

DEAF COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY WHEEL

This wheel begins to demonstrate the ideal response, within the Deaf community, to the issue of domestic violence. Community opinion and a desire to make a difference can lead all members of the community to expect full accountability from the abuser by applying appropriate consequences. Developed by Erin Esposito and Aimee Whyte of Advocacy Services for Abused Deaf Victims (ASADV).



Inspired and adapted from the “Community Accountability” and “Coordinated Community Action” Wheels developed by Mike Jackson and David Garvin. Inspired by the “Deaf Power and Control Wheel” developed by DeafHope and from the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project.

Media

- Social media, internet, television, print, and other forms of media will educate (not glorify) about the dynamics and consequences of violence experienced by Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and signing people.
- Recognize and celebrate Deaf domestic violence agencies/supporters as well as peace and nonviolence. Highlight efforts and events that promote nonviolence.
- Cease labeling domestic violence inappropriately (i.e. “it’s between them,” “not my/our business,” “s/he should leave,” “s/he has a bad temper”) and stop portraying abusers’ excuses/lies as if they were the truth.
- All forms of media are made accessible to Deaf and Deaf-Blind people through captions/subtitles, American Sign Language, and visual representations.

Service Providers

- Service providers and agencies will become social change advocates by helping ensure Deaf and Deaf-Blind clients are safe [i.e. agencies run by, of, and for Deaf/Deaf-Blind people, mental health professionals, medical professionals, interpreting agencies, vocational rehabilitation offices (VR, VESID), support service providers (SSPs), social security offices (SSI, SSDI), audiologists].
- Domestic/sexual violence agencies, shelters, and supporters will provide accessible services to Deaf and Deaf-Blind individuals and their families and will contact Deaf domestic/sexual violence agencies and/or other Deaf advocacy/support agencies for support and/or consultation.
- Establish guidelines for care, advocacy, and/or referrals regarding domestic violence.
- Utilize local referral resources and treatment programs for abusers (i.e. batterer’s intervention programs, anger management).
- Ensure interventions are culturally and linguistically appropriate. Embrace Deaf-centered approaches.
- For mental health providers: Routinely ask questions regarding violence in intake sessions. Do not provide couples/marriage counseling in domestic violence cases.

Government

- Enact laws which provide more protection to survivors and more serious consequences for perpetrators.
- Maintain a cultural and linguistic accessible analysis in all laws relating to domestic violence services for Deaf and Deaf-Blind people.
- Provide secure funding for Deaf domestic/sexual violence services.

Employers

- Condition batterers continuing employment on remaining nonviolent.
- Safeguard survivors, who are employees, by providing and negotiating flexible schedules, LOAs, employee assistance programs, counseling and support.
- Incorporate provisions in Human Resource policies which address violence in the workplace and the ramifications of such acts. Intervene against any violence in the workplace.

- Provide domestic violence training to all staff and managers. Train supervisors to recognize violence, harassment, and stalking in the workplace.
- Recognize that the dynamics vary for Deaf and Deaf-Blind survivors in a predominately Deaf workplace, as opposed to a hearing or mainstreamed workplace. Attention needs to be given to issues of confidentiality, boundaries, and safety.

Justice System/Law Enforcement

- Receive ongoing in-service trainings and professional development regarding working with Deaf survivors and responding appropriately to domestic violence situations involving at least one Deaf person.
- Understand the unique dynamics of Deaf-Deaf and Deaf-hearing domestic violence situations so that survivors are not re-victimized by the system (i.e. wrongfully charging a survivor, not providing qualified interpreters, or having a protocol in place to ensure that an interpreter is provided).
- Understand that there are various subgroups within the Deaf community (i.e. Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Deaf with developmental delays, Deaf immigrants) and ensure that appropriate and effective access to communication and information is available and provided.
- Respond to domestic violence situations by talking with the individuals involved separately and directly. Refrain from using hearing batterers as interpreters for Deaf and Deaf-Blind survivors.
- Refrain from using children and other family members as interpreters for Deaf and Deaf-Blind survivors.
- Receive training and information regarding working with Interpreting agencies, certified ASL Interpreters and Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs).
- Contact Deaf domestic/sexual violence agencies for support/advocacy; refer Deaf and Deaf-Blind individuals to these agencies.
- Ensure that any and all information and resources made available for hearing survivors are equally as available and accessible for Deaf and Deaf-Blind survivors [i.e. phone services (victim advocate hotline), ability to walk into a police station without any barriers (call box)].
- Provide easily accessible and enforceable protection orders.
- Root out audism and biases towards Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and signing people.

Deaf Education

- Provide ongoing Deaf-centered professional development for teachers, educators, faculty, staff, and support staff who are Deaf and/or work with Deaf people/students to better respond to domestic violence in their students' lives.
- Teach Deaf-centered violence prevention, peace-honoring conflict resolutions and communication skills in schools and colleges (Deaf schools, Deaf programs, mainstream environments) and model these skills throughout the school.
- Address bullying and dating violence in schools in addition to domestic and sexual violence (Deaf-centered).
- Deaf Education and Interpreter Training Programs, at the undergraduate and graduate levels, incorporate Deaf-centered domestic and sexual violence seminars/courses.

Hearing Allies

- An ally is a supporter/friend, not a helper, who supports Deaf and Deaf-Blind survivors, in different ways, especially in regards to safety issues. Hearing allies may or may not know ASL and may or may not be part of the Deaf community.
- Work with members of the Deaf community to hold Deaf and hearing abusers accountable.
- Donate professional skills and services (i.e. legal, financial, educational), time, and/or money to support Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and signing survivors as well as the work of Deaf domestic/sexual violence agencies.
- Receive training about the unique issues Deaf and Deaf-Blind people experience in domestic violence situations and encourage other hearing people to become educated as well.
- Be willing to learn from Deaf and Deaf-Blind people about the unique issues they face in domestic violence situations.
- Cease the practice of accepting hearing privilege in all its forms. Acknowledge audism. Embrace Deaf-centered approaches.

Deaf Community

- All members of the Deaf community (i.e. Deaf people, CODAs, Interpreters) support peace and oppose violence.
- Use peer support to help prevent and stop any form of violence. If you see someone being abused, ask them if they would like help and/or inform them where they can get help.
- Confront people who abuse and call them on it. Place the responsibility on the abusers by asking them why they abuse [instead of asking survivors why they stay(ed)].
- All Deaf social clubs and interest groups will address and confront violence at Deaf clubs, Deaf organization events and programs, Deaf sports events/leagues/tournaments, Deaf poker/euchre games, Deaf conferences, and Deaf church or spiritual services and gatherings. Make it clear that violent, abusive, and controlling behaviors are unacceptable.
- Listen to Deaf and Deaf-Blind survivors' requests for support. Be especially supportive with the additional challenges survivors may face because of "small world" and "grapevine" issues (i.e. Orders of Protection in place and risk of seeing perpetrators at Deaf events, relocating to a new geographical area, avoid talking about them behind their back/gossiping, avoid making judgments).
- Cease labeling domestic violence inappropriately (i.e. "that's between them," "not my/our business," "s/he should leave," "s/he has a bad temper," "it's not abuse, it's strong facial expressions, which is part of Deaf culture") and stop portraying abusers' excuses/lies as if they were the truth.
- Refrain from using the hierarchical status of an abuser (i.e. Deaf community leader, Deaf family) as a reason not to intervene and instead make the safety and welfare of the survivor of paramount importance.
- Learn more about domestic violence and attend Deaf domestic violence events/programs.
- Donate professional skills and services (i.e. legal, financial, educational), time, and/or money to support survivors and Deaf domestic/sexual violence agencies and events/programs.
- Promote positive discipline of children and do not use physical punishment or spanking ("hands are for signing, not for hitting").