative and cooperative relationships between members of the collaboration. In order to achieve this goal the collaboration must be nurtured.

Key activities and who will be involved:

The Collaboration Team will meet monthly to ensure ongoing communication on initiatives, to share challenges and successes, discuss best-practices, and to explore long-term opportunities for meeting the mission, vision and goals of the collaboration. Quarterly

meetings with Collaboration CEO's will be scheduled to ensure ongoing input on progress of the Collaboration and to seek buy-in when needed. Other meetings will be scheduled when approval for initiative activities is needed. The Collaboration Team will discuss developing an MOU between agencies regarding working collaboratively, and information sharing. The MOU will be sent to OVW for review.

Desired outcomes:

- MOU between agencies regarding working collaboratively, and information sharing..
- A mechanism will be developed for applying jointly for funding.
- Protocols that will be shared with staff will be developed for ongoing resource sharing and sharing of community connections.
- The effective working relationship and the trust developed between the collaboration partners will be maintained. This will make it possible for the Initiative work groups to achieve all desired outcomes stated in the strategic plan.

Evaluation and Monitoring:

- The project manager will monitor the work and the timeline.
- There will be an MOU between agencies regarding working collaboratively, and information sharing. The MOU will include:
 - A mechanism for applying jointly for funding.
 - Protocols that will be shared with staff for ongoing resource sharing and sharing of community connections.
- The frequent Team meetings will provide numerous opportunities for discussions on the progress of the Initiative work groups. This creates ongoing opportunities for monitoring and evaluation of all project work.
- Quarterly meetings with the CEOs for the duration of the project will provide ongoing communication on the progress of the project and create opportunities their direct involvement in the change process.

Systems Change and Sustainability:

- The relationship between the two agencies will be institutionalized through the MOU. The MOU will include a bi-annual Team review of the relationship and the MOU. An annual agency review will include CEOs.

Grant Deliverables:

- The MOU will be sent to OVW for review.
- Report to OVW on key changes, additions, and outcomes.

❖ Initiative #5 - Activity #2 – Develop case consultation process

Justification:

Each agency has valuable expertise and strengths that could benefit the other agency. Each wants to call upon the other for expertise in meeting the needs of survivors with disabilities

in areas where they are not experts. An inter-agency case consultation process would institutionalize a method of calling upon the expertise of the other agency.

Key activities and who will be involved:

The Collaboration Team will convene a work group with representatives from the partner agencies. The full Collaboration Team will be updated on a regular basis as to activities and outcomes. The work group will determine Collaboration case consultation needs and purpose. They will research inter-agency case consultation models and create an inter-agency case consultation process. They will pilot with a few case consultations and evaluate the process. An MOU will be developed to institutionalize the inter-agency case consultation process. The MOU will be sent to OVW for review.

Desired outcomes:

- An inter-agency case consultation process for the Collaboration partners will be developed.
- An MOU between Collaboration partners will be developed to institutionalize the inter-agency case consultation process.

Evaluation and Monitoring:

- The project manager will monitor the work and the timeline.
- Case consultation discussions will occur.
- Staff will report an increased ability to provide enhanced services.

Systems Change and Sustainability:

- Inter-agency case consultations will result in increased communication and information sharing between the two agencies. This will lead to improved services for survivors with disabilities.
- The case consultation MOU will institutionalize the process.

Grant Deliverables:

- The MOU will be sent to OVW for review.
- Report to OVW on key changes, additions, and outcomes.

❖ Supplemental Information: Hiring Consultants with Expertise to Assist Collaboration Team in Achieving Outcomes

In order to have the best possible outcomes the Collaboration Team will hire consultants with expertise in a variety of fields to assist the work groups. The consultants will contribute expertise that is beyond the internal capacity of Goodwill and the YWCA and to supplement what can be gleaned from other OVW grantees. Each agency in the Collaboration is aware of its limitations. Neither is an “expert” to the full extent possible in their field; no one agency can be. Consultants with expertise will add their knowledge and examples of best practices

to the knowledge of the YWCA and Goodwill work groups. They will also stimulate the work groups to consider ideas and approaches that would not have been considered otherwise. The involvement of consultants will enrich the process, enrich the conversations, and increase the likelihood of true change occurring.

Initiative # 2 – Activity #1 - Revise or create sections of policies, practices, intake, safety plans, staff and participant handbooks, and supplemental resources; and

Initiative # 3 – Activity #3 – Increase knowledge of trauma and trauma-informed services

Consultant: Sally Mason

- Sally Mason will be invited to Springfield as a resource person for looking at policies and practices at the YWCA that might limit access to welcoming and safe environments. She will also be asked to present information on trauma and trauma-informed services. This will be primarily for Goodwill with the YWCA invited to participate.

Initiative #2 - Activity #1 - Revise or create sections of policies, practices, intake, safety plans, staff and participant handbooks, and supplemental resources

Consultant: Human resources consultant(s) with expertise in nonprofits that serve people with disabilities and survivors of domestic violence /sexual assault will be hired to assist the work group.

- Neither agency has a human resource person with sufficient expertise to provide the depth of knowledge or legal background needed. A consultant, or consultants, with expertise will provide examples of best practices to be considered for inclusion in revised policies, practices and handbooks. They will also provide current legal knowledge that is not presently available at either agency. The consultant(s) will assist the work group in reviewing current agency policies, etc. to identify where revisions or sections are needed.

Initiative # 3 – Activity #2 - Basic staff training at the intersection of domestic violence/sexual assault and disabilities

Consultant: Person with expertise in domestic violence/sexual assault and disabilities who has curriculum development, training, and evaluation to increase the capacity of the work group.

- Neither agency has staff with expertise in curriculum development, training, or evaluation. The consultant will work with the work group to develop the curriculum and the evaluation.
- This training will be a best practice model. As such it could be used by other OVV grantees, other disability, domestic violence and sexual assault providers in our region, as well as by other YWCAs and Goodwills around the country.

Initiative #4 - Activity #1 - Accessible Materials

Consultant: Person with expertise in enhancing materials.

- Neither agency has expertise in enhancing materials. The Collaboration Team will work with a consultant to enhance materials. The expertise of people with disabilities and survivors (current / past participants of the YWCA and Goodwill) will also be utilized.

Section 6: Overview of Potential Long Term Initiatives

The Equal Access to Safety Initiative short term initiatives will provide a solid foundation for ongoing work together. Building on the short term initiatives, the Collaborative Team has identified some potential long term initiatives. All would increase the likelihood of sustainability of outcomes and of systems change.

1. Orientations and Trainings for all staff on revised policies, practices, intake, safety plans, handbooks, supplemental resources, and mandated reporting
 - Through work on short term initiatives significant changes will have been made in both agencies on policies, practices, intake, safety plans, handbooks, supplemental resources, and the mandated reporting process for vulnerable adults. Policies and practices at both agencies will reflect an awareness of the impact of trauma on people with disabilities who are survivors of domestic violence/sexual assault. Orientations and trainings at both agencies will be changed, *piloted*, evaluated, and revised to reflect this work. In order to institutionalize these changes the Collaboration team would like to provide orientations and trainings for all current and future staff that incorporate these changes. The information would be reinforced through supervision, case consultations and staff meetings. The combination will provide a foundation for cultural and systemic change at both agencies.
 - Adults learn in a variety of ways and have varying abilities. To further extend the knowledge and awareness from the revised orientations and trainings a long term initiative could be to make the orientations and trainings available on line and in multiple formats. This would make them available and accessible to staff at both agencies and to others. This would also make it easier to update the information on an ongoing basis.
2. Training for all staff at the intersection of domestic violence/sexual assault and disabilities
 - Through work on short term initiatives, basic staff training at the intersection of domestic violence/sexual assault and disabilities will have been developed, *piloted*, evaluated, and revised. A long term initiative could be to provide training for all current and future staff at both agencies. The information would be reinforced through supervision, case consultations and staff meetings. The combination would provide a foundation for cultural and systemic change at both agencies. It would also increase inter-agency staff trust and build relationships between staff who would be trained together. This would strengthen the collaboration and sustainability of the work of the project for the long-term.

- Adults learn in a variety of ways and have varying abilities. To further extend the knowledge and awareness from the training at the intersection of domestic violence/sexual assault and disabilities a long term initiative could be to make it available on line and in multiple formats. This would make it available and accessible to staff at both agencies and to others. This would make it easier to update the information on an ongoing basis and to share the information with others.
3. Share what has been learned with other agencies in our region
 - The changes to policies and practices as well as the overall knowledge and awareness gained from this project could greatly benefit other disability agencies and domestic violence/sexual assault agencies in our region. A long term initiative would be to determine the interest of other providers in the region in the work of the collaboration and to develop means for sharing outcomes with them. The benefit of sharing the information would be people served by any agencies taking advantage of the opportunity to learn from our experiences. The long term initiative would also strengthen and sustain the collaboration through ongoing shared learning as Team members work together to communicate what has been learned and changes made within and between collaboration partner agencies on an ongoing basis. The benefits would extend throughout the region.
 4. Model for other Goodwills and YWCAs around the country
 - YWCAs and Goodwills around the country provide services similar to those offered by our collaboration agencies. A long term initiative would be to develop a roadmap for Goodwills and YWCAs to develop partnerships for doing this work together, to change the services they provide. The process and outcomes from the Equal Access to Safety Initiative could greatly benefit survivors with disabilities who receive services from other Goodwills and YWCAs.
 - An initiative goal could be for collaboration team members to be invited to present the information at a national meeting of YWCA agencies and a national meeting of Goodwill agencies. The benefit of sharing the information would be people served by any agencies taking advantage of the opportunity to learn from our experiences. Doing so would also strengthen and sustain the collaboration through ongoing shared learning as Team members work together to communicate what has been learned and changes made within and between collaboration partner agencies. Hence, the benefits could be local and national.
 5. Website update
 - The website of each agencies could be reviewed and updated to ensure they are accessible and in easily understood language. Neither agency has done this.
 6. Resource Kits
 - A potential long-term initiative would be to develop resource kits as a mechanism for ongoing information sharing for use in both agencies with the potential of being used by other disability and domestic violence/sexual assault agencies in our region. The information would be about both agencies in the collaboration. Each agency would update the information semi-annually. The information could include:

- Crisis phone numbers
- Program descriptions
- Contact information for key staff
- Eligibility criteria for services
- Resource materials
- Easy-to-use checklists

7. Communication with Staff

- A long term initiative could be a focus on improving communication with staff by making materials more accessible. This would be an expansion of Initiative #4 – Activity #1. As a result staff would be more likely to understand, learn, and utilize information.

Section 7: Conclusion

Through a needs assessment process we identified strengths and areas in need of improvement. The information gathered during the needs assessment process has been used to develop a strategic plan with manageable and achievable goals in keeping with our Initiative goals. The Equal Access to Safety Initiative remains committed to providing appropriate, responsive, safe, accessible, quality service, including embracing new approaches to service delivery and systems change. Team members understand that there will be challenges, both internal to their organizations and external due to a wide variety of variables that they cannot control.

Initiative Team members have demonstrated a high degree of investment of time. From the beginning they have spent considerable time thinking about the Initiative, their organizations, and the partnership. They have worked hard to analyze the information that was identified through the needs assessment and to utilize the information in developing a strategic plan. The two agencies had not worked together prior to this project. The partnership has already born fruit. Each organization has directly benefited from the expertise of the other organization. We have an excellent foundation for our future work together.