



Using Objectives to Develop Online Course Structures

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Learning objectives help people become clear on all the outcomes they hope a training will achieve. Once people know where they are trying to take others, they can develop an outline to serve as a roadmap, making sure they are treading a path with enough peaks and valleys to capture learners' attention and with enough interaction to allow people to integrate the information they are learning. Research shows that "humans have about ten minutes of attention. First you have to capture the learner's attention through a hook...then you have nine minutes and some odd seconds to explain the meaning of a key concept" (Medina, as quoted in Clay, 2012). Using learning objectives to develop course structures can help coalitions design optimal learning experiences that are both engaging and effective.

Objectives identify what coalitions want people to discuss, compare, connect, understand, relate, recognize, practice, and more. For sexual assault coalitions, this could include facts about sexual assault, information about survivors' experiences with different systems, discussion about systems that perpetuate sexual assault, and more. Designing objectives with what people will do with the information in mind helps people "learn content with the intention of using it"

(Knowles, 1996). Particularly when designing mandatory trainings, such as advocate certification in some states or territories, “adults want to know why they should learn” (National Highway Institute, n.d.). Learning objectives help trainers focus on one or two key points at a time and ensure course segments build on each other in a logical way. The learning objectives map out a path for people taking the trainings to focus on (Brame and Smith, 2010; UNSW Sydney, n.d.). For example, if a coalition is designing online trainings for new sexual assault advocates, the first part of a training may introduce important vocabulary and frameworks so that subsequent parts of the training series can focus on strategies to effectively provide survivor support in line with those values.

In this way, clear training objectives are the foundation of good design. A training that teaches advocates how to fill out a victim compensation fund request form may require different learning tools and a different investment of time than a training about how to empathically listen to and support a survivor. The training about applying for victim compensation funding might benefit from practicing scenarios where people get feedback on their narratives about why a survivor should qualify for the funding. A training about actively listening to someone may have an online portion that teaches people how to provide emotional support over text chat or respond to a survivor who posts on their social media page and a second in-person session that provides a chance to practice and receive feedback on how well someone listens in person. A training that helps people understand why survivor support services are important in the first place will also require a different set of tools and time. That may involve getting people to reflect on times they’ve needed support and having conversations about what that has looked like for them.

Training is about inviting people into a broader community working together to end sexual violence and support survivors. Whether it happens online, in-person, or both, designing trainings with outcomes in mind can transform a learning space into a place of insight and action. With intentional thought and planning, online training can supplement in-person gatherings and expand possibilities for people wanting to learn how to support survivors of sexual assault and change the cultures they live in. When we keep people at the center of all our trainings,

online trainings can become one tool of many to create a truly world wide web of care for survivors.

References

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Sample Online Training Objectives Worksheet

Start with
the 1st or
2nd box

The worksheet consists of five rows. Each row has a blue question box on the left and a green answer box on the right. The questions are:

- What information do we need people to know?
- Where are people struggling? What is the skill, tool, or info that can help?
- What parts of the above need to be broken into smaller parts?
- Which of those parts can be trained online?
- How many training sessions would it take?

Sample Training Outline Worksheet (for 60-minute workshop)

The number of concepts and activities that will fit in one 60-minute workshop will depend on the training and processing needs of each learning group. The “concept & interactive activity” segments listed below assume an average time of 10 minutes.

Objective(s)
Introduction & Access Notes
Concept #1
Interactive Activity & Debrief
Concept #2
Interactive Activity & Debrief
Concept #3

Interactive Activity & Debrief
Concept #4
Interactive Activity & Debrief
Q&A
Summary & Reflection
Closing, Gratitude, and Acknowledgement