



Collaboration Safety: Safety Planning and Lethality Assessment

*“We have historically thought of safety as simply being free from physical abuse, free from sexual abuse, free from emotional abuse, and free from neglect. This type of safety is a critical first step on the road to being well. But, we need to broaden our definition of safety to also include this concept of **feeling safe**; a concept that we call psychological safety.”-by Jeanne Preisler*

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) plays a significant role in our human family as research indicates that roughly 1 in 4 females, 1 in 7 males and 1 in 2 trans people have had experienced IPV. The impact of IPV is significant. It impacts health and well-being both in the immediate and long term and the psychological consequences can be as serious as the physical effects. Exposure to IPV leads to poorer overall health that can lead to death, disability and long-term chronic illness. Research also indicates that it can take up to, on average, 7-12 times to successfully leave an abusive relationship.

Safety planning and lethality assessment are very important aspects of an advocate’s job. A safety plan is personalized, and practical plan designed to help victims achieve and maintain safety. In order to be human centric, trauma informed- each plan should look different. For some, safety planning involves “staying safe at home”, because they are not ready to leave the relationship. Some involve “keeping the children (even furry, feathered or scaly children)” safe while others “involve keeping safe during a stalking situation”. It is essential that each plan is individually tailored to include technology, lethality assessment and inclusive of emotional/psychological safety.

Safety planning and lethality assessment should be individualized, holistic and rooted in empowerment. This presentation will explore various safety planning models that will help the advocate and victim collaborate on physical, emotional and psychological safety for all members impacted by violence. This presentation will also explore non-clinical lethality assessment tools along with human centric, trauma informed methods to compassionately discuss such difficult topics. Finally, we will create a focus on how to identify and leverage existing client assets in the safety planning process.

Objectives:

- To discuss human centric, trauma informed safety planning process
- To impart the importance of including emotional/psychological safety planning
- To discuss implications of technology and the essential nature of continual learning in this area
- To examine various lethality assessment models
- To explore the pros and cons to the empowerment model
- To practice individualization and creation of tailored plans
- To explore “exit planning” with an emphasis on safety