

---

# ADVOCACY SKILLS

---



## WORKING WITH ADULT SURVIVORS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

For adult survivors of child sexual abuse, possibly the most important resource we can provide is listening. When a survivor doesn't need a tangible resource, like shelter or a protection order, it can feel like we didn't do our job or that we weren't able to help that survivor. But that is not true. Listening, providing emotional support, and helping them talk through options is an essential part of our role as advocates.

In this resource, we explore some of the core skills that advocates use as they assist adult survivors of child sexual abuse in navigating their healing.

**Our Advocacy Skills series** includes discrete tools that you can use in your work with adult survivors of child sexual abuse to meet each individual's unique needs. This resource is not designed to be used by survivors, but instead to help advocates develop skills. As you develop this skill it will become an ingrained part of your advocacy practice and you will no longer need this resource to prompt your practice.

## **ADVOCATES:**

- Value the survivor's knowledge of themselves and creative methods of healing over clinical and evidence-based ideas of healing
- Build trust with survivors over time
- Feel comfortable without a concrete advocacy plan and confident with intangible advocacy. Advocates center emotional support and healing.
- Help survivors explore options for the issues they are facing today, without judgement
- Stay present
- Welcome and receive survivors' whole selves, including cultural identities, strengths, and trauma. Respect survivors' strength and creativity
- Support survivors in finding ways to manage and accommodate their trauma and healing into their everyday life.
- Reflect on their practice and seek education on service provision, their own emotions and reactions, and biases, oppression, and privilege. Advocates seek to understand the social context and history of their work (sexual violence movement, intersecting movements, racism and other intersecting social issues)
- Help the survivor identify and build community.

- Instill hope for healing. Help the survivor recognize their own strengths and how far they have come.
- Provide context to survivors about what child sexual abuse is and how it affects adults.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1

Pick a skill from the list of advocate skills. In pairs or in individual reflection, consider:

- What does this mean to you?
- Why do you think this is important to survivors?
- What actions or words would demonstrate this to a survivor? In other words, how does this show up in practice?
- What signs would indicate an advocate is not practicing/ providing this or is practicing it badly?
- Does this feel different than your current practice? How so?
- What, if anything, should your program consider doing to support this?

Repeat the dialogue or reflection with as many skills as desired.

2

What skill seems the easiest or most natural to you? What makes that so? Is there anything that would help you stay strong in this area?

3

What skill seems the hardest or scariest? Why is that? What would help you improve in this area? Who would you like to ask for support or guidance?

## **“Advocacy Skills - Working with Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse”**

August 2022

This publication was created by the Building Resilience team: Resource Sharing Project, Activating Change, Just Detention International, Minnesota Indian Women’s Sexual Assault Coalition, the North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and Olga Trujillo, J.D.

© Resource Sharing Project, 2022. All rights reserved.

The content of this publication may be reprinted with the following acknowledgement: This material was reprinted, with permission, from the Resource Sharing Project’s publication entitled “Advocacy Skills - Working with Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse”. This report is available by visiting [www.resourcesharingproject.org](http://www.resourcesharingproject.org).

Graphic and Publication Design by Norio Umezu Hall, RSP, and Laura Chow Reeve, Radical Roadmaps

This product was supported by cooperative agreement number 2019-V3-GX-K040, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this product are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U. S. Department of Justice.

