

MODULE

1

WELCOME

This section is comprised of five lessons that ground trainees in your organization and advocacy work.

LESSON 1: Introductions

LESSON 2: Question Wall

LESSON 3: Why Advocacy Training?

LESSON 4: Overview of agency, agenda, and expectations

LESSON 5: What brings you to this work?



OBJECTIVES

Trainees will be able to:

- Describe the training agenda and expectations
- Meet the trainers, key agency staff, and other trainees
- Describe the agency mission, vision, and services and policies that support the work
- Articulate what grounds them in this work
- Begin to identify how their interests pair with the goals of the training and the advocacy program



MATERIALS

- Training agenda (if you choose to create one)
- Agency brochures
- Flipchart paper or dry erase board
- Markers
- Notecards
- Pens/pencils



TIPS FOR PREPARATION

- Ask in advance that someone in your organization's leadership (Executive Director, a Board Member, etc.) come in to join the welcome for this cohort of trainees. Check in to see if they need any help in preparing welcoming words for the cohort.
- Plan your own introduction so that you can model the activity to trainees.
- State/territory laws related to confidentiality and privileged communication for advocates vary among the states, territories, and tribes. These laws inform advocacy practices. Gather information prior to the training about your state/territory/tribe's laws related to privileged communication for advocates.



POINTS TO CONSIDER

- **Set an open and welcoming tone**

Many trainees will come to this first session with a variety of expectations as well as concerns or fears: about the topic of sexual violence, about how they will be received, and about advocacy. You can start demonstrating that this is a safe and welcoming space by maintaining a welcoming, friendly, open, and direct demeanor.

- **Be upfront about the potential impact of the training**

This first session will give you, as the trainer, the opportunity to reinforce any messages that were shared in the application/interview process. For example, the training is a good way for the trainee to find out if this advocacy role feels like a good fit. It is expected that some will find the role of an advocate not what they anticipated it to be or perhaps too difficult. For some, the training can be upsetting or triggering, for a variety of reasons. You should remain alert to the potential of this occurring and include discussion of this during the application and interview processes.

- **Stay grounded in trainees' passions for the work**

As the training sessions continue and when you are able, try to remember to refer back to an individual trainee's motivation or passion for this work to reinforce how their contributions bring value to the overall.

- **Supporting trainees who disclose or want support**

During training, trainees may feel moved to disclose their own history of being a survivor or a significant other of someone who has experienced sexual violence. Acknowledge that there are survivors in the room who may or may not choose to disclose their experience. Encourage trainees to take care of themselves the best way they can throughout the training, such as stepping out at any time if they are triggered or uncomfortable and engaging with supports. Set up multiple options for trainees to debrief and talk with staff as needed. Continue to be aware of this possibility and make sure you have staffing, policy, and supervision supports available to all trainees.

LESSON 1: INTRODUCTIONS

This is a brief introduction activity, with an upcoming module that focuses more on trainees' interest in advocacy. For the activity in this section, ask trainees to prepare responses to questions a–d, plus two additional questions of their choice from those listed. Write the questions on a flipchart, dry erase board, or prepare PowerPoint slides.

Use these four prompts (a–d):

- a. *What is your name?*
- b. *What are your gender pronouns? (i.e., how do you refer to your own gender? he, she, they, etc.)*
- c. *What do you want to learn about sexual violence?*
- d. *What do you want to learn about advocacy?*

And select two prompts from the list below:

- e. *What do you like to do for fun or relaxation?*
- f. *Where were you born and where did you grow up?*
- g. *Share something about the origin of your name/nickname.*
- h. *What languages do you speak?*
- i. *What is the furthest you have ever been from where you live?*
- j. *What is your favorite food?*
- k. *What is one hope you have for the future?*



ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

- Briefly introduce yourself by answering to the questions selected to model the activity. Ask your co-trainer/s to do the same.
- As trainees introduce themselves to the group, write any themes on the flipchart or dry erase board.
- Make notes to yourself on any significant points or questions to return to.
- Thank participants for choosing to learn more about sexual violence and advocacy. For some, this may be the first time they have thought deeply and critically about the issue of sexual violence.
- Explain that in any group, one can find great diversity in interests, values, professions, and life experiences as the introductions might indicate. Whether you know someone well or are meeting that person for the first time, there is always something interesting and new to learn about that person. There is a wealth of information and experience represented in the entire group and it can be an invaluable resource throughout and after the training. While differences are interesting and important to acknowledge, similarities are also important. For example, there should be a shared commitment to assisting survivors of sexual violence.

LESSON 2: QUESTION WALL

Introduce the concept and practice of a “Question Wall.” Have a piece of flipchart paper posted on a side wall with markers available. The Question Wall is a process of collecting questions or concerns that are prompted by the topics discussed.

It is important to eventually refer back to this sheet and make sure that questions are answered — either immediately, or after the trainers have found answers or resources. These questions can help identify future needs for trainings. Remember if one person has the courage to ask then most likely, there are others in the room that have the same questions.

Let trainees know:

If there is something they want to know more about, they can add a question or comment to this sheet. Of course, this does not take the place of asking questions during discussions. The question posted may be about a previous training topic, something that may be a tangent to what is being discussed in the moment, something a trainee is curious about, or something they anticipate may come up in future discussions but they want to make sure isn't missed.

LESSON 3: WHY ADVOCACY TRAINING?

Advocates are powerful people. Being present, listening, and validating are some of the most helpful skills advocates have that survivors are not likely to get elsewhere.

When discussing the importance of advocacy training, integrate these points into your dialogue:

- Advocates are an important resource for survivors. Advocates provide a safe place for a survivor along their process of healing. Advocates believe the survivor and follow the direction given to us by the survivor. Advocates know that survivors are whole, healthy, capable human beings responding to trauma.
- Advocacy training helps advocates build the ability to support survivors through their knowledge of resources and development of active listening skills.
- Legal standing is often connected with the successful completion of the training. This enables survivors' communication with advocates to be privileged, meaning that what is communicated between survivors and advocates cannot be required to be disclosed by law except in rare circumstances. In some states, advocates can claim privileged communication status with survivors only when they have been trained and are employed with or volunteer at agency. Privileged status likely does not apply outside their advocate role. For example, trained advocates could not provide advocacy to a friend outside of the agency context and maintain privileged status. With awareness of your state's laws, explain this significance to trainees.

Trainees may find it helpful if you acknowledge:

- Some trainees may be curious or even anxious at the thought of working with survivors of sexual violence — that is exactly why this training is provided. The training will begin to prepare participants with the skills and knowledge they need to start this work. Remind participants that they are not alone in this work; there is the entire advocacy program with multiple perspectives and talents behind them. Supporting survivors and working toward ultimately ending sexual violence takes collective community action.
- The foundational advocacy training is just the beginning of the learning process about sexual violence and advocacy. This is a time for challenging oneself, engaging in curiosity about this complex issue, and making a commitment to continually learn. Trainees will continue to learn from other trainers, from fellow advocates, and from watching public commentary about sexual violence. Most importantly, trainees will learn from the survivors they have the opportunity to work with.

LESSON 4: OVERVIEW OF AGENCY, AGENDA, AND REQUIREMENTS

This is an opportunity to review the logistical aspects of the training for trainees. This is also a chance for trainees to check in about logistical questions they may have.

Trainers may consider covering:

- Dates, times, and locations of training
- Expectations regarding make-up sessions or what to do if a trainee can't make a training
- Information about training modalities used [for example, lecture, discussion, small group activities, field trips, speakers, and online activities, as applicable]
- An overview of when/how there will be opportunities to debrief and what a trainee should do if they need additional time to debrief
- Agency commitment to organizational support for staff/trainee wellness and related information on available support
- How feedback will be gathered
- A brief agency overview including information about programs, the mission, and vision. Consider sharing brochures/handouts that cover:
 - Programs and services available
 - Agency mission and vision statements
 - Agency values
 - Other items that represent your agency
- Housekeeping items such as:
 - How to reach the trainers between sessions
 - Accessible restroom locations
 - Service animal relief area [if applicable]
 - Where to find water or refreshments

LESSON 5: WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THIS WORK?

This activity and discussion will invite trainees to share about what brings them to this work. Hand out notecards and direct trainees to write down a response to the prompt, “What inspired you to want to be an advocate?” Invite trainees to share with the group.

There are many thoughtful ways to listen to and honor trainees’ responses. It is important to show appreciation for whatever the motivating factors are that bring a trainee to this work. There is no ‘right’ motivation for doing this work.

Examples include:

- Some people become advocates out of a passion for the cause.
- Some become advocates as a means of fulfilling the need for employment or education.
- Some people become advocates out of lived experience and a desire to smooth the path for someone else.
- Some people want to find a way to give back to individuals and community.

