



“Violence in the Lives of the D/deaf: Unique Challenges” Webinar Transcripts

This document is a transcript of the webinar “Violence in the Lives of the Deaf: Unique Challenges”, held on Dec. 17th and 18th, 2009. The text has been edited to match the presenters' words and meaning as closely as possible. In some instances, details and other information has been added to clarify the points being made. These details and information will be enclosed in brackets [] to make it clear what has been added. Also, the slide number will appear as {#} to allow you to follow the slideshow and transcript together.

Speaker: Kenya Fairley

Good morning. This is Kenya Fairley with the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. Welcome to the webinar titled “Violence in the Lives of the D/deaf: Unique Challenges.” We will begin soon and we will turn everyone on a global mute. You need to confirm that you can still hear me speaking by responding in the public chat.

In past sessions, we have had questions about what a webinar is and how it is defined. We'll spend a few moments discussing what a webinar is. A webinar is a web-based seminar in which the presenters speak over a standard telephone while pointing out information being presented through Power Point slides on participant's computer monitor or screen. Participants will be able to access the slides and access the chat feature seen at the bottom of the screen. A webinar may include polling and question and answer sessions to allow interaction between the participants and the presenters. For this particular webinar, we are also including the closed caption feature, which we have discussed and given instructions in the public chat. If you are still having difficulty with accessing the closed captioning window, please feel free to contact us privately by clicking on private chat or on the “leaders and administrators” section.

Before we begin the presentation, I want to cover a few housekeeping items. This presentation is being recorded and will include a short question and answer session with the wrap-up at the end. Please use a public chat feature to post your questions and comments and then we will keep track of those and post them on your behalf at the end of the webinar. Be aware that the public chat is live and can be viewed by all participants across the country. So far, today, we have about 37 participants on this webinar. Closed captioning is being provided and again, please let us know if you are still having difficulty with that.

Our presenters are a Deaf woman and a native Spanish speaker. Please be mindful of the fact that it may take some time to get used to their accents. Please be patient. The materials covered in this webinar will be available online later and you will be notified via email. Materials will include frequently asked questions and their answers.

Gretchen Waech, one of the webinar presenters, was the founding executive director of Deaf lowans Against Abuse and is the former executive director of the Justice for Deaf Victims National Coalition. Gretchen is a proud Deaf woman with particular expertise on the intersection of domestic and sexual violence and the Deaf culture. Heidi Notario-Smull is originally from Cuba and has resided in the United States for the past 14 years. Heidi works at the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence as part of the technical assistance team as a Training Specialist. She also worked as an advocate for individuals with disabilities and Deaf individuals

at the Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania since 2004 where she coordinates the Disability Grant Program funded by the Office on Violence Against Women on a contractual basis with that organization.

This webinar will provide participants with information about the barriers encountered by D/deaf survivors who may seek advocacy from mainstream organizations. The presenters are a Deaf advocate and a hearing DV/disability rights' advocate lending a dual perspective to the discussion. Participants also have the opportunity to share specific situations they may have encountered with D/deaf survivors for analysis during the Q and A portion of the webinar. The content of this webinar is intended to build upon the content of the July 2009 webinar entitled "Why Cry if No One Hears?" also hosted by the NRCDV. Some information presented here will overlap with that webinar. Now I'm going to hand the session over to Gretchen and she will begin.

New speaker: Gretchen Waech

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Good morning. Are you hearing me okay? Well, welcome! I wanted to just do a little introduction. Today's webinar will include not only a Deaf advocacy perspective, which is what I am lending, but also additional insight from a disability perspective. My name is Gretchen Waech and I am a Deaf woman from Iowa. I wanted you to have the opportunity to hear my voice before I turn things over to my co-presenter and friend Heidi Notario-Smull. I have a deaf accent. She has a Spanish/Cuban accent.

So those of you who are listening in, your ears will get a workout! All right, Heidi, take it away.

New Speaker: Heidi Notario-Smull

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Good morning, everyone. Thank you Gretchen, for the introduction. I am going to begin by sharing with you some definitions. In this case, I'm going to talk about the definition of disability as it is presented or defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act. It refers to an individual who has a *physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities*. Based on this definition, deafness is a disability. But the reason I am presenting with Gretchen today is because we wanted to raise awareness about the fallacy of always viewing deafness as a disability. Although, deaf individuals have protections under the ADA and other laws, we want to talk about deafness not as a disability but as a culture. Think of it with a capital 'D' as members of a cultural minority or group. So, the following slides are going to talk about this concept.

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Many deaf people don't consider themselves to be disabled, but as part of that cultural minority. When we are thinking of a culture, what are some of the elements we use to identify that culture?

So a culture, a cultural group, is comprised of individuals that share a common language, values, behavioral norms and traditions. In this case, we want you to think about again, Deaf with a capital 'D' as a culture.

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So, why is that relevant for me and for my work as a disabilities rights advocate? For one thing, we had to understand that we were talking about a specific minority group and not a group of individuals that, you know, are going for the 'disabilities' label alone. Some of the things we

[disability rights advocates] were doing didn't really apply in this case.

One of the main differences had to do with the role of institutions. A lot of the work of the disabilities rights' movement in history had to do with the elimination of institutions. We were very strong on eliminating many of the institutions that had really kept people away from society; a lot of them, unfortunately, had turned into places where people did not receive appropriate services and necessary support.

However, institutions [meaning residential schools] play a very important role in the lives of Deaf people. For example, Deaf children are exposed to Deaf adults that serve as role models. [Also important to note that the residential schools often provided the only language instruction Deaf children received, in a linguistically accessible environment]. So understanding the cultural perspective is critical when it comes to the Deaf community. For us, as disability rights advocates, advocating for inclusion [of Deaf persons into mainstream programs] or the mainstreaming of deaf children with their hearing peers really had detrimental results.

THERE IS NO TRANSCRIPT FOR THE NEXT FIVE SLIDES – the captioner cut out, so this section is what is believed to have been imparted to participants.

New speaker: Gretchen Waech

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Speaking of definitions and terminology, I want to direct your attention to the slide, where we have the term 'Deaf' with a capital 'D' and the term 'deaf' with a small 'd'. As Heidi mentioned earlier, many deaf people do not consider themselves to be disabled; those who do not, those who typically use American Sign Language as their primary language, those who subscribe to the cultural norms and values of the Deaf community, will be referred to as Deaf with a capital 'D'. The term 'deaf' with a small 'd' is one that is used to label someone as having a hearing loss in the medical sense. An interesting note about the term "hard of hearing": to the hearing or medical community, this means someone who has a slight to moderate hearing loss. However, within the Deaf community, and you should assume from here on that when I use the term 'Deaf' it will be in the sense of 'Deaf with a capital D', when someone is referred to as being "hard of hearing" this means that they speak, lipread, or otherwise interact more on a hearing level. This is without regards to their actual medical level of hearing loss.

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Typically, I see people using the term "hearing impaired" or "hearing disabled" and I want to make a very strong point that this is **not** the politically correct term, nor is it the term the Deaf community prefers. The terms that are better to use are "d/Deaf and hard of hearing." Part of the reason the Deaf community dislikes the term "hearing impaired" is because they do not see the fact of being deaf as an impairment; also, to them, hearing is not the important sense. The Deaf community sometimes calls hearing people "signing impaired" as a twist on this... taking a term they abhor and turning it around in a humorous way. I would encourage you to check your policies, procedures, and other written materials for the use of the term "hearing impaired" and replace it with more culturally affirmative terminology.

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It is likewise important to remember that, as in any other minority group, identity is fluid and may be constantly changing. Thus you will have people {myself included} who will fall somewhere between 'big D' and 'small d' deaf, with their communication preferences and adherence to cultural norms and behaviors fluctuating depending on the people they are associating with. Now I'll turn it back over to Heidi.

New Speaker: Heidi Notario-Smull

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Yes, and expanding a little bit on the perspectives on deafness, you have the medical or pathological view, which identifies deaf people as being a group that is broken and in need of being fixed. This "fixing" can take many forms, from forcing deaf children to wear hearing aids that either don't help them or are disturbing to them, to attempting to force surgical intervention in the form of cochlear implants. This pathological view is one that has prevailed for the greater part of the last century; it leads to a view of deaf people as having lesser intelligence, or even being less than human. Thankfully, the cultural view [which sees the Deaf community as an ethnic or language minority group with a valuable history and identifiable cultural hallmarks] is becoming more prevalent. This could be due to more visibility of the Deaf community, the acceptance of ASL as a distinct language, or other factors. This has led to empowerment for the Deaf community and development of more culturally affirmative services nationwide.

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As I mentioned, there are consequences to the medical or pathological view of deaf people; there is an entire industry being driven by this view. It's important to remember this when you are going out and looking for feedback on the cultural affirmativeness of your programs or policy; if you ask for feedback from an individual or agency that has a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, you very likely won't get appropriate feedback. Now I will turn this over to Gretchen again.

New speaker: Gretchen Waech

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Thank you, Heidi. Moving on to discuss Deaf culture, I want to make the point that, of course, defining any culture is never so simple as providing a laundry list of features. Within any minority or ethnic group, you will have a wide range of diversity; thus, the information we are giving you may not apply to any given situation.

So I went out to a restaurant with a hearing friend of mine and as soon as I started to talk to the waiter [a young man, probably in his mid 20s] he automatically looked at my friend and was asking my friend questions that should have been directed to me. I kept redirecting the waiter to look at me, talk to me, and ask ME the questions. He kept going back to my hearing friend who just automatically took over. When the waiter walked away, I told my hearing friend, "stop doing that... make the waiter work for the communication." The waiter came back, kept doing it. I said, "Hey, I'm talking. I'm ordering. You talk to me." Finally, the third time it happened, I said to him, "I just want to tell you that not only am I one who has been doing all of the talking, but I am the one who is paying for the meal so you just screwed yourself out of a good tip." And, he was, oh, back pedaling and I was like, no, no. I have a great deal of patience with people. Up to a point. But I point out what they are doing and they continue to do it, well, that kind of thing happens any time I go out in public, so frustrating.

About the shared language of the deaf culture in America, that shared language is American Sign Language. And, there are different sign languages from all different countries. There is not a common, universal sign language. Some of you may have heard of the universal spoken language, which nobody, except William Shatner knows. And, there is also universal sign language. Nobody knows it. Not even William Shatner. Just about being proactive about answering that question.

Also, there are behavioral norms in the culture that are different from mainstream.

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I want to talk briefly about values within the deaf culture, they might be different or contradictory with hearing cultures and I'm not going to go over all of them. But, the ones that you might be able to be aware of, as an advocate, working with a deaf survivor, one thing, the value of information. If you think about it, think about how much information you, as a hearing person get from listening to the radio, or overhearing conversations at the supermarket, or overhearing the family at the dinner table. You get a great deal of information, probably more than you realize from those auditory stimuli. And, that information is obviously not accessible to a deaf person. So when we get that information, even if it is not proven, or it is anecdotal, it is still very valuable, like gold. So that sometimes lends to misinformation, if that makes sense. You need to be aware of that. In the deaf community, you may see deaf people valuing the deaf community over their families, particularly if their family is hearing because of the communication issue. So that is important to remember. If you are talking about support systems, a D/deaf person may not go to the family for support while a hearing person would. The D/deaf person might go to the community. And, the last thing I want to point out is the loyalty to the deaf community, which minority groups often do. Sometimes that leads to protection of a perpetrator who is part of the community.

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I also want to point out a couple of behavioral norms that might be different. Pointing, I point at everything. And, you know, my mom had taught me it wasn't polite to point but I still do it. Because it is part of communicating, sometimes you would point and others, you sign. In ASL, you are signing, and setting up a grammatical structure. Touching, for a Deaf person to get a their attention, a hearing person often will not just touch a Deaf person. Advocates might not have the willingness to do that. They feel it is not appropriate to touch a survivor without their permission. Which is absolutely correct. However, if you consider that a Deaf person values her/his Deaf identity over every other identity in their lives, then if you won't touch a Deaf person because they are survivors, you have effectively taken that identity as a survivor and placed it above the Deaf identity. Which is very disempowering to them. So, again, that should be different from working with the hearing survivors.

You may see much more animated facial expressions and body language. And that is often due to American Sign Language. Facial expression and body language are a part of the structure of ASL. That could be very disturbing to hearing people who are taught to sit quietly, with their hands in their lap. So, again, hearing American culture was taught eye contact to be very rude or can express an interest or some other form of communication. But in deaf culture, maintaining eye contact is critical to communication. My friends used to tease me because I would tell them, take off your sunglasses, please. They would say, you're reading my lips not my eyes. But it really is critical. Sometimes, you can do an experiment when you have someone talk to you with or without sunglasses because hearing people actually have more [ways of receiving information] than they realize and you really do use the eye contact. So, in deaf culture, if you look away while you are having a conversation, it's considered rude. That is often for me, because something about my brain that I need to look away and to think before I come back. So I am horrible, rude, to that person. Okay. I'm going to turn it back over to Heidi to talk about 'Audism'.

New speaker: Heidi Notario-Smull

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Okay. So this concept of Audism, again, for all anti-violence advocates and disability rights' advocates, this is another thing that we could probably relate to when we think about it. Audism

is, again, a perspective that views deafness as something that needs to be fixed. So it is also rooted in the historical belief that deaf people were savages without language because it equated language, conventional language with humanity. So, Audism is really rooted in all these theories or attitudes and behaviors that promote this incredible stigma towards anyone who does not speak/hear using conventional means. It is similar to racism or sexism, and all of the other 'isms'. It really labels people and measures them, on the basis of whether they can hear. So, this is real important because oftentimes, for a lot of us, unintentionally, we do things that are within our own organizations or our practices or the way in which we deliver our services that could be audist. Gretchen is going to give you examples of Audism.

New speaker: Gretchen Waech

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Yes, thank you. I'm not going to go over all of these but I want to just have you read the slide. I want to challenge you, if you are working with a deaf person to really stop and think about some of the things that you are doing. And, for example, I was in New Mexico with Heidi. Heidi and I were presenting at a conference in New Mexico together. We had a friend in our presentation and we were talking about Audism. And, our friend asked me, so, if I say, communicate with someone who is hearing, what should I do? I said, nothing. She said, well, when is it appropriate for me to help? I said ask and it is kind of funny, because just a few minutes later, she and I were up at the front desk arranging bus shuttle to get to the airport. We had totally different flight times. The hotel person told her that each of us would have to call separately about getting a shuttle. And I turned to my friend and said, do you mind calling for me? She burst out laughing. She said, isn't that audist? I said, no, because I asked.

So, you know, I have to admit that until I learned about myself as a deaf person, and I didn't learn it until I was much older, probably in my 30s, until I learned about that and I learned about oppression and then I learned about audism. I did it myself. You can -- you see people who are audist in behaviors and beliefs who are themselves deaf. That is just how I grew up. That was how I was raised. I was raised to believe that being hearing, being able to lip-read, were the important things. Not everything about my identity as a deaf person is about oppression. So I would opt in, often jump in to help other deaf people or take over. Since I've become aware of that, I completely stopped that. One thing I do want to point out, is hearing, over a deaf person, and we bump up against it. Probably more than I would like. Even if you have a hearing person who worked with the Deaf community for a really long time, taking their advice over a deaf provider advice or over deaf survivor's advice is really, probably not the way you want to go. Okay. We are going to go over to Heidi for a few minutes.

New speaker: Heidi Notario-Smull

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So, we know based on the information that we have access to that most evidence in terms of the violence against deaf people that we have today is anecdotal. Unfortunately, not a lot of research has been conducted in this area. But this situation will be changing. We hope within the next few years. And among other reasons, because the Office on Violence Against Women has funded this project across the country that specifically looks at what are some of the obstacles to services that deaf survivors face. So, then, deaf survivors and persons with disabilities, from different communities throughout the country have been collecting this information and between that and other initiatives, I think that we will be able to see more information on this.

But the statistics you have there, the one that talks about 2 to 6 times more likely relates to persons with disabilities. We do know some of the figures that we have, again, most of this is

based just from speaking to folks indicate that over 60 percent of deaf persons have experienced or will experience abuse by a partner in their lifetime. As I said earlier, still a lot needs to be done in this area in terms of research.

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So why are deaf people at a higher risk? Why is this group, perceived as more vulnerable? One of the reasons is that in some ways, because of the communication and the barriers they experience, they may be easier to isolate.

Just for the anti-violence advocates that are on the phone today, just think about the dynamics that would take place if we had a situation where there was a deaf and a hearing partner and the abuser in this case was the hearing person. Just imagine some of the tactics that this person could use against the deaf victim and most of them would end up isolating this person greatly from society. And then, Gretchen is going to talk to you about some of the deaf stressors that play a role in this kind of dynamic.

New speaker: Gretchen Waech

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Yes, thank you. I was just speaking with a deaf advocate yesterday. She was talking about her experience in the courtroom with some of her deaf survivors and she was just appalled at how much of a disadvantage a deaf survivor was and that system, just horror stories that are abound. It is way too early for horror stories. Okay, I just want to point out a few deaf stressors; things that are like, lack of knowledge about a person's rights, whether just general human rights or rights to an interpreter. Knowledge about sex and whatever you believe about sex education and I think that we could all agree when people don't know anything about sex, it is easier to abuse in that area. And, also, knowledge about safe relationships. If you don't know what a healthy relationship looks like, how could you know that the relationship that you are in is not healthy? I'm going to just sort of combine some of these and talk a little bit about internalized audism. And if a deaf person believes that they are powerless, and then you add in abuse and trauma on top of that you create a very vulnerable situation. Communication difficulties can be related to the lack of interpreters or if an interpreter is being used that is not qualified for a situation or maybe someone who just knows sign language. We mention that at the end of the power point, which hopefully we will get to.

I put in some information about the difference between a signer and an interpreter. So you need to be aware that just because someone knows some sign language that doesn't mean they are qualified to interpret for anything. Okay. We had a momentarily tech glitch. I want to put something up about mental health services. Survivors of trauma who really need mental health services above and beyond what advocates provide for them. And, we may have some mental health providers listening in. I just want you to know that I am not picking on you at all. But the reality is that mental health services are not typically accessible for a deaf survivor. Because, not only do you have the issue of providers who adapt themselves through American Sign Language which means you have to bring in a interpreter, and some mental health providers are very, uhm, well, hesitant to involve a third party for issues of confidentiality. You have that issue but you also have culturally competent service providers. Or culturally affirmative service provider, I should say. We are going to talk about that in a minute. But, with that, what it means is mental health providers are not aware of, not knowledgeable and don't incorporate that into it. I think that is very much the case with cultural minorities. Mental health is a whole other webinar.

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I just wanted to point that out the number one deaf stressor though, which people don't realize is, for them, is that a deaf victim, actually, leaving the area where she/he was assaulted or abused. She or he is not ever really leaving the community because the community is so interconnected and because of that knowledge or information, even if the person picks up and moves to another state, or even another country, you end up worrying, for some time. You can't depend on geographical change for safety planning. That is important to remember.

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Now we get to language. Language acquisition which is one of my favorite things to talk about. I just love; I love interconnection between brain development and language. It is just one of my favorite things. I know I'm weird. When a child is born, any child, they have a window of opportunity from about birth to age 3 to learn their first language. That window of opportunity is incredibly important because if they don't learn, if they don't have a solid language foundation, during that time, it hinders further learning down the road because if at school, where a child learns that first language, learning that language is establishing that foundation, actually creates, it actually makes the nerves in the brain think, so there are nerve pathways created in the brain. Isn't that awesome? You would never think about that now.

For a hearing child, they typically learn their first language by listening and imitating their parents. So, it would seem obvious that a deaf child would learn their first language through some other means. The reality is hearing babies are more likely to be taught sign language than deaf babies are.

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There was some discussion yesterday about whether, whether I was right, whether it was possible to learn English and American Sign Language at the same time. Sure it is. Kids learn two languages at the same time. For a deaf child, they have to have that foundation. Again, I could do a whole other webinar with that. The reason this is important to know is because when you have someone with little bits of language, but no solid foundation, they often tend to have trouble mastering a second or third language. It means that they have trouble accessing information even if it is supposedly accessible to them. I am going to, very quickly; very, very quickly go through a couple of examples. I just want to put out a couple of things.

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ASL and English are not the same thing and American Sign Language is not the same thing as sign language. ASL has its own grammar and syntax structure that is very separate from English. Also, American Sign Language does not have a commonly used written form. I'm going to show you examples of what a deaf person might write. I'm just going to let you read those on your own. So hopefully you are fairly quick readers. This is what a deaf person might write; a deaf person whose first language is American Sign Language. And then, what this means in English. So there is quite a difference. This is actually a note that I found the other day, when I was going through some papers that a client left for me. And I thought, it was a perfect example. And, then in English. So those are just very brief examples of why you might have trouble communicating with a deaf person whose first language is American Sign Language.

{23-26 can be read as seen on slides}

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I just want to very quickly point out that when you use an interpreter, when I say, interpreter, I mean a qualified under the ADA and preferably, certified by one of the national organizations.

When you use an interpreter, they must ask the client signing style both expressively in how they sign and also receptively and how they read the sign. Even when you have an excellent interpreter, you can have some issues that arise just from human error. And I did talk a little bit about incidental learning: learning that takes place from listening to the radio or overhearing conversations. Heidi likes to keep me on track. So she messages and tells me, chop, chop, let's go!

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When you are working with an interpreter, it is important to remember that it is really up to the deaf survivor, whether the interpreter matches your needs. And this is true in any situation. I can give you an example. I, at the ripe old age of 39, have decided to go back to college. I started college this past fall. And, I have had a number of different interpreters for different classes. Some of them just did not match me well. Even though I may be able to participate more fully than I would be otherwise, I still need a good interpreter who matches me. Otherwise, my learning is hindered. So it is a barrier to my learning.

So, when you talk about qualified interpreter, and if you read the ADA, which I know is a huge, huge document, but if you read that, to see anything about certification, you'll see "qualified". And, qualified interpreter is different from a certified interpreter. So, for example, if you have an interpreter with the highest level of certification, but they have no training on what to do during a rape exam, they may not be qualified in that situation. That is the thing to remember, when you are looking for an interpreter, to support survivors.

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And just quickly talk about the deaf community. I mentioned that the deaf community is very interconnected. And, that information has a lot of value. It is very different in the deaf community though. It took me a long time to figure this out.

When talking to a deaf survivor, I would often have to really explain the concept of confidentiality. Until many years later, I realize after doing some thinking and doing some reading that because of the value of information in the deaf community, when you are talking confidentiality, and giving information you may seem anti-social. Sometimes you have to tell a deaf survivor why confidentiality might be important for her or his safety. It is a barrier to reporting a crime for deaf survivors. And some of these are applicable to other survivors. But some consequences on deaf survivors for reporting a crime are having children removed from the home. And unfortunately we know that especially with domestic violence, we see children removed from the home quite a bit. The victim may be arrested, taken to jail. Again, applicable across the board. If you have, as I think, Heidi has mentioned this earlier, if you have a deaf victim and a hearing perpetrator, the hearing perpetrator may be allowed to tell their story; because of communication barriers.

This, in the community I was mentioning earlier, that there is loyalty from the deaf community--a deaf victim, another deaf person as a perpetrator, takes active steps and a deaf person could push that perpetrator out of the community, that could be a stigma for the victim. And I have seen that a number of times where the community has kind of rallied more around, not pushing the perpetrator out, because they don't want to exclude him from the community because he has been part of the community for several years. This can be awful for survivors, especially difficult for a deaf survivor. Especially when you have the legal requirements. Again, that is a whole other issue. I should just say that I have great friends as cops, but not any friends who are judges yet. Lots of lawyers. So I'm not picking on them by any means.

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When you talk about accessibility issues, there are three areas that you need to be aware of, attitudes, are not accessible, where you might see the audism when you talk about people first language, and, Mark or Heidi may jump in with information about this. When you talk about people with disabilities, you are encouraged to use people first language. When you are talking about a deaf person, you don't do this; you refer to that person as a 'deaf person'. Physical access. Think about your office. If your office is secure and you have to use intercom for communication; that could become an issue. It was an issue for me when I worked at a facility that had an intercom. Programmatic accessibility. It includes things like having appropriate policies or no policies about working with deaf survivors. It also applies if you are creating a budget. You need to remember to include a line item for interpreting services, very important.

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Culturally affirmative services, I'm not going to go over this in depth, but I want to address the use of volunteer interpreters. Someone in July, when we did a webinar, someone asked about the appropriate way of using volunteers to interpret and my answer was, it is really not a great idea. Now, if you have a certified, qualified interpreter who genuinely wants to donate their time, as a tax write-off, for example, to your agency, awesome. You struck gold! If you are just using someone who is an "interpreter" it is not a great idea. Because what you end up with is someone who probably didn't know American Sign Language, probably doesn't know enough about deaf culture or knows about it, just to get themselves in trouble. So, be aware please that just because you have someone who can sign and is very eager to help, you still may not be offering appropriate accommodations.

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Okay. So culturally affirmative services often, when we talk about culture, we are talking about cultural competency. And, to me, competency is not enough. I think that competency is a very minimum standard. Therefore, it's got to be appropriate. I am stating my opinion and the opinion of many others. So, cultural competency is minimum standards. Culturally affirmative services on the other hand require active support of cultural aspects. I will give you an example. And this may seem really simple and maybe common sense, but when I was working at a hearing organization, a hearing shelter, the hearing survivors stood up at the shelter and asked us [staff] to have access to the phone 24-7. Where the deaf survivors, until I rose up, only had access to a videophone during business hours. That to me was not access -- that was not -- just bare minimum standards in providing access to videophone. Not culturally affirmative. The other thing to remember about culturally affirmative services, involve outside support. No support from a deaf advocacy organization or other deaf experts coming in to help analyze that. And now, I am going to stop talking for a little bit -- and hand it over to Heidi.

New speaker: Heidi Notario-Smull

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Okay. So we are just learning from Gretchen about moving beyond cultural competency. We just wanted to list a few things to think about. We have been kind of talking about this as we have been going along. So understand and comply with the ADA but moving beyond that. Not only what the ADA states but really the spirit behind the ADA that talks about access for everyone. So, sometimes we say we are complying because we are meeting the minimum standards. It is really important that we understand what we are trying to do and whom we are trying to reach, especially if we are working with survivors of violence. So, we are also taking a serious look at existing policies and procedures to make sure that we are practicing and offering

services to the greatest number of individuals that need them; that we are able to modify the practice that we might have in place today. Those practices that really exclude people from our services. That when we provide training or education opportunities to increase the knowledge of our staff and co-workers, that we make sure that we are bringing people that truly know about the topic we are discussing. So if we want to do something about the deaf community that we bring a deaf trainer that we learn from them before we send out that message. So all of these things combined, hopefully will affect our cultures and cause attitudinal change that could be so difficult, especially after doing things in the same manner for years and years.

So, in the next slide, we continue with a list of recommended best practices. There is a list. If we are really looking for information in places for example, VAWnet. So, I was just talking about some of the best practices that we are suggesting here. And please use our resources. The resources, we already posted, for example, on the National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women (VAWnet), we have a list of resources that are accessible to all of you and information that you can freely download. We have a special collection as we mentioned at the beginning of the webinar that is specific to this topic and Gretchen was one of the main contributors to this collection. That we continue to remain survivor- focused in our approaches, that we provide info to folks, for example, when thinking of using interpreters, we are listening to what survivors want. That we practice co-advocacy strategies when working with deaf survivors or working with people with disabilities that we bring individuals from those worlds to co-advocate with us. That we, again, develop policies that will affect cultural change within our organizations that are inclusive and provide practices that, you know, set the norm for our organizations at large, and that we really collaborate with others because unless we partner with other organizations that have expertise in these areas, it is really difficult for us to achieve this goal. So I'm going to move now to Gretchen and she will continue to talk about this.

New speaker: Gretchen Waech

Thank you, Heidi. Practical strategies and tools. Heidi mentioned collaboration. And, in collaboration, you can include deaf advocacy organizations. There is a great expansion. We have several deaf advocates with us today. Great expansion on the field of sexual and domestic violence advocacy, some amazing people out there doing amazing work. And, we have some listings of those on VAWnet. Disability advocacy organizations, I just want to offer one caveat. It has been my experience that sometimes as Heidi stated, advocates may not be aware of the difference between the deaf cultural perspective and the deaf person as someone with a disability so just be aware of that. Collaboration is to include: advocacy organization, criminal justice system, and law enforcement. I know we all get that, preaching and preaching to the choir here. But, I feel it is important to emphasize.

When you are looking out either for yourself or for your agency, what you are doing, or what you need to be doing, you need to be doing a formal assessment to identify gaps. It provides you with information about what you need to do. Where you need to go and how you can get there. It is very important that you involve, in this particular case, members of the deaf community, in some way. If you are creating some sort of specific community, be aware, if you create a survey, you may not get the kind of response you did. I worked with a group that was doing surveying of the deaf community regarding sexual violence. They created video surveys. That was much more effective. So what is next? For all of you, I would encourage you to do some assessment and research. Maybe expansive training on deaf survivor forces your program or your area and creates a formal referral process with deaf advocates. Sexual and domestic violence advocates can create policy and protocol. Outreach. People like to do outreach though I know outreach is tough when you are talking about any minority group.

Okay. What we got now, we have question and answer time! So, I just want to point out that the only really dumb question I have ever had people ask me is, can you read lips? And, you know, this is actually a lot funnier when I am in the presence of the people I'm speaking to. People get it much quicker. If you ask that question verbally and people, people -- sorry Alicia just asked, can deaf people drive? That is another dumb question. But if you, if you ask a deaf person verbally if they could read lips, well, if they can't, they are not going to understand you. If they can, they are going to think you are an idiot. Okay. Awesome. We are ready to go to the question and answer.

To access the Webinar Questions and Answers, visit:
http://www.vawnet.org/category/Main_Doc.php?docid=2315