Responding to Students’ Needs During COVID-19

Students who are currently experiencing isolation while enduring/recovering from intimate partner violence may become hopeless, exhibit depressed mood or grow anxious as social media and the news continues press on COVID-19. Becoming creative in the ways in which we provide trauma-informed/survivor centered services to survivors will be vital to continuing to meet the needs of students while abiding by restrictions set in place by our colleges and universities.

Advocacy & Counseling Efforts:

Consider accounts that are registered to your specific office via personal accounts on HIPPA complaint platforms to schedule appointments with students. Outreach and support efforts that continue virtually should maintain work-life balance while staff are working from home, as students’ access to personal email and phone could potentially disrupt your professional boundaries.

Free HIPAA approved online software for telehealth:
Doxyme (PC only)
Regroup Therapy

Fee based HIPAA complaint online software for telehealth:
Counsel $40/mo
Theralink $45/mo
VSee $39/mo
Simple Practice $39/mo (HIPPA Complaint)
Zoom

*telehealth information adapted from Natasha Oates, MA, EDs, LCMHC

Offering virtual yoga and mindfulness practices is another resource that may be offered in person but can be transferred online. Many local yoga studios are transitioning their services to online offerings that students can sign up for. Additionally, partnering with on-campus fitness programs/academic departments can serve as a potential resource for providing alternative
distance healing. Online coloring sheets can also be a tool to practice mindfulness that students can utilize in addition to other services.

**Trends that you may see during social distancing that have led to a surge in abuse:**

1. Restaurants, bars and other service and retail jobs are often are held by the students we serve on college campuses. With mandatory closings, an increase in Financial/Resource Dependency may occur within many relationships. See safety planning tips below for suggested options to address this growing concern.

2. Students among the LGBTQ+ community may experience an increased amount of threats of outing as individuals return home. It is important to assess with students the access an abuser may have to contact extended family and friends. Have students explore social media websites (restricting who can see their friends or tags of friends and family), access to home address or phone numbers, limiting sharing of names of family and friends who are not aware of students’ identity.

*This section will continue to be updated as we receive more information from across the state of advocates’ experiences and helpful tips to share while working from afar*

**Safety Planning Tips When Working with Students Amidst COVID-19:**

As students are advised/mandated to return home, many students are moving to off campus living quarters with their significant others, returning to their childhood homes, or living with family. For many students, due to coercion, threats and intimidation, students will be forced to stay/return to unsafe environments. Advocates and prevention staff who contact survivors during this time period must work together with students to form creative safety planning techniques. Please view considerations below to safety plan with students:

- Assess a students’ access to essential materials during the isolation period. If a student has necessary medications or other critical supplies (sanitation pads/tampons/etc.), assess whether the student can prepare 3-4 weeks worth of products in a secure location away from their unsafe person.
- Explore options to safety plan around remote learning with students and professors. As many professors transfer to online class offerings, it may become unsafe for students to attend as necessary. Prevention and advocacy offices may want to reach out to Department Chairs to advocate for faculty to make accommodations when necessary. Partner with students who are currently receiving services to find the safest way to communicate their individual needs to faculty members.
• Develop a plan to communicate to the larger student body how to receive services with your revised isolated format. Campus communities are often relational and students are used to having physical access to on-campus resources. Think about ways to communicate how to access your office if crisis counseling or services are needed.

• If it is safe to do so, have students consider changing passwords while using devices at home that their abuser may have access to. Academic abuse can involve abusers accessing Blackboard, Canvas, and other online platforms to delete assignments and damage the students’ status on campus.

• Consider planning with students who have flex dollars associated with their campus meal plan to have food options stored and/or delivered (if remaining local to campus area) if an abuser limits access to food. If student has limited or no flex dollars, consider exploring options within their friends who may not be able to use their flex dollars as they have returned home.

• Connect students with local DVSPs/RCCs if you are aware a higher level of care may be determined during the isolation period. Connecting a student via e-introduction or phone call will ensure your local community partner is connected with the student who may have to seek shelter due to escalating abuse in their home.

More suggestions from WomansLaw.org and FuturesWithoutViolence.Org

• Suggest a student make a habit of backing the car into the driveway/parking space (so you can quickly pull out) and having a full tank of gas. Keep your car keys in the same place so you can easily grab them. If you would be leaving by yourself (if you don’t have children), you might want to even keep the driver’s door unlocked (and the other car doors locked) so that you are prepared to make a quick escape if you have to.

• The abuser may have patterns to their abuse. Try to be aware of any signs that show they are about to become violent so that you can assess how dangerous the situation may be for you and your children.

• If it is safe to do so, consider identifying and reaching out to a trusted friend, co-worker, or family member who could check in with you about your safety and support needs, should you have to quarantine at home. If you need help identifying support people in your life, take a look at the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective’s pod mapping worksheet.

• Figure out where the “safer places” are in your home – the places where there aren’t weapons within arm’s reach. If it looks like the abuser is about to hurt you, try to get to a safer place. Stay out of the kitchen, garage, workshop or other room where items that can be used as weapons are kept. Try to avoid rooms with tile or hardwood floors if possible.

• If it is safe to do so, let friends and neighbors who you trust know what is going on in your home. Make a plan with them so that they know when you need help and so they know what to do (such as calling the police or banging on your door). Make up a signal with a
trusted neighbor, like flashing the lights on and off or hanging something out the window, which will alert them that you need help.

**LGBTQ+ Resources During Distance Learning and Social Isolation:**

The decision that colleges/universities have made to send students home also mandates that some students return to environments where they don’t feel safe or comfortable living their authentic LGBTQ+ lives. If students need a friendly face or to just chat, encourage them to reach out and connect via Facetime, Google Hangouts, Zoom and other online platforms as they once did on campus. *(Adapted from Susan E. Stahley, MSW Prevention Education Coordinator at Rider University)*

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender National Hotline
https://www.glbthotline.org/national-hotline.html 888-843-4564

The Trevor Project A national 24-hour, toll free confidential hotline for LGBTQ youth https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now/

The LGBT National Youth Talkline
(Serving youth through age 25)
(800) 246-7743

Crisis Text Line: 741-741
Crisis Text Line Serves anyone, in any type of crisis, providing access to free, 24/7 support and information via text. Simple text 741-741 from anywhere in the USA, anytime, about any type of crisis. A live, trained Crisis Counselor receives the text and responds quickly, helping you "move from a hot moment to a cool moment." Please note that this Crisis Text Line is not specific to LGBTQ+ people.

The TransLifeline Transgender Crisis
(877) 565-8860

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
(General Community)1-800-273-8255 (24/7)

The National Runaway Safeline
1-800-RUNAWAY

If you have any additional question/concerns surrounding supporting students during social isolation, please feel free to reach out to NCCADV’s Campus Program. Our Campus Services Specialist, Taylour Neal, can be reached at tjohnson@nccadv.org