

NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT COALITION

Resource Sharing Project



Considerations for Remote Advocacy & Working

As communities begin to practice social distancing to aid public health departments and slow the spread of disease, local programs may be reaching out to their state and territorial coalitions for support in brainstorming considerations for protecting survivor confidentiality while working remotely. For programs that already provide mobile advocacy, many of these protections may already be in place and merely need expansion or additional consideration to accommodate working from home where others may also be present.

Confidential workspace

Each program will need to work with advocates to assess their remote workspaces and if confidential services can be provided. If, for example, an advocate's partner is also temporarily working from home, the advocate will need to ensure there is a soundproof room in which to provide phone services.

Temporary file storage

If advocates need to work remotely for some time, they will likely need to bring client files home. Best practice would be to get lockboxes for each advocate so they can store files confidentially. This might be something that the coalition wants to bring up with funders, as programs are unlikely to have budgeted for this. With electronic files, the program will want to set expectations and perhaps policy for advocates who will share a computer at home with partners, children, or others. The policy/supervision expectations should address signing in and out of databases, clearing history, etc., to protect confidentiality. For databases that

restrict access based on IP address, or that require the presence of a physical security key to access the database for the first time, programs will need to make a plan to collect advocates' home IP addresses or install security keys on advocates' home computers.

Reimbursement

Programs may need to reimburse advocates for personal cell phone usage or modify their mileage reimbursement policies (some programs base reimbursement on distance from the office, but that wouldn't work). An advocate that pays per minute for cell usage will probably go over their minutes if they are using it for service provision. If an advocate doesn't have home internet or phone service, programs will also need to think about how they will them in providing services.

Phone access and records

If an advocate does have to use their personal phone for service provision, issues related to confidentiality and phone records arise. It might be advantageous for a program to provide temporary cell phones to advocates, if they don't already provide phones.

Temporary job duties

Some staff members are reliant on the physical office location for their positions and cannot do their jobs remotely, or may be unable to create conditions within their home to carry out their duties confidentially. Coalitions may want to brainstorm with programs about temporary job duties, and advocate with funders for maintaining those employees even if office locations close. Programs may need to write an emergency policy to address this.