



Mobile Advocacy with Survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence

Presented by National Alliance for Safe Housing (NASH)
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National Alliance for Safe Housing (NASH)

- A project of the District Alliance for Safe Housing (DASH), a local safe housing program in D.C.)
- A national Technical Assistance and Training provider (launched October 2015)
- Project Partners: Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- Part of the federal Domestic Violence and Housing Technical Assistance Consortium (DVHTAC)





NASH provides programs and communities with the tools, strategies and support necessary to improve coordination between domestic and sexual violence services and homeless and housing providers, so that survivors and their children can ultimately avoid homelessness as the only means of living free from abuse.



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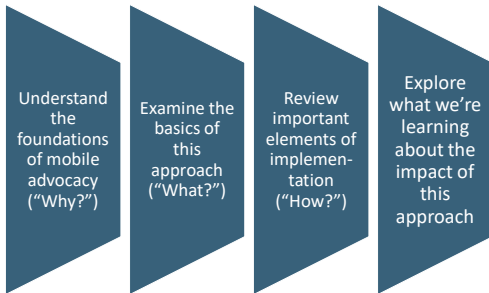
- Mobilizes Latinas and Latin@ communities to end domestic violence.
- Centralizes building Community Capacity
- Three main work areas forward this goal:
 - Family Advocacy
 - Community Engagement
 - National Latin@ Network



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Today's Objectives



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What is Mobile Advocacy?

- Leaving our offices to meet participants where they are...literally
- Natural way to respond to participant needs and realities



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Mobile Advocacy in Context

- Broadly used in culturally-specific communities/orgs
 - Ex: The *Promotora* is a culturally sensitive, lay health educator for the Latin@ community. Used throughout the US to address domestic violence, chronic disease, and oral health.
- Approach used by DV/SA advocates – before we owned buildings



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Philosophical Foundations

- Authentic Connection
 - Back to the roots of the movement
 - Dignity and Human Connection
 - Mutual Learning
 - Culturally-specific approach (Promotoras)



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Philosophical Foundations (con't)

- Anti-Oppression Frameworks
 - Sexism
 - Racism
 - Homophobia
 - Other Privileges



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Philosophical Foundations (con't)



- Last Girl
- Ruchira Gupta, Founder of Apne Aap



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Why Mobile Advocacy?

1. Eliminates barriers and increases access
2. Fosters more authentic human connections
3. Provides unique opportunities to understand a participant's life



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Enter Survivor's World

- Home or other familiar community settings can often be more convenient and comfortable
- Enhanced safety planning opportunities
- Understanding natural networks of support



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More on Why is This a Great Approach



- Some survivors intimidated by social services world and/or disinclined to use traditional entry points
- Trauma Context: Restores power: more equal footing with advocate, choices as to where the work happens
- Advances know-how, collaboration and partnerships

“Taking the time to do home visits, going with people to court or other places communicates ‘I’m here for YOU’ and makes a connection that is unique. Other services just aren’t structured that way.”

- DV Advocate



Mobile Advocacy Can Be....

- Going together to appointments/court
- Active housing search
- Transporting your client to help them get something done
- Help bridging a language barrier (such as with landlords)
- In-person advocacy/intervention
- Home visits
- Meeting at a coffee shop, workplace, wherever is good for client
- A calming presence in intimidating environments



Mobile Advocacy is NOT:

- Crisis response
- Mandatory (and not the *only* way to provide services)
- Setting up an outreach office (this can be a start, but you're still having people come to you)

Advocacy Can Happen Anywhere

- Operating in mostly in confidential locations hides our work away
- Face-to-face relationships strengthen collaboration and partnerships
- Fluidity/variety in advocate's day, connection to bigger picture promotes staff retention



"I have some participants who love to have me in their home and want to have all our visits there. Others want to meet at a coffee shop or somewhere else. We talk about what they want to talk about, too; we always talk about rent stuff, but they lead the conversations."

- DV Advocate



Considering Home Visiting as Part of Mobile Advocacy

- Is it welcome?
- Clearly explain purpose of visit (not an inspection)
- Educate yourself about cultural considerations
- Time of day most convenient for participant (impact of visiting at mealtimes, kids' bedtimes, etc.)
- Who else might be at home; can privacy be arranged?
- Ensure your schedule includes enough time to get lost (don't arrive stressed)



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Preparing for a Visit

- Open conversations with the participant
 - Review all safety concerns and have a plan in place
 - Identify items that would be helpful to bring
- Self-Assess
- Advocate safety protocol in place with Supervisor and/or Co-workers
- Learn what you can in advance



During a visit

- Center yourself
- Bring something to share
- Review safety discussion
- Review confidentiality & mandatory reporting
- Orientation to the whole person; allow time for small talk and be your authentic self
- Discuss leave-behinds, next steps and future communication



After a visit

- Allow time to debrief/decompress
- Follow through on all commitments
- Safety plan (survivor and advocate) again...and again...

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Home Visiting Challenges

- Survivors may feel they need to clean house for you, offer you food, or “host” you
- It may take a visit or two to learn whether survivor truly wants you in their space
- You can’t bring all the resources available at the office
- If survivor is in shared housing, privacy can be tricky
- Children are often curious and want to be in on the visit
- May see things that could mean hard conversations later
- Travel takes more time than meetings at your office



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Getting Comfortable

“I try to think about how I would want someone to act in my own home visit and then present that way.”
- DV Advocate

“Sometimes you’re just going to have to drink that cup of tea if you want to build trust, and that’s ok!”
- DV Advocate



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Working Safety Outside of Confidential Locations



- Based on origins of our movement, we may equate "safe" with "hidden"
- Even if temporarily in hiding, survivors live their lives out in the world
- Helping survivors plan for safety in all areas of their lives adds to their resiliency

Safety for Survivors and Staff

- Safety Planning is key—no matter where you meet with someone
- Have a plan for what you'll say/do if you encounter the person causing harm (abuser)
- How does the survivor want to identify you if someone they know sees you together?
- Let your program know your schedule
- Check in with your program before and after visit
- Follow your instincts
- Keep your cell phone charged and handy.



Mobile Advocacy and Trauma

"I feel like when I am more fearful it's a good sign to do some self-care around Vicarious Trauma."

-Mobile Advocate

- Trauma and perceptions of safety
- Advocates with past trauma
 - Unknown environments
- Anonymity vs. being known in the community

Making the Shift: Advocates

- You're more on your own in this model
- Less structured, new elements and surroundings
- Hard to know if you're "doing it right"
- Relationship-based



Organizational Considerations

- Develop a framework for decision-making
 - When are appointments made?
 - What happens when appointments run beyond the scheduled time?
 - What is expected of advocates during home visits?
 - How will you approach mandatory reporting if applicable?
 - When is providing transportation appropriate?
 - Are advocates allowed to talk to other family members?
- These conversations will be ongoing



Organizational Considerations (con't)

- Mobile advocacy requires:
- Additional training, mentoring and support
 - Autonomy or consistent access to supervisors for approval during a visit
 - Opportunities for team consultation
 - Technology/equipment
 - Transportation



Organizational Considerations (con't)

- Set Realistic Expectations
 - Fewer appointments per day
 - Could decrease total number of participants
- The landscape shapes our services
 - Rural/Urban/Tribal
- Cultural Norms
 - Unpack your own
 - Learn about others
- Flexibility



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Evidence Base

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- Latinas did not want to leave their relationships to get support around violence.
- Often, other priorities took precedence over domestic violence.
- Latinas wanted greater access to information and resources.



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Changing Trends in Help-Seeking Behaviors



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Evidence Base

- Mobile advocacy leads to improved access to community resources (including housing), social support, safety from abuse, and overall quality of life (Bybee & Sullivan, 2002; Sullivan & Bybee, 1999).
- An examination of mobile advocacy and housing supports found positive changes in survivors/children's lives, including greater housing and job stability, higher quality of life, fewer problems with alcohol/drugs, and less depression and PTSD. Children missed fewer days of school, had better academic performance and showed fewer behavioral problems (Glass & Rollins, 2010).
- Evaluation of WSCADV's DV Housing First model found that the majority of families in both rural and urban communities were successful at accessing and retaining housing at 6, 12, and 18 months after program entry, and reported increased safety and well-being (Mbilinyi, 2015).



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safehousingpartnerships.org

The website for the Domestic Violence and Housing Technical Assistance Consortium



- UNDERSTANDING THE INTERSECTIONS
- BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS
- EMPLOYING KEY APPROACHES
- PUBLIC POLICIES

- Data, infographics, literature reviews, and reports that describe the intersections between domestic violence, sexual assault, homelessness, and housing
- Strategies for building effective and sustainable partnerships across systems and case studies of successful collaborations
- In-depth resource collections organized around four key approaches to addressing and preventing housing instability among survivors
- Access to relevant federal laws, regulations, and policies

Have questions? Need TA? Want training?
Contact the Consortium directly through the site!



NASH NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR SAFE HOUSING

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