

SAFER *and* MORE STABLE CONDITIONS



Importance for Adult and Child Survivors of Domestic Violence

Safer and more stable conditions help to reduce survivors' risk of physical, sexual and emotional fear and harm, and increase survivors' sense of control over their lives. Housing and economic stability for the family and educational stability for children are particularly important for survivors.

Overall Role of Practitioners

To help build safer and more stable conditions, practitioners can provide resources and advocacy to help adult and child survivors secure places to live, learn, work, and play that are predictably consistent, provide positive experiences, and meet their unique circumstances and needs, whether or not those needs are directly related to domestic violence. (At the same time, practitioners can hold the person who is harming survivors accountable for their behavior and provide help for them to change. Tips for practice in this area are forthcoming.)

Examples of How Practitioners Can Help

1. Reduce stressors on survivors by helping with immediate needs such as groceries, car repairs, legal issues, or health care.
 - Provide information, resources, or referrals when survivors' specific needs arise.
 - Provide survivors with a 211 Help Line or free community and online resources.
 - Advocate directly for survivors' access to resources and help them overcome barriers (e.g., language and geographic barriers, racial and gender identity discrimination, etc.)
 - Talk with colleagues and others to generate ideas about new or untapped resources or partners that you could call upon now to help survivors achieve safer and more stable conditions.
2. Engage collaborators, especially DV practitioners, to help create and support individualized, flexible safety plans with survivors.
 - Ask survivors about the safest ways and times to contact them.
 - Establish code words with survivors for them to signal that "now is not a safe time to talk" or "send help", and be sure the information is available to others who support safety.
 - Include supportive family and friends as part of safety plans when desired by survivors.

- Define roles of collaborators in supporting the plan (e.g., identify who will make safe contact with adult and child survivors, support their sobriety, respond after hours and on weekends, provide them a place to stay if needed, provide emotional support, etc.).
 - Look at challenges that keep people from following through on the safety plan as opportunities to revisit, refine, and strengthen strategies as circumstances change and new considerations emerge.
3. Reduce an adult survivor's reliance on and vulnerability to their partner by supporting their educational/employment/recovery goals, setting up child care, and locating community resources for specific needs.
 4. Advocate with child care centers and schools to maintain consistency and stability in a child's/youth's environment.
 5. Help survivors to develop skills to effectively advocate for what they need.
 6. Help families experiencing homelessness to understand and assert their rights under the McKinney-Vento Act.¹
 7. Work with community collaborators to safely engage and hold accountable the person using violence and coercive control to help them change their behaviors.²

“When a flower doesn’t bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower.”

Alexander Den Heijer

This is part of a series of Practice Tips on Protective Factors for Adult and Child Survivors of Domestic Violence. Find the others here: <https://dvchildwelfare.org/resources/protective-factors-practice-tips/>

Examples of Questions to Ask Survivors

1. What do you need help with as soon as possible?
2. What do you need for you and your child to be safer or to have more stability in your lives? How can I help?
3. In what ways has your child's sense of routine and normalcy been disrupted by what's happening in your home or in the world? What needs to happen to restore and maintain their sense of routine and normalcy?
4. How do you advocate for yourself to get what you need? How do you advocate for what your child needs?
5. Have you encountered barriers or discrimination trying to get help or to access various resources and services? What can I do to help you get what you need?

1. The McKinney-Vento Act is a federal law that ensures the rights of students to go to school when they do not have a permanent address. For more information see <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/mckvenapp20120829.pdf>

2. For more information on relational and systemic accountability for people who use violence, see <https://dvchildwelfare.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Relational-and-Systemic-Accountability.pdf> and forthcoming practice tips at <https://DVChildWelfare.org>



Advancing an Adult & Child Survivor-Centered Approach

Funded through the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, Grant #90CA1850-01. The content of this document does not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the funder, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products or organizations imply endorsement by the US Department of Health and Human Services.