

**Promising Practices**  
Standards for Ohio's Domestic  
Violence Programs

**Promising  
Administrative  
Practices Manual**



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## Introduction

The following standards for administrative best practices were developed in an effort to help Executive Directors/Directors perform a self-evaluation of where they are at the present time in relation to the administration of their program. This manual, used in conjunction with the program self-assessment tool, will provide an outline of the best practice standards and trauma-informed services designed for domestic violence programs.

Organizational progress can be measured by utilizing the [Trauma-Informed Road Map](#). The Road Map is designed to give programs a quick visualization of the areas they may want to improve to make sure that they are engaging in “promising practices” when working with survivors of domestic and intimate partner violence. The expectation of the self-evaluation is not that programs meet all the best practice standards but that they are identifying their specific areas for improvement.

Staff at Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN) is available at any time to provide technical assistance and program support to programs that want to improve their program services or implement changes that will bring them in line with the following standards. ODVN provides individualized technical assistance and training to programs as well as general technical assistance to all programs.

## Administrative Standards

The following guide relates to the administration or management of a domestic violence program. The role of the governing body, fiscal and data management, personnel management, and personnel training are addressed.

### **Board of Directors / Advisory Boards**

The Board of Directors is the governing body of a nonprofit agency providing domestic violence services. The Board is responsible for:

1. Upholding the agency’s mission
2. Determining that services are delivered in accordance with the mission
3. Financial and legal oversight of the agency
4. Setting policies and planning within which management operates
5. Ensuring that adequate resources are available to support the agency
6. Selecting and evaluating the executive director
7. Representing the agency in the community
8. Maintaining a strong, effective Board

In addition, the Board of Directors for programs providing domestic violence services should include at a minimum:

- Developing, adopting, and maintaining a current mission statement and bylaws
- Conducting Board meetings at least quarterly and keeping minutes of these meetings indicating that bylaw procedures were followed, including utilizing quorum and voting procedures for all Board decisions
- Maintaining a list of Board members, Board officers’ positions, their addresses, and members’ terms of office
- Signing a confidentiality agreement and maintaining records of the same
- Recruiting, selecting, and evaluating the executive director on an annual basis
- Developing, adopting, and monitoring written agency policies and procedures, including those addressing the following concerns:

- Employee handbooks, including job descriptions, sexual harassment, nondiscrimination policies
- Fiscal policies, including internal controls over cash, deposits, expenses, large expenditures, contracts, investments, insurance, and the audit process
- Other agency governance policies

Ensure that the agency is compliant with the following:

- State and federal reporting and requirements for nonprofit, charitable funds, and tax-exempt statuses
- State, federal, and local laws and codes regulating the agency and its services
- Standards required by funding agencies, including A-133 audits required by federal law
- Annual filing of IRS Tax Form 990
- Monitoring the financial status of the agency by reviewing the following documents
  - At least annually:
    - The annual auditor's report and audited statements, including a statement of cash flow, statement of activities, statement of financial position
    - The IRS Tax Form 990
    - Investment reports
  - At least quarterly:
    - Updated budgets, projected and actual, planned revenue and expenses, and budgets specific to cash and capital
    - Large expenditures and contracts
    - Ensuring that agency planning and service evaluation are implemented, and monitor both processes to make certain that the mission of the agency is upheld

Programs should prohibit Board membership from those who may have a conflict of interest without prior written approval from the program. A conflict of interest is any real or apparent incompatibility between one's private interest and one's fiduciary duties. Two specific types of conflicts are self-dealing (transactions with the agency that benefit the Board member) and usurpation of agency's opportunities (taking an opportunity away from the agency for personal gain). The following are examples of prohibited conflicts of interest:

- Attorneys serving on the Board who represent people who cause harm as respondents in Orders of Protection or as defendants in criminal court in domestic violence related charges
- Family members of program staff serving on the Board
- Sales or purchases between the agency and a Board member
- Family members of the Board transacting sales or purchases with the agency
- Delivering competing services or competing to take funding from the agency
- Misuse of organizational information for personal gain
- Requesting information about individual survivors seeking or receiving services

Programs should maintain a conflicts of interest policy that clearly explains what a conflict of interest is, reporting procedures, and how to address such conflicts should they occur. This policy should be presented to each Board member during orientation. Each Board member should also sign a conflicts of interest statement indicating adherence to the policy, and programs should maintain records of the same.

The program should maintain a file for each Board member that includes:

- A completed Board member application
- A signed Board of Directors Declaration of Confidentiality
- A signed Board of Directors Conflicts of Interest Statement
- A record of each Board member's contact information, positions, committee membership, and term dates

The Board of Directors should reflect the cultural make-up of the geographical area that the program

serves. This practice ensures that all voices in the community are represented. Additionally, the Board of Directors should have at least one member who is a survivor of domestic or intimate partner violence. This information does not have to be made public to the larger body but should be known by the Executive Director.

Boards may choose to outline specific director responsibilities, either in the agency bylaws or a Board manual. Communicating clear expectations to all members about the role of a Board member is recommended. In addition, the bylaws or Board manual should specify criteria for removal of a member. An example of one commonly used criterion that may lead to a member's dismissal is failure to attend meetings on a regular basis, or failure to attend a minimum number of meetings in a set time period. The bylaws should also specify the length of the term and limits for consecutive terms. A procedure for notifying members of the end of terms and for renewing terms should be outlined.

The following is a list of common Board member responsibilities:

- Duty of Care – defined as the care that an ordinarily prudent person would exercise in a like position and under similar circumstances. This duty includes the care and decision regarding the financial and legal oversight of the agency as well as active participation as a Board member.
- Duty of Loyalty – defined as placing the best interests of the organization ahead of personal interests and exercising the powers of Board membership in good faith. Acting to prevent a conflict of interest is one of the key duties of loyalty.
- Duty of Obedience – defined as complying with the mission, bylaws and other governance policies of the agency when acting as a Board member.
- Be knowledgeable about the agency, its mission, any strategic plans, various programs or services, policies, facilities, and the population served.
- Gain an understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence, participating whenever possible in training on domestic violence and services as it is made available.
- Be familiar with the community served by the agency and represent the agency and its work with domestic violence within the community.
- Support the financial health of the organization, through good fiscal oversight, participating in fundraising efforts, and making donations.
- Advocate for the best possible salaries, benefits, and work environment for program staff in order to acknowledge their professional services and expertise.
- Attend all Board meetings and events.
- Come to meetings prepared to participate, having reviewed the agenda, and any accompanying materials.
- Participate actively and effectively in the meetings, following established protocol.
- Assist with maintaining and developing the Board.

### **Board Officer Positions and the Executive Committee**

Although a Board may detail in its bylaws any type of Board leadership positions that it deems necessary, the most commonly used officer positions are president (or chairperson), vice president (or vice chairperson), treasurer, and secretary. Typically, the Board officers also comprise the membership of the executive committee of the Board, which interfaces with the executive director and oversees the operations of the Board itself. For further detail on the officer positions, refer to the Board of Director Officer Roles and Responsibilities.

## **Board Recruitment and Orientation**

It is recommended that Boards have established criteria to recruit members, drawing upon the defined expectations and responsibilities for Board members. Each Board will have unique needs for new members at any specific time and should recruit members based on those needs. Building a Board of members with a variety of backgrounds and professional skills will bring value to the Board, including members with some experience in domestic violence or other social services, law, human resources, accounting, or money management. Boards are also encouraged to be diverse and to have membership that represents the communities that the agency serves, geographically and by gender, ethnicity, age, disability, and other demographic traits that reflect the community and/or population served.

The following are qualities that Boards may want to search for when recruiting new members:

- Basic understanding of domestic violence services or willingness to learn from staff and other Board members, including but not limited to client confidentiality
- A commitment to service and to helping domestic violence survivors
- Good people skills
- Board knowledge and skills or a commitment to acquire the same
- Ethical standards
- Evidence of leadership abilities
- The ability to commit to the individual Board membership responsibilities

Establishing a formal orientation process will increase the quality and functioning on the Board. Orientation activities may be assigned to a committee, such as the Nominating Committee, and can include compiling and maintaining an orientation packet, procedures for acquainting the new member with the agency and the Board experience, training opportunities, and even assigning mentors to new members. An orientation packet may include the agency mission, bylaws, Board manual, agency policies, a confidentiality statement, programs and services descriptions, an organizational chart, staff list, Board member list, and other organizational items.

An important aspect of the orientation process in an agency providing domestic violence services is to increase the new Board member's awareness of the values and advocacy focus inherent in the provision of domestic violence services. In addition, issues of safety and confidentiality should also be addressed.

## **Board and Agency Role Differentiation**

It is crucial that there be clear communication and agreement about the roles and responsibilities of Board members, Board officers, executive director, and other agency staff. Clarity regarding differentiation of roles prevents any tendency for the Board to passively follow agency management's lead or, conversely, to micromanage the executive director or other staff. When there is clear understanding about what the Board and executive director or staff take responsibility for, it is more likely that those responsibilities will be effectively managed. In addition, it will reduce the potential for conflicts and mistrust between the Board and the agency. Knowledge of each other's roles and responsibilities can be increased through regular and open communication about those roles.

## **Policy Development**

Boards of nonprofit programs are responsible for setting fiscal, legal, ethical, and service planning policies within which the executive director, and other staff operate. Board policies are often general guidelines and do not always dictate specific procedures, especially service delivery procedures. For example, the Board, in conjunction with the executive director, may approve a policy that the agency should expand its programming to include a greater prevention focus, but it would not issue specific procedural decisions regarding how those prevention services are delivered.

Boards are often responsible for the following categories of policies:

- Financial—policies that set limits and outline procedures that maintain the fiscal health of the organization
- Legal—policies that ensure that the agency is meeting all federal, state, local, funding, and regulatory requirements
- Personnel—policies that determine the practices for staffing the agency, including hiring, promoting, disciplining, terminating, compensation, benefits, fair treatment of employees, work environment, and any federal or state-mandated personnel requirements
- Ethical—policies that set limits and outline procedures to uphold the values of the agency across all operations of the agency, including Board actions
- Mission-based—policies that ensure that services and service outcomes are being delivered in accordance with the mission and the goals of the agency.

To develop effective policies, it is important that Board members be well informed about all aspects of the agency and its domestic violence services. Members should attend training, spend time at the program, and visit with various staff members and volunteers.

Policies are set by a formal and collective action of the Board. Any decisions regarding policies are recorded in the Board minutes. New or revised policies should be written and stored in appropriate manuals. Policies are revised as needed and generally reviewed on a regular basis, either once a year or every other year.

### **Board Processes: Leadership, Communication and Collaboration**

Board members are leaders, both of the agency and in the community. Using effective leadership skills in the role of Board member increases the effectiveness of the Board and the stability of the agency.

One of the greatest difficulties that Board members face is finding the right balance of directive and receptive leadership. Directive leadership means giving firm and clear direction or being an active leader. Receptive leadership means asking for input from others, taking in information, and allowing others to influence the direction taken. Both are important leadership skills to be used when appropriate.

Board members need to be directive in establishing and maintaining financial, legal, and ethical guidelines for the agency. Board members who take a passive approach to this role are not fulfilling their duty of care to the agency.

As the Board and agency management work together in ensuring its mission is met, collaboration and receptive leadership are crucial. Building relationships with staff, strengthening communication skills and processes, and creating opportunities for connection between the Board and staff are methods for making collaboration work.

### **Board Meetings**

Board meetings should occur regularly and be run in an efficient way that also allows for all members to share, contribute, and reach formal Board decisions.

Recommendations to help keep Board meetings productive, focused, and effective include the following:

- Follow the bylaw requirements for a quorum and voting procedures.
- Hold deliberations that are free and wide-ranging with full participation and respect for divergent opinions.
- Follow set meeting procedures that encourage organization and participation, such as Robert's Rules of Order or a similar procedure.

- Provide agendas to all Board members prior to the meetings, and minutes afterwards.
- Strive for regular attendance of all Board members at all meetings.
- Have staff participation at both Board and committee meetings when appropriate.
- Have a written record of attendance at the meetings and a record of all agenda items discussed and formal Board decisions made during the meeting.
- Hold regular executive committee and other standing committee meetings, generating both written reports and oral reports back to the Board. Common standing committees often include finance, personnel, funding or resource development, program/planning, bylaws, or other areas.

## **Domestic Violence Program Advisory Boards**

For programs located within larger parent agencies, it is recommended that a program specific Advisory Board be created to meet the needs of the program and to report to the larger agency Board of Directors. In addition to many of the elements listed above, a significant role of the Advisory Board is to also assist the program director with fundraising planning and implementation.

## **Fiscal and Data Management of the Program**

To remain viable, domestic violence programs must responsibly manage both fiscal information and data pertaining to survivors who utilize program services. There are several steps listed below that programs can take to effectively manage these systems.

### **Fiscal Management**

Sound fiscal management begins with appropriate regulation of the financial operations of an agency. Appropriate fiscal management allows the agency to plan for long and short-term financial stability, provide assurance that funds are being used for the purpose for which they were awarded, and allows the Board of Directors of the agency to make financial decisions.

The following are some standards that should be followed for optimal fiscal management:

- The organization has clearly outlined the fiscal policies and procedures of the agency. A guideline for establishing these policies and procedures can be found here: [Nonprofit Fiscal Policies & Procedures: A Template and Guide](#).
- The organization follows both generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and IRS regulations for nonprofit organizations.
- The organization creates an annual operating budget with realistic operating expenses and fundraising expectations which is authorized by the full Board of Directors.
- The Board of Directors has a Finance Committee that receives, and reviews reports on the financial status of the agency in comparison to the projected budget throughout the year.

The following responsibilities are required in fiscal management, with the party most commonly responsible for each requirement shown in parentheses:

- Plan and develop the annual budget (Staff)
- Review, adjust and approve the annual budget (Board)
- Elect a Board treasurer and appoint a finance committee and subcommittees to oversee the safeguarding and profitable management of the agency's assets (Board)
- Research and arrange for adequate insurance policies (Staff)
- Administer contracts for any contractual services required by the agency (Staff)
- Oversee all insurance policies and contracts made by the agency (Board)
- Ensure that all requirements are met for 501(c)3 status (Board and Staff)
- Ensure that all services are provided to survivors free of charge (Board)



- Prepare the state and federal reports and tax forms (Either external accountants or Staff)
- Monitor the filing of state and federal reports and tax forms (Board)
- Budget and anticipate financial problems, including long-range financial forecasting (Staff and Board)
- Arrange for an annual audit of the organization's books, including A-133 audits required for agencies receiving \$750,000 or more in federal funding (Staff)
- Review all audit materials and strategize fiscal planning as needed (Board)
- Generate policies for internal financial controls (Board)
- Adopt and maintain procedures for internal financial controls (Staff)
- Periodically inspect the books and records of the organization (Board)
- Ensure that the agency manages resources in a manner consistent with sound fiscal standards and keeps written policies and procedures regarding its fiscal activities, including but not limited to payroll, purchasing, cash management, relevant fee schedules, contracts, and risk management (Board)
- Ensure that the agency conducts all financial record keeping in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles consistently applied. Accounting transactions must be properly classified, adequately documented in appropriate books of original entry (journals), and posted to general ledgers on a monthly basis (Staff and Board)
- Keeps all fiscal records for at least six years beyond the fiscal year that the expenditure occurred or longer if there is an audit, in which case the records shall be maintained until the audit is completed (Staff)

### **Survivor Data Management and Record Keeping**

Programs should develop and maintain a data collection and record-keeping system for all services provided. This system must allow for the efficient retrieval of data needed to measure and report the program's performance in relation to its stated goals and objectives.

In dealing with survivors, how records are kept is crucial. Advocates should carefully document the reported abuse and efforts made by survivors to find help as the domestic violence program may be the only place that has the full history of abuse and safety planning behaviors. Documentation should not include subjective opinions about a survivor's behavior and only factual information related to the survivor and the goals of their service plan should be documented.

Advocates are cautioned against documenting data that does not directly pertain to the survivor's identified goal plan, such as rule violations or the safety plan. ***Best practices for documenting in a survivor's file can be learned through ODVN's annual Confidentiality and Best Practices for Documenting Client Records Training. It is recommended that all advocates take the training annually to ensure that they are up-to-date with evolving best practices.***

Domestic violence programs that receive federal funding from Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) or the Office on Violence against Women (OVW) are prohibited from participating in the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) or participating in any third party shared data systems. Domestic violence programs should operate with comparable databases that collect this information and report it in aggregated form with no personal identifying information. 42 U.S.C. §§11383 and 13952(b)(2). Personal identifying information is defined in 42 U.S.C. §11383 to include:

A first and last name, a home or other physical address, contact information, Social Security number, and any other information including date of birth, racial or ethnic background or religious affiliation, which, in combination with any other non-personally identifying information would serve to identify any individual.

Safe Housing Resources has compiled a list of resources for building or selecting a comparable database which can be found here [HMIS and Comparable Databases](#).

## **Personnel Management**

Personnel management in domestic violence programs includes the process of recruiting, training, and supervising both staff and volunteers of the program. These processes are carried out by the executive director and other management staff of the program and are outlined in the program's employee handbook. Employee handbooks provide the steps to be followed not only in managing personnel, but also in general operating procedures of the program. It is highly recommended that all programs consider the development of an employee handbook if one is not already available.

The following information is a general guide for personnel management in a domestic violence program:

- Programs should have written job descriptions for all staff that include qualifications, duties, and responsibilities.
- Programs should have a current organizational chart that defines responsibility and lines of accountability, including both staff and volunteer positions.
- Whenever possible, programs should have a director/manager position whose duties include the daily management of the program.
- All program directors, staff, and volunteers who may be in a position to provide or supervise direct services to adults or children and who have access to confidential information should be required to complete 40 hours of program-specific training
- To ensure that staff and direct-service volunteers have the most current information, programs should develop a plan for providing additional domestic violence training on an ongoing basis.
- All personnel should be required to sign a confidentiality agreement.

## **Personnel Policies**

It is essential that organizations' up-to-date personnel policies are compiled in an employee handbook and thoroughly reviewed with each employee at the time of hire. The employee handbook provides general guidelines to be followed while in the employment of the agency. The handbook should also address terms and conditions of employment as well as equitable treatment of employees. A comprehensive employee handbook template can be found here [The Essential Nonprofit Employee Handbook Template](#).

An employee handbook should include, but not be limited to, the following information:

- Recruitment, hiring, and compensation of staff
- Promotion, supervision, discipline, grievances, and termination of staff
- Procedures for evaluation, which should occur at least annually
- Employee benefits, including a list of benefits provided and eligibility requirements
- A professional code of ethics
- Travel and per diem reimbursement guidelines
- Confidentiality of staff about program location if applicable, activities, and survivor information
- Employee use of technology, including policies for maintaining client confidentiality
- Affirmative Action policy/Equal Employment Opportunity statement
- Sexual harassment policy
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance
- Workplace violence policy that addresses domestic violence
- Drug-free workplace policy
- Conflict of interest procedures
- Program operation procedures regarding health and safety, including:

- Responding to communicable diseases and/or blood borne pathogens
- Procedures for handling body fluids
- Pandemic and epidemic response plans
- Disaster plan describing actions to be taken in the cases of tornado, fire, evacuation, uninhabitable buildings, and emergency supplies, including arrangements with local agencies that are kept current
- Meeting the medical needs of survivors and staff, including emergency situations
- Responding to emergency and safety threats posed by people who have caused harm
- Plans for disaster recovery and resuming business once immediate emergency safety issues have been resolved.

## **Personnel Records**

Personnel records must be maintained for the purpose of keeping information related to employment at the program. These records contain confidential information and shall be kept in a location that disallows access by other staff members who are not in supervisory positions.

It is important that programs make every effort to ensure diverse representation among staff in sex, race, age, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity/gender expression, religion, income, and any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law. To do this, it is critical that programs promote a welcoming and safe environment for all.

The personnel file is the property of the employing program; however, procedures must be in place related to staff having access to their own files.

The personnel records maintained on all employees shall include but not be limited to:

- Confidential personnel file
- The employee's application/resume and references
- Job description
- Offer letter
- Date of hire
- Authorizations for any necessary background checks
- Certifications, licenses, or proof of educational degrees or training
- Driver's license and proof of auto insurance (if employee drives as part of their position on behalf of the agency)
- Work performance evaluations
- Salary
- Promotions
- Any disciplinary actions taken
- Signed confidentiality agreement
- Certificate of completion of 40-hour training
- Signed Employment Eligibility Verification (I-9)
- Any statements requiring signature according to program policy, such as drug-free workplace policy, communication guidelines, technology policy, etc.
- Personal and emergency contact information
- W-4 tax exemption form
- Benefit enrollment forms
- Beneficiary and dependent benefit forms
- Employee acknowledgment of receipt of Employee Handbook and any additional policies
- Performance evaluations

- Letters of commendation
- Attendance records (but not payroll records)
- Disciplinary memos and performance improvement plans
- Personnel action forms detailing changes in salary, job title, etc.
- Payroll information including direct deposit authorization, memos related to wage attachments or garnishments, request/authorization forms for leaves of absence (excluding medical certification)
- Letters of resignation or termination

Organizations are responsible for ensuring that personnel files are in compliance with any grant funding or accreditation guidelines and may be required to disclose personnel files at the site visits of these oversight agencies.

## **Background Checks**

At a minimum, all staff and volunteers should have statewide background checks. Effective November 14, 2007, House Bill 190 requires all Ohio teachers, non-licensed school employees, and school bus and van drivers to receive both a BCI and FBI criminal background check. This protocol is best practice for mentors and tutors working with children. It is recommended that domestic violence programs also use this standard when hiring staff or volunteers who will have direct contact with survivors, their children, or their personal information. Laws detailing how and when an organization can ask an individual to disclose their conviction record ("ban the box" legislation) or undergo a background check vary across the state and it is important to consult an employment lawyer before finalizing applications and hiring policies.

It is also important to recognize that many survivors of domestic violence have experienced being accused and convicted of violent crimes that occurred in self-defense or were entirely fabricated by their abuser. This record can negatively impact the survivor's ability to find employment and create economic instability for the rest of their lives. It is critical that domestic violence programs not participate in re-victimizing these individuals. As such, information that could be perceived as negative found through a candidate's self-disclosure or background check should never result in an automatic dismissal of an otherwise qualified candidate but rather must lead to further inquiry and assessment based on the information discovered about the situation in context.

## **Orientation, Training, and Development**

It is important that staff, volunteers, and interns receive training to provide advocacy with and for survivors and their children. Although it is not necessary to have a specific degree or professional licensure to do effective advocacy work, it is important that program staff, volunteers, and interns are provided with adequate training related to issues that survivors and their children face related to domestic and intimate partner violence.

The ODVN Domestic Violence Advocacy Fundamentals training is a good introductory training for new staff, volunteers, and interns. It provides the foundation for advocacy in the domestic violence field. ODVN offers this training once each quarter. The training consists of 12 hours of self-directed eLearning prior to the training and 18 hours of virtual or in-person training. Best practice standards suggest that new staff members receive at least 40 hours of training and volunteers, and interns receive at least 20. The Domestic Violence Advocacy Fundamentals and New Shelter Advocate Toolkit training, along with other topic-specific training offered by ODVN, and a program's own individualized training and orientation can provide a solid foundation for new staff members, volunteers, and interns. Staff members, volunteers, and interns can access the ODVN eLearning portal at any time for training modules on various topics. The eLearning portal as well as the ODVN Training Academy calendar can be found [here](#).

An annual training log should be kept by the organization documenting all training attended by staff members within the calendar year. Training logs serve multiple purposes. First and foremost, training logs demonstrate the organization's commitment to both staff development and staying up-to-date with developments in the field. Secondly, reviewing staff training is part of many funders' site visits. Ideally, this log is kept in a format that can be easily sorted so that this information can be presented within each funder's criteria. Additionally, licensed staff are required to acquire continuing education units (CEUs) to maintain their licensure. While it is the staff member's responsibility to do this, it is in the interest of the organization to be aware of their progress. Finally, the training log is a way to evaluate if a staff member who is under-performing is receiving adequate support to perform their position. Before any performance related discipline is begun, an organization should be confident that the staff member was adequately trained in the area of concern.

All training, both in-house and external, should be included in the training log. If training is a regular part of staff or department meetings these should be included along with each staff member who was in attendance. Similarly, when a staff member attends a conference, each workshop should be listed as a separate training unless they have participated in a complete series. Copies of training certifications should be kept with the training log. A training log should include the minimum information:

- Topic/course title
- Date of training
- Duration of training
- Staff member's name
- Staff member's title
- Organization that provided the training
- CEUs granted
- Expiration date if applicable (e.g., CPR)

Staff training should be a dedicated line in the organizational budget. Staff should not be expected to pay for trainings fundamental to developing in their roles. When possible, money for staff training should be included in funding proposals.

At the onset of employment, new full- or part-time staff members who provide direct services to survivors should receive a minimum of forty (40) hours of training/orientation. Training can involve both didactic and experiential learning opportunities. ODVN offers a variety of trainings throughout the year to support advocates and programs. Advocates who will be working with children should receive additional training on topics specific to children exposed to domestic violence. Advocates working with youth are able to participate in the quarterly Youth Caucus Meetings as well as access ODVN's Youth Advocacy & Trauma-Informed Services Coordinator for support and guidance. A full list of ODVN trainings can be found [here](#).

After the first year of employment, each employee should receive an additional 16 hours of training/continuing education annually provided by the agency or an external source. In addition, each staff member should be encouraged and permitted to attend ODVN statewide taskforce and/or caucus meetings quarterly to continue networking and increasing their knowledge and resources.

A sample onboarding checklist is provided in the appendix section of this document. It can be used as a template for an onboarding schedule with new staff members, volunteers and/or interns. Programs can use this as a model or create their own. The idea is to create an onboarding plan or schedule to help the new staff member feel as prepared as possible for their new position.



## **Employee Management**

Once employees are hired, good management skills are critical for supporting the staff of domestic violence programs. The following guidelines are recommended for those who oversee staff in domestic violence programs:

- Provide staff with adequate support and supervision. Be available to meet with staff regularly, and to address urgent questions and concerns as they arise.
- Allow staff autonomy and independence in making decisions about their work.
- Provide clear roles and responsibilities for staff.
- Create an environment where staff members are encouraged to express interests as it relates to their professional development and attempt to provide them with opportunities.
- Treat staff respectfully and without condescension. Try to foster a team and collaborative approach so that some decision making can be shared by staff.
- Follow up on agreed-upon tasks or courses of action within the agreed timeframes or attempt to notify staff of any changes or delays.
- Provide staff with adequate time to meet the demands of their workload.
- Plan regular staff meetings that are enjoyable, yet productive and focused.
- Foster an environment that encourages personnel to support one another.
- Acknowledge staff's accomplishments and contributions in a variety of ways.
- Where possible, involve staff in developing processes that affect their day-to-day work.
- Help staff keep well informed of locally or nationally publicized domestic violence issues and situations.

## **Volunteer and Intern Programs**

Volunteers can be an invaluable part of any program. To build a strong, thriving volunteer program, the agency should be committed to recruiting, training, and developing those who want to volunteer.

Volunteers applying to serve in an agency should go through a similar process to those seeking paid employment. This process includes but is not limited to:

- Completing a volunteer application
- Interview to determine their interest and suitability to the program
- Written job descriptions for each volunteer position with a designated supervisor
- Matching the skills and interests of the potential volunteer to the best fit volunteer position
- Written policies and procedures for supervision and termination
- Training appropriate to the position they will be filling—orientation to domestic violence for all volunteers and a minimum of 20 hours of training for those who will be interacting with survivors and their children directly

The following additional guidelines are recommended for creating a supportive and successful volunteer program:

- Maintain a sign-in process to document volunteer time. This process helps not only with program records of volunteer hours, but in later recognizing volunteers for their contributions. Grants funders sometimes require volunteer time sheets and tracking this information can help document and contribute to in-kind matches for grant reporting purposes.
- Have written job descriptions for each type of volunteer position, including all responsibilities. These descriptions should be provided to all volunteers to clarify roles and responsibilities.
- Assess volunteers for skills and abilities and provide appropriate placements that best utilize each person's strengths and areas of interest.
- Be creative and flexible in utilizing unusual or diverse volunteer skills. If volunteers are able to

contribute special skills that lie outside of general program services but may still benefit survivors (e.g. creative writing, art demonstrations or leading a yoga class), make efforts to accommodate these potential contributions.

- Provide a high level of program involvement for volunteers, including ongoing participation in program staff training, retreats, and meetings as appropriate. This involvement allows volunteers to learn and feel more connected to the program.
- Acknowledge the efforts of volunteers. This includes not only informal positive feedback and praise to volunteers on a day-to-day basis, but more formal recognition as well. A way to provide formal recognition might include an annual reception for volunteers at which they receive awards for their time and efforts.

## **Internships**

Organizations that seriously consider the fit of an internship and are clear about expectations from the beginning can find interns are invaluable to their ability to meet their mission. When coming into the agency interns should follow the same basic application and training process as volunteers. However, there are key differences between volunteers and interns that organizations should take into consideration. Interns come to the organization fundamentally for a learning experience, if the organization does not have the capacity to provide this experience it is most appropriate to turn down the intern.

Because of the educational nature of internships, it is key that the supervisor be an individual with both the experience and the time to provide adequate supervision over the course of the internship. Most internships are connected to a specific course or degree requirement through the intern's school, and many have specific degree or certification requirements for supervisors. It is important for the supervisor to review all written requirements from the school before agreeing to host an intern.

At the beginning of any internship, the supervisor and intern should develop a set of expectations about the internship's goals, hours the intern will work, the schedule for formal supervision, documentation, and who is responsible for submission of documents (e.g., time sheets, performance review, recommendation). Interns should be encouraged to think critically about the work they are doing and ask questions about methodology and program design. Throughout the internship the supervisor should be providing constructive feedback to both the intern and the supervising professor. At the conclusion of the internship, there should be a final meeting to review the successes and challenges of the entire experience. Intern supervisors should expect that they will be asked to serve as a reference in the future and should be honest with the intern if they would be amenable to providing a reference.

For programs engaging in ongoing internship and volunteer opportunities, it may be helpful to design an intern/volunteer manual. The manual could provide knowledge about the organization, mission, vision, philosophy statements, as well as expectations, performance standards, review, and opportunities with the program after successful completion of the internship or volunteer assignment.

## **Evaluation**

Employee evaluations should be used as an opportunity to exchange feedback and help avoid the negative consequences that come from inadequate communication. Each employee's supervisor should conduct the evaluation with each staff they supervise. The Board of Directors conducts the executive director's evaluation.

To be effective, employee evaluations should communicate performance expectations, identify strengths and training needs, guide performance improvement, and determine compensation and position changes.

Communication and conversations regarding improvement should occur throughout the year. Staff should not be surprised by first hearing about a performance issue during the evaluation process.

If problems with a staff member start to be identified, a program may want to consider placing the staff member on a performance improvement plan. A sample of a performance improvement plan can be found in the appendix section of this document.

Some of the questions to help guide evaluations and measure employee development may include the following:

- What was the employee expected to accomplish?
- Was the employee provided the tools necessary to accomplish these tasks?
- What did the employee actually accomplish?
- How did the employee achieve these accomplishments?
- What was expected of the employee that was not accomplished, and why?
- In what performance areas does potential for improvement exist?
- What support does the staff member need from the organization in order to feel successful in their position?
- What strengths did they bring to the organization?
- What goals does the staff member have for their position or professional development?
- What is the hardest part about their position?
- What is the best part about their position?
- In what ways would they like to grow and contribute differently to the organization?

Sample employee evaluations can be found in the appendix section of this document. There is a sample self-evaluation for employees with one year or less with the program as well as a sample self-evaluation for employees with more than one year with the program. Both are paired with a supervisor feedback form.

## **Grant Writing**

Grant writing refers to the process of writing grant proposals in the attempt to obtain funding. This process usually involves responding to a request for proposal (RFP) from a funding agency. Carefully prepared proposals that clearly outline needs and services are generally most effective in receiving awards. Requirements differ according to the individual grant and will be clearly delineated in each RFP. It is important that grant proposals be well organized, clear, and detailed. Most importantly, they should clearly answer each question put forth in the RFP.

The primary funding sources for domestic violence programs in Ohio include the Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCSJ) and the Ohio Attorney General's Office (OAG). The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grant, the Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA) grant and the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) grant are offered through OCJS. The OAG is responsible for the administration of the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant. The primary funding sources that contribute to a domestic violence program's funding are typically VOCA, VAWA, and FVPSA.

## **Writing Successful Proposals**

It is essential to follow the RFP directions precisely, responding to each section of the RFP exactly as it asks. It is also important to not overcomplicate the proposal and to simply outline the needs of survivors in the program and community.

When writing proposals, it is especially important to be extremely clear about program goals, how they will be accomplished, why the program's approach is effective, and why the program would be successful.

Provide specific program policies and procedures and provide detailed descriptions of services offered by the program. Be consistent throughout the proposal with the goals that the program wants to accomplish and don't lose sight of the original plan or request.

Program goals should be cited in measurable terms, using numbers whenever possible. These stated goals should be specific and realistic in both outcomes and timelines. When in doubt, it is better to underestimate rather than overestimate project deliverables. Finally, the goals should relate back to those of the funding agency, stating how the program would support and promote the funding agency's goals.

Additional tips for writing effective proposals include the following:

- Make a strong case of need for the program; use current research and local statistics that pertain to the specific issue the proposal is addressing.
- Identify staff with strong capabilities who will be responsible for carrying out the project and cite their qualifications in the proposal.
- Highlight creative services offered by the program and showcase successes.
- Be open and honest about strengths and challenges with service provision, needs, gaps in service and barriers that are faced by survivors. Grant funders want to know about these issues so that they can better assess the ways to help fund the program or position.

Budget:

- Include a realistic budget that includes all costs associated with the proposed project.
- State other sources of program funding if applicable; this illustrates for a funder that the organization has the financial capacity to oversee the project.
- Mirror the terms and language used in the funding agency's materials in order to avoid confusion, especially in personnel and service categories.
- Be sure to fully describe budget items in the budget narrative if requested.
- Proofread the proposal thoroughly; simple math errors or unclear language can lead to the refusal of the request.

ODVN has a series of grant writing and reporting modules available on the eLearning platform. For more information about successful grant writing and reporting, access the eLearning modules through the ODVN website found [here](#).

## **Coordinated Community Response**

Advocates know that survivors often call on many systems to get safe and heal from abuse. Law enforcement, courts, healthcare, child welfare, abuse intervention programs, shelters, places of worship, and many other community systems play a key role in reducing domestic violence. Across these many systems, the focused goal of survivor safety and perpetrator accountability becomes shared and can only be accomplished through a strategy of coordinated knowledge, perspectives, and protocols. The communities that coordinate efforts through risk assessment teams or other community coordinated response teams have the greatest success in responding to domestic and intimate partner violence and reducing the number of domestic violence homicides.

ODVN is committed to helping organizations build a coordinated community response to domestic and intimate partner violence in their communities. There are often great differences between the many systems and organizations involved that can prevent coming together as a team to address domestic and intimate partner violence in the community. ODVN staff members can assist with the development of these response teams.

The following are some best practice standards for a Coordinated Community Response Team:

- Programs organize or join a domestic violence response team that meets at least quarterly with community partners.
- Outcomes of team meetings should include increased accountability to survivors and their children throughout the systems.
- Partnerships should encourage flexible, creative solutions when responding to the unique, individual needs and trauma responses experienced by survivors and their children.
- Domestic violence providers must be included whenever community response systems are being created, evaluated, or re-imagined.

## **Non-Profit Fundraising**

To keep your program operating efficiently, organization leaders must have a sustainable fundraising plan that will balance grants and gifts with other funding sources while being careful to maintain a diverse donor base.

Now more than ever, programs must reach their audiences through multiple online and offline channels to build community awareness, recruit volunteers, and raise funds. To do this, you need an effective marketing and branding strategy. The importance of branding in your marketing plan starts with your mission and impact. When supporters feel connected to your brand's story, they are more likely to donate on an ongoing basis. Your brand influences every aspect of the community's perceptions of your program. Branding builds trust, recognition, and reputation.

Having a consistent and standardized look and feel in your social media communications is the basis of a strong brand. You want to be sure that your brand is telling one consistent story. This also includes having a clear, consistent marketing and branding strategy to help communicate your program's social mission to funders and the community.

The following is a list of potential fundraising events to consider for your program to appeal to unconventional or nontraditional donors:

### **Special Events**

Events are the most common method programs use for raising funds. Events will vary from county to county, depending on the culture of each community. Programs should consider hosting a '*signature fundraising event*.' Signature fundraising events are those that an organization is known for throughout the community and beyond. Hosting signature fundraising events can help build your agency's brand, build your donor base, and contribute to a consistent part of your annual fundraising budget. When an event is repeated, people in the community learn to plan for and expect it.

### **Digital Fundraising**

Online fundraising is a way for nonprofit organizations to raise money via the internet. It usually involves an online donation page, including mobile giving, peer-to-peer fundraising, and more. It allows donors to give quickly, easily, and securely. Nearly everyone has access to the internet in one way or another. With online fundraising, nonprofits can meet donors where they already are. An added benefit to digital fundraising is that it also expands your stakeholder network, mobilizing people who haven't necessarily been part of the nonprofit or philanthropic community.

### **Crowdfunding**

Donation-based crowdfunding is one of the most popular ways nonprofit organizations raise money. This is



because crowdfunding takes advantage of established networks of family, friends, supporters, coworkers, and peers to bring in large donations. Examples of crowdfunding platforms include Donorbox, Fundly, GoFundMe, and more.

### **Giving Circles**

This impact of giving together enables individuals to come together to create change they want to see in the world by creating a giving circle. Many circles, in addition to donating their money, also contribute their time and skills to support your program.

### **Community Sponsored Drives**

This is a creative way to gather the community support and financial benefits of a fundraiser event without the intensive time investment. Finding a local business willing to sponsor an event in your agency's honor is all that is required. Many restaurants are willing to participate and sponsor such activities, but other businesses do these events as well. In addition, fostering a culture of giving and addressing the "willingness to give" gap may address fundraising challenges in communities where many residents have limited resources.

### **Solicitation Letters**

Sending out a well written and concise solicitation letter is a time efficient way to raise funding. Your letter should include your mission, history, types of service you provide, and number of people served by your program. The letter should be signed by your board chair and a copy of your 501(c)(3) should be attached.

### **Holiday Campaigns**

Holidays represent a time for giving for many people and are good times to solicit donations. The community can be encouraged to donate to your program in the name of a loved one, teacher, neighbor, friend, or coworker. When a donation is made in honor of someone, your program should send a card with an inscription such as: *'May the peace and hope this gift brings to survivors of domestic violence be felt in your home throughout the year.'*

### **Capital Campaigns**

A capital campaign is an intense effort to raise significant dollars in a specified period of time. Usually, the money raised is to fund additions, renovations, and acquiring a new shelter.

### **Giving Tuesday**

Giving Tuesday is a day that encourages people to give back in whatever ways they can. It presents programs with the chance to raise even more money than they would on an average day of giving, which is why many programs create special campaigns to participate in this day of giving.

### **Wills and Bequests**

A long-term method of raising sustainable funds is to begin a campaign encouraging the community to support your program through planned estate giving. Usually, this includes a bequest in their will. Brochures about the program can be printed and widely available in the offices of attorneys who specialize in estate planning. The brochure can include the option to become a member by designating the program in their will or bequest or to get more information about the program. Members could be thanked with a small gift to identify their commitment to your program.

## **Experiencing Crisis, Grief, and Loss in Domestic Violence Programming**

As difficult as it is to imagine, there may be times when a domestic violence program experiences grief and loss due to the passing of a past or present survivor or staff member. These crises can be difficult for staff, survivors and children to navigate without additional assistance. The dynamics and feelings of loss will vary among each staff member and the survivors within the program. Some will experience the loss more deeply than others depending on how closely staff members and survivors interacted with the person who passed away. The loss may also be difficult for management staff as well as you, the Executive Director. As the Executive Director, you will be responsible for taking care of the administrative details, seeing to the cares and concerns of staff, addressing the loss with survivors and children, and managing to keep your program fully functioning. It will be important in these moments to take care of yourself as you take care of others.

In response to these types of crises and loss, ODVN has created a Crisis & Loss Response Team. The support offered by ODVN Team Members is available to all programs at no cost. Whenever possible, two team members will meet individually with the Executive Director/Director to discuss the event, the dynamics occurring after the event, and the goals of the meeting that will take place between program staff and the ODVN team responding. This initial meeting will be virtual or by phone. The ODVN team will also take some time to process the event with the Executive Director/Director to promote self-care during such a stressful time. The ODVN team members will then set a time, if desired, to meet with staff to process the event further in an effort to assist staff with their feelings of loss, helplessness and methods for moving forward.

Additional information about the ODVN Crisis & Loss Response Team can be found in the appendix section of this document. There is an agency checklist that is important for Executive Directors, Directors and Management staff to review before experiencing a loss so that everyone knows how to respond and proceed. The checklist will be helpful with the development of advanced policies and procedures before they are needed. There is also a companion document that may be helpful to staff and survivors who are experiencing the loss with greater difficulty. The agency checklist can be found [here](#) and the companion document can be found [here](#).

## **Conclusion**

We know that managing a domestic violence program requires oversight in many areas that are ever changing. The Promising Administrative Practices Manual will be a living document that will be updated on an ongoing basis. New administrative sections important to domestic violence program management will be added and/or revised and new emerging promising practices will be added. We appreciate that there are many moving parts to domestic violence program management and thank you for your commitment and dedication to supervising program staff and serving survivors in the most trauma-informed and survivor-centered manner.

## Thanks and Appreciation

The revision of the primary Promising Practices Manual, as well as the new Promising Administrative Practices Manual, would not have been possible without the assistance of so many experienced, dedicated and committed advocates in the domestic violence movement. Their commitment to best practice procedures, trauma-informed and survivor-centered services, and exceptional domestic violence program management is inspiring and exemplary. It is with tremendous thanks and deep gratitude that ODVN thanks the following people for their contributions:

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- Tonia Moultry, Ohio Domestic Violence Network
- Laura Schumm, Ohio Domestic Violence Network
- Rebecca Cline, Ohio Domestic Violence Network
- Rachel Ramirez, Ohio Domestic Violence Network
- Tuesday Ryan Hart, Ohio Domestic Violence Network

## Resource Materials

Handbook for Nonprofits: An Operational Resource for Board members of charitable organizations (2009) Ohio Attorney General's Office.

Illinois Domestic Violence Services Guideline Manual

National Network to End Domestic Violence. Technology and Confidentiality Resources Toolkit. Available online at: <https://www.techsafety.org/confidentiality/>

A quick summary for domestic violence of the March 2010 HMIS final regulations. (n.d.). Retrieved May 27, 2014, from: [http://www.ncdsv.org/images/NNEDV\\_HMISSummaryDVAdvocatesFinalRegs\\_3-2010.pdf](http://www.ncdsv.org/images/NNEDV_HMISSummaryDVAdvocatesFinalRegs_3-2010.pdf)

## Appendix

The following documents can be found online at [www.odvn.org/directorsacademy/](http://www.odvn.org/directorsacademy/).

The documents with an asterisk (\*) can be found in this document on the following pages.

<b>A. The Trauma-Informed Roadmap for Ohio’s Domestic Violence Programs</b>	
<b>B. Guide to Fiscal Policies and Procedure</b>	
<b>C. NNEDV Choosing a Comparable Database</b>	
<b>D. The Essential Nonprofit Employee Handbook</b>	
<b>E. Outline for Onboarding New Staff</b>	
<b>F. Orientation Onboarding Checklist</b>	
<b>G. Employee Self-Evaluation Template (One Year or Less)</b>	
<b>H. Evaluation Template for Supervisor (Employees with One Year or Less)</b>	
<b>I. Process for Staff and Employee Discussions (One Year or More)</b>	
<b>J. Employee Self-Reflection Form (One Year or More)</b>	
<b>K. Supervisor Reflection (Employees with One Year or More)</b>	
<b>L. Sample 1: Performance Improvement Plan</b>	
<b>M. Sample 2: Performance Improvement Plan</b>	
<b>N. Agency Checklist for Grief and Loss</b>	
<b>O. Coping with Sudden Loss</b>	
<b>P. Responding to Subpoenas and Warrants*</b>	.23

## **Appendix P: Responding to Subpoenas and Warrants**

### **I. Review record-keeping procedures**

These procedures should be differentiated for:

- People
- Warrants (search, arrest, and/or bench warrants)
- Staff vs Residents

Ask yourself these questions:

- Is the information kept in the records factual?
- Have you done everything you can to comply with the confidentiality requirements of VAWA, VOCA, and FVPSA?
- Do other state and federal laws apply to you?
- What do other laws require?
- Which staff have confidentiality privileges by statute?

After you have answered these questions:

- Determine how and where files are kept
- Determine who has access to the files
- Determine your record retention policy
- Determine when & how you will release information.
- Revise record-keeping policy & review all relevant forms
- Train staff/volunteers/interns on updated policies and forms
- Inform program participants about the newly revised policies

### **II. Designate a custodian of records who shall:**

- Maintain control over the records
- If necessary, bring the records to court
- Ensure conformity in procedures
- Keep track of number and types of subpoenas served
- Follow the agency procedures when responding to a subpoena
- Include in your procedures that:
  - If there is an administrative office separate from the shelter, the custodian should be at the administrative office
- Only the custodian or person named on document can accept subpoenas and warrants

### **III. Develop a relationship with an attorney who:**

- Advises the program on its potential liability
- Is committed to the policy of the program & understands domestic violence issues
- Is aware of the program's legal obligations under federal and state confidentiality laws
- Is willing to file a Motion to Quash on behalf of the organization



#### **IV. Inform and train staff, volunteers, interns and board members about all policies and procedures.**

- Clearly communicate policies, procedures, practices and expectations
- Tell staff that only authorized persons can accept subpoenas and ensure that everyone knows who that identified person is
- Ensure that staff who may be the first point of contact for a subpoena are well trained and know the protocol for follow up after being contacted

#### **V. Proceed on a case-by-case basis for each subpoena**

- Never reveal information to anyone who is serving the subpoena
- Do not answer any questions from the process server

#### **VI. Examine and develop procedures**

- Review existing record-keeping procedures
- Require all volunteers, board members, student interns and staff workers to sign confidentiality agreements with the program
- Consider changing record-keeping procedures so that no confidential information is kept in the program participant files
- Assess the impact that the disclosure of records will have in court
- Be sure to follow confidentiality requirements of VOCA, VAWA and FVPSA as well as appropriate releases of information
- Have the attorney (both one working for the agency and the program participant's attorney, if applicable) explain to the program participant the effect of records release
- Ensure that workers or volunteers who receive a subpoena contact the Program Director immediately
- Remember that a subpoena, even one signed by a judge, does not require the automatic release of files or other information. Follow the established agency process when responding to a subpoena.

#### **VII. Take the appropriate legal actions**

1. The attorney working with the agency should:
  - File a motion to quash the subpoena when it is determined that the records or testimony sought should not or cannot be released
  - Object to procedural defects with documents—e.g., incomplete, overly broad, unclear, improperly served
  - Insist that the information sought is privileged or confidential
  - Learn why the records are sought and for what purpose
  - Present testimony information on the critical importance of confidentiality and safety to victims
  - Use litigation to educate the judge on purpose of the program and why confidentiality is so essential
2. If the motion to quash is unsuccessful:
  - Ask the Judge for an in camera review
  - File a motion for a protective order for the records
  - Argue for partial protection for the records or scope of questions
  - If both motions are unsuccessful, appeal with other organizations joining by amicus curiae.

### **VIII. If someone must testify:**

- Consult an attorney immediately
- Prepare for questions most likely to be asked
- Listen carefully to the language of the questions
- Pause before answering – to allow for an objection by your attorney
- Limit your answer to what was asked
- Bring copies of policies and records to court
- Tell the truth
- Do not volunteer information
- Do not show anger

This material was adapted from the model confidentiality policy drafted by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (Barbara J. Hart, Staff Counsel) in December 1992, contained in the Appendix of "Confidentiality for Domestic Violence Service Providers In Arizona Under Federal and State Law," Arizona Coalition Against Domestic Violence, June 2001, p. 38-40 and contained in the Appendix of "Model Protocol on Record Keeping when working with Battered Women, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 2007.