

MMDI:ACCESS Needs Assessment Report

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**Metro-Milwaukee DART Initiative:
A Community Collaborative Effort
Serving Survivors
*With Disabilities From Crisis to
Healing***

**Needs Assessment
Report**



Metro-Milwaukee DART Initiative: A Community Collaborative Effort Serving Survivors *With Disabilities From Crisis to Healing* is being supported by Grant No 2007-FW-AX-K005 "Education, Training and Enhanced Services to End Violence Against and Abuse of Women with Disabilities Grant Program" awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, US Department of Justice

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Metro-Milwaukee DART Initiative: A Community Collaborative Effort Serving Survivors *with Disabilities from Crisis to Healing* (hereafter referred to as MMDI:ACCESS) was created to improve the response to survivors with disabilities who have experienced domestic and sexual violence and/or abuse. MMDI:ACCESS is made up of four community programs:

- IndependenceFirst
- The Task Force on Family Violence (TFFV)
- Milwaukee County Disability Services Division (DSD)
- The City of Milwaukee Office on Violence Prevention (OVP)

MMDI:ACCESS was formed in 2007 through Grant No 2007-FW-AX-K005 “Education, Training and Enhanced Services to End Violence Against and Abuse of Women with Disabilities Grant Program”, from the Office on Violence Against Women, US Department of Justice. As required under this grant, MMDI:ACCESS conducted a needs assessment as a way to inform the collaborative of both strengths/assets and weaknesses/gaps in services from crisis to healing that exist for Milwaukee area residents with disabilities between the ages of eighteen to fifty-nine (18-59) who have experienced domestic and sexual violence and/or abuse.

MMDI:ACCESS identified five (5) goals for the needs assessment:

1. Identify the existing policy/procedures/practices that address the needs of persons with disabilities experiencing violence and abuse.
2. Identify the gaps and barriers; and strengths and assets experienced by survivors with disabilities in accessing and receiving services.
3. Identify the gaps and barriers; and strengths and assets of organizations in addressing the issues of and providing services to survivors with disabilities.
4. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the existing relationships between organizations.
5. Identify opportunities for change and/or solutions for improving services.

MMDI:ACCESS talked with two hundred and fifteen (215) people during the needs assessment, using four methodologies, including:

- Individual interviews with ten (10) people:
 - Four (4) interviews with partner agency leaders
 - Five (5) interviews with individuals who are Deaf-Blind
 - One (1) interview with a survivor with a disability
- Pre-focus group surveys were completed by one hundred and seventeen (117) managers and staff.
- Focus groups:
 - Fifteen (15) focus groups with one hundred and seventeen (117) managers and staff

- Eight (8) focus groups with forty (40) individuals with disabilities
- Two (2) focus groups with seventeen (17) survivors with disabilities
- A community dialogue with thirty-one (31) service providers from a variety of community-based programs

We heard a lot of consistent messages from participants but it should be noted that scientific methods were not used to ensure the findings were representative. Nonetheless, given the consistency in the themes, MMDI:ACCESS identified five (5) key findings:

1. There is a lack of consistent policies and procedures that:
 - Tell staff how to handle cases of abuse
 - Address mandated reporting requirements for staff and the agency as a whole
 - That addresses violence/abuse issues in the workplace
2. There is a lack of awareness about the four (4) partner agencies and their programs and services among both the staff and managers at the partner agencies and within the community as a whole.
3. There are barriers, at each of the four (4) partner agencies, that impact people with disabilities who have been hurt by violence/abuse. These barriers include physical, communication and attitudinal accessibility, the agencies appearance of being welcoming to survivors with disabilities and the perception of safety within the agencies
4. There is a need for staff training and cross training on the basic topics of violence and abuse, disabilities and accommodations, as well as training on agency policy and procedures.
5. There is a need to fully integrate the fifteen (15) core values of MMDI:ACCESS into the four (4) partner agencies' culture and practices

MMDI:ACCESS will use these key findings to help shape our strategic plan and guide us through the implementation phase of this grant.

IndependenceFirst, the Task Force on Family Violence, the Milwaukee County Disability Services Division and the City of Milwaukee Health Department Office on Violence Prevention are only four players in a much wider and more comprehensive service delivery system.

Any actions taken by us will have both a positive and potentially negative trickle down effect to this larger service delivery system. On the positive side, we will be increasing our capacity to serve people with disabilities who have experienced domestic and sexual violence and/or abuse and will be able to share this capacity and lessons learned with the larger service delivery system. On the negative side, as we increase

our capacity, we may also see an increase in the number of people seeking services. Since some of these individuals might need services that are beyond what is available from the four (4) partner agencies, the increase will need to be addressed by programs outside of the collaboration. The best way to find out how well the other programs and the community in general can meet this increase need will be to conduct an extensive needs assessment that will look at this larger service delivery system and the community as a whole.

However, this would be a longer-term goal and we will need to consider this issue as we move into the implementation phase, we will use OVP to help us make connections with those programs in the larger service delivery system, and use the MCDVSA meetings to keep those providers apprised of what we are doing.

MMDI:ACCESS would like to thank everyone who participated in this needs assessment, including:

- All of those individuals and survivors with disabilities who shared their experiences during focus groups and interviews, as this taught the collaboration a great deal about the existing service delivery system
- The community agencies that worked hard helping MMDI:ACCESS set-up the focus groups and interviews. Without their assistance, our access to individuals and survivors with disabilities would have been severely limited.
- The members of the Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (MCDVSA), a coordinated community response team, for allowing MMDI:ACCESS to use their meeting time to hold the Community Dialogue.
- The managers and staff at each of the four (4) partner agencies, who took time out of their busy schedules to candidly share with MMDI:ACCESS their thoughts about what is working and what is not at their respective agencies
- Finally we would like to thank the leaders of each of the four (4) partner agencies who supported our efforts in talking with managers and staff, and took the time to sit down with MMDI:ACCESS representatives and share their thoughts during individual interviews.