

Needs Assessment Report

PAH! Partners Advocating for Healing Oakland County, Michigan FALL 2010

HAVEN
Deaf Community Advocacy Network
Deaf Women's Advocacy Services



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PAH! – Partners Advocating for Healing

Oakland County, Michigan

Executive Summary

The PAH! collaborative recently embarked on a fact finding expedition to assess the needs of the Deaf Community in Southeast Michigan in relation to domestic and sexual violence services. This document is a summary of the goals, process, data gathering, key findings and conclusions of this needs assessment.

HISTORY

PAH!: *Partners Advocating for Healing* is a community collaborative effort to increase responsiveness and accessibility of the service delivery system to Deaf and Hard of Hearing survivors of domestic and sexual violence. Our name comes from the American Sign Language sign of “PAH”, which represents success or achievement. We thought it was only appropriate to name our collaboration PAH! , thus incorporating both the hearing and Deaf communities, and symbolizing the bridge we are building between these communities to combat domestic and sexual violence. PAH!, established in October of 2008, is a collaboration consisting of three community programs located in Oakland County, Michigan: HAVEN, Deaf Community Advocacy Network (DEAF C.A.N.!) and Deaf Women’s Advocacy Services (DWAS).

The collaboration of HAVEN, DEAF C.A.N.!, and DWAS is the first and only partnership in Southeast Michigan that brings together the skills, leadership and experiences of both Deaf and hearing advocates. All members of the collaborative are committed to create sustained systems change within their organizations that will extend well beyond the parameters of this three year, federally funded grant. Each agency and individual member is committed to learning from one another and their agencies collective

experiences in order to plan, evaluate, develop, and eventually implement culturally sensitive services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing victims of domestic and sexual violence.

This collaborative is funded by a three year, multi-phase grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women (Grant # 2008-FW-AX-K005) received in October of 2008. The collaborative partners have been working together since December of 2008, meeting weekly to establish the goals, values and mission of the group. The PAH! collaboration charter, which was developed in the first year of the grant, outlines the vision, mission, goals and philosophy of PAH!

PURPOSE

To explore how PAH! agencies are currently delivering services to the Deaf community, and how we can improve the delivery and accessibility of services to Deaf and Hard of Hearing clients that have experienced domestic and/or sexual violence. Ultimately, the information collected through this needs assessment will assist in establishing better programs and protocols within HAVEN, making HAVEN services more accessible to Deaf and Hard of Hearing clients; and assist DEAF C.A.N.! and DWAS in creating and establishing services more responsive to the needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing survivors.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Information was gathered from collaborative agency staff, Board of Directors, clients, Deaf community groups associated with DEAF C.A.N.!, Deaf and hearing family members, and certified American Sign Language interpreters.

With the information obtained from these groups, PAH! is seeking to make participating agencies more comfortable, accessible, and responsive to Deaf survivors. The compiled results will serve as support in developing tactics for the strategic plan, and chart a realistic and manageable course for the implementation phase.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT GOALS

Listed below are four areas that summarize the PAH! needs assessment goals. As a collaborative, each agency has committed to making the internal systems changes required to enhance and fill gaps in service. The data collected from our target audiences will help us answer the following questions:

1. What are our current practices in terms of domestic violence services for our Deaf clients? What works? What doesn't work? How can they be improved?
2. What are the gaps in our programs and services and how can we address them?
3. What do Deaf consumers want in terms of services in general? Who? What? Where? When and How?
4. What are our organizational capacities to serve Deaf and Hard of Hearing clients in a more inclusive, engaging and safe way?
 - a. Staff knowledge and comfort
 - b. Formalized policies, practices and procedures
 - c. Budgets

NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Members of PAH! utilized interviews and focus groups to gather data from collaborative agency staff, Board of Directors, clients, Deaf Community groups, Deaf and hearing family members, and certified American Sign Language interpreters. All recruitment was done through face to face contact. All questions were designed by the members of PAH!, with technical assistance from the Vera Institute, and approval from the Office of Violence Against Women. Safety, accessibility, confidentiality and consent

considerations were all discussed during participant recruitment and again, immediately prior to the interview or focus group.

From June 2010 through August of 2010, PAH! had projected a target audience between 80-144 participants. PAH! spoke directly to a total of 122 people, consisting of 71 agency staff and 51 program participants. .

NEEDS ASSESSMENT KEY FINDINGS

Through our focus groups and interviews, PAH! compiled the following key findings:

Key Finding #1

When seeking services from a hearing agency, the three most important aspects to creating a welcoming environment for Deaf clients are:

1. A non judgmental attitude and sense of normality
2. Access to interpreter services
3. The comfort level of staff when working with Deaf clients.

Key Finding #2

Due to issues of confidentiality and the fear of gossip, when dealing with a 'private matter' the majority of Deaf people we spoke to preferred to speak with someone not involved with the Deaf community.

Key Finding #3

The primary barrier to service accessibility for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community is communication.

Key Finding #4

There is a lack of knowledge and awareness (1) among HAVEN staff in regards to Deaf culture and the Deaf community; (2) among DEAF C.A.N.! staff in regards to domestic violence and sexual assault; and (3) among all PAH! agencies in regards to the specific needs of a Deaf or Hard of Hearing survivor of domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

Key Finding #5

No policies, procedures or protocols exist for responding to a Deaf or Hard of Hearing survivor of domestic violence and/or sexual assault.

Key Finding #6

Regrettably, during the needs assessment phase, the collaborative lost one of its key members – Kate Slosar- the President of DWAS. Currently, DWAS does not have leadership, and it's foundation as a volunteer support agency has become unstable. PAH! will be assisting DWAS in capacity building to restructure and rejuvenate their volunteer agency

CONCLUSIONS

The goals of this needs assessment have been attained and the success is largely due to the strong, trusting relationships between the agencies, their mutual respect for one another, and their ability to work together as a hearing ally. Through the focus groups and interviews, the collaborative was able to identify not only the weaknesses that exist when serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population, but also the strengths this collaborative possesses to make positive, sustainable change in the months and years to come. The data collected will be directly responsible for creating a strategic plan consisting of realistic and manageable goals for the collaborative to achieve by Fall of 2011.

Staff of HAVEN and DEAF C.A.N.! and the volunteers of DWAS are very excited to embark on this journey together. Leadership at HAVEN and DEAF C.A.N.! have expressed their desire to research further into the needs of the Deaf community here in Southeastern Michigan, and both agencies are dedicated to making fiscally responsible systems change by Fall of 2011.