

Advocacy Tips for Supporting Victims in the Amish/Plain Community

Resources/ Outreach

“Doorway to Hope” – book by The Sewing Circle, stories drawn from domestic violence victims from IN, OH and PA; belief that suffering on Earth will be rewarded after death.

LGBTQ – Because of religious beliefs, victims may have reservations about working with service providers who identify as LGBTQ.

Outreach – The community embraces educational meetings on awareness topics

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Church/Community Involvement

Support Team – The Church assigns a support team (one or multiple couples) to each spouse. The abuser may even be temporarily placed in the home of one of the support couples. Connecting with the support team could be an important advocacy strategy.

*Assess who the victim’s *chosen* support team is and encourage the victim to ask for emotional and logistical support with defined safety planning strategies

Forgiveness – Church and community will encourage that forgiveness of the abuser and moving forward is important - “Forgive and Forget”

Spiritual Abuse – Abuse can stem from multiple sources at the same time: within the home, the church and community

Taking Sides – If the Church supports the abuser, the victim and victim’s supporters (family, friends, silent mentor, etc.) may be penalized by not being allowed to participate in certain activities or to patronize community-owned businesses. In return, the community may not patronize the victim’s/supporters’ businesses

Guidance – Victims often use lay counselors and ministers within the church community for insight into the situation

View on Trauma -- Church leadership often doesn’t believe in PTSD or lasting trauma resulting from abuse

Excommunication – Church rule (the Ordnung), and how strictly it is applied, dictate things like whether the victim may be allowed to attend church and amount of contact with church members. They cannot participate in the church meal.

Restoration Team – A group of Amish men/women who put a plan in place for the court to handle the abuser post-sentencing. They are notified if abuse is reported, and they separate the couple.

Counseling – All types of counseling options approved (AOD, Sexual Assault, Mental Health, DV, etc.), typically residential counseling in another state

Personal Business -- News spreads quickly within the community, and is viewed as sharing essential information, not gossip

Accessibility/Safety

Phones – some victims may own a cell phone, share a cell phone, or have access to a phone or black box at an outside location (work, neighbors, etc.). If a phone isn't in the home, sometimes children are asked to run to make a phone call to get help.

Language Barrier – Although victims likely speak English, frequently check in for understanding of terminology/phrasing and seek interpretation if needed.

Transportation – If clients don't live close to your agency, they may need assistance with arranging transportation. They may hide their intentions by running errands before or after their appointment. Ensure your agency has a place for parking horse and buggies.

Silent Mentor – someone from the English community (landlord, employer, business owner, etc.) that assists with communication, transportation, and legal pursuits in addition to moral support

Courtesy – Ensure that your agency has a place for men to hang their hats.

Legal Action

Divorce – Divorce is typically not an option in the eyes of the Church

Decisions – Protection orders, legal separation, legal representation, etc., are at the discretion of church leadership

Child Support – Often resistant to filing for child support (don't want the entanglement/feeling of not deserving husband's money)

Court – Typically not able to "swear" into court (against God), but can "affirm" into evidence

Personal Property – Husbands are entitled to the property of the wife. Transferring ownership of a horse or having a support system member purchase a horse and buggy for the victim may be necessary.



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Helping people change direction.

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