

THE GIFT OF DIVERSITY:

UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES & ALTERNATIVES TO TECHNOLOGY

Innovative
Outreach
Strategies for
Rape Crisis
Centers &
Advocates



Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence

CONTRIBUTORS

Olivia Montgomery, Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator for Inclusion and Equity, OAESV

Shandra Witherspoon, Director of Coordinated Community Response, OAESV

Cece Norwood, Founder, Nirvana Now!

Kate Scott, Special Populations Advocate and Volunteer Coordinator, Safe Haven

Alison Webb, Outreach and Prevention Coordinator, Safe Haven

BACKGROUND

When we sought out to create this resource, we reached out to women of color to brainstorm ideas after they brought up the structural and classist barriers that were standing in the way of tele-advocacy for survivors of color. As our resource project developed, we quickly realized that many of these issues were already addressed through the Amish community and the Rape Crisis Centers who were serving them. Ashland's rape crisis program, Safe Haven, provided some phenomenal ideas and thus, this resource was created.

"It is interesting to me that when the mainstream community finds itself in crisis, we are quick to call on underserved populations for their tools in responding to lifelong and structural oppression. OAESV holds these truths in the center of our work, and we are very grateful to those who continue to lead the way and contribute their energy towards the work of creating access to all survivors. I hope that once this crisis is over we don't forget that we can find strength and gifts in diversity."

Olivia Montgomery

If you want to find more information on providing outreach to and within the Amish Community, we offer the following resources:

Mission to Amish People

<https://www.mapministry.org/>

Amish America- Ohio Amish

<http://amishamerica.com/ohio-amish/>

Blog Post

<https://www.marydemuth.com/bonnets-buggies-and-sexual-abuse/>

PURPOSE OF RESOURCE

We recognize that tele-advocacy practices are not equitable for survivors and advocates in Ohio. Phones, Wi-Fi, and other technology-based tools are innovative but aren't always accessible to survivors. We aim to increase outreach strategies to include non-technological strategies to provide advocacy for all Ohioans.

Many folks are not aware of which agencies are still open – it is helpful to share what services you are still providing, times your agency is available (i.e. if are you still open 24-7), how they can be accessed, and

your contact information, especially your hotline number. This is an excellent time to share brief educational information about signs of abuse, social norming/“you are not alone” messages and safety planning tips.

STRATEGIES

Sexual Assault Awareness Month. This is a great selling point when reaching out for collaborations with local partners. Offering virtual training for their staff could be a great collaborative selling point, as well. Please reach out to OAESV if you have any questions about training.

Billboards and Yard Signs. Sometimes these can be donated by companies who are in-between billboard ads. Yard signs and bus signs are a great way to catch people who are walking or waiting for transportation. We suggest setting them up near commonly traveled areas i.e. the bus routes, food banks, banks, pharmacies, etc.

Commercials (TV/Local News/Radio/Spotify). Although this involves technology, it is an innovative way to get into the homes of folks who may not otherwise have a chance to get out of the home. It can also be accessible to folks on public transit. You can use these platforms to provide safety planning and other quick, relevant information about the services that you are offering. This is an opportunity to consider accessibility in other ways i.e. including an interpreter if you chose to use TV. Think about who is watching the news and at what time. For elderly folks and those not engaged in social media, this may be the primary way that they are receiving information.

Public Spaces. Think through what places are still seeing people. Gas stations and their bathrooms are great places to leave information about safety planning and what abuse looks like. This is another opportunity to let people know that you are still open and to relay what services you are offering. Grocery stores are a great partner to use. Consider tear-off sheets so that folks can tear off a slip with your agency contact information and/or safety planning.

Meal Delivery. Companies are still delivering food to folks. Some potential partners are: Meals on Wheels, senior citizen centers, food banks, schools, and specific restaurants that you already have relationships with or that may be willing to partner with you. This includes local grocery store delivery/pick up as well.

Local Service Providers. Many organizations are still providing services to folks. Many communities are looking to the local Health Department as a central source of information. This is an opportunity for intentional collaboration to connect your organization and services to folks who aren't feeling safe at home.

Training Frontline Staff. Work to partner with local businesses that are providing services for the community. Offer to provide their staff with a free online training to recognize the signs of abuse and how to respond. These don't have to be social service agencies. Leaders in the community are likely coming into contact with numerous people who are reaching out and would benefit from training. Community members aren't coming into contact with many people, so it is imperative that everyone is on the lookout for signs that someone needs help. Again, Sexual Assault Awareness Month is a great way to organically call for a partnership.

Schools as Resources. Reach out to area schools and see if they are willing to include your agency info/message in their newsletter or other communications to families. This is another opportunity to offer support and training to teachers/principals/staff who may be unfamiliar with your agency's services.

Legal System in COVID-19. This guidance can be printed and distributed in the manners recommended above. Each county should have staff available to answer general questions about their temporary procedures. Most courts have brief guidance divided by case type. To protect safety, court information can be marketed in a PSA format that covers all impacted areas of law. Additionally, advocacy groups should consider connecting with attorneys in their region or the statewide coalition to gather information about which lawyers are still meeting with clients in person and taking cases during the health crisis.

Courts are still operating, though with varying approaches to limiting in-person requirements and contact. Ohio is a Home Rule state, meaning that every county has significant control over their own court operations. The Ohio Supreme Court issued guidance allowing (but not mandating) courts to waive in-person appearances in court if the "integrity of the proceedings" and "parties' interests and rights" can be maintained in such a manner. Courts are generally refusing to modify custody orders due to COVID-19 concerns, and some are delaying evictions during the crisis. Courts are still processing protection order applications, but whether they use technology or limit the number of persons entering the court room (including advocates) varies by county. Criminal matters vary by county, with many conducting arraignments via phone or video conference. Most counties are delaying jury trials until the crisis concludes, and the criminal justice system is still required to adhere to statutory early release processes and victim notification rights if incarcerated persons are released during the crisis.

Be Creative. Every community looks different and has its own strengths and diversity. What new partnerships can be made during this time that will extend beyond Covid-19? Think outside of the box. We are here to strategize with you all!

OAESV Resources:

Need further support? Feel free to reach out to OAESV. We would love to provide technical assistance for your organization. Visit us at www.oaesv.org/covidsupport or email us at info@oaesv.org and we will connect you with the appropriate staff member.

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