

# 8 TIPS FOR WORKING WITH SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

## 1 ACKNOWLEDGE POTENTIAL PAST AND/OR ONGOING TRAUMA

- Recognize that trauma can affect an individual in many ways.
- Remember that people may express the same emotions in different ways.
- Make the person experiencing the abuse feel they are in control.
- Be mindful of body language and verbal communication.

## 2 LISTEN ACTIVELY

- Start by believing the person experiencing the abuse.
- Validate the person's feelings and their experiences.
- Ask open-ended, non-judgmental questions.
- Mirror the person's language, when referring to the abuse, abusive partner or the relationship.

## 3 RESPECT PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- Provide a private space for discussion.
- Do not leave any documents with identifying information about the abuse where other people can view them.
- If you are a mandated reporter make sure to inform the person of the limits on confidentiality.

## 4 RESPECT THE PERSON'S RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

- Remember, disclosing the abuse does not mean the person experiencing the abuse is ready to take action.
- People are experts on their lives; let the person experiencing abuse decide what is best for them, even if you disagree.
- Manage expectations, know your resources and provide appropriate information.
- Offer options and support, not your opinion on what they should or shouldn't do.

## 5 USE THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF SUPPORTIVE STATEMENTS

- "It's not your fault; anyone could find themselves in this situation."
- "What can I do to support you today?"
- "It must be very painful when someone you care about is frightening you."
- "I am worried about your safety; what do you think would help you feel safe?"

## 6 DEFINE YOUR ROLE

- Remind the person experiencing abuse of your role and what you are able to do to help.
- Ask the person experiencing abuse what kind of help they are looking for, don't assume you know.
- Be aware of your limitations and ability to act in certain situations.
- Maintain the boundaries of the helping role throughout your work with the person experiencing abuse.

## 7 CHECK YOUR BIASES

- Use gender neutral language; don't assume that all gender identities are visible.
- Be mindful of your facial expressions and other non-verbal cues.
- Avoid judging or criticizing the person's behavior or their abusive partner's behavior.
- Avoid blaming or defending the person's culture.

## 8 AVOID THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF QUESTIONS

- "Why would you let your partner treat you that way?"
- "What did you do to make your partner angry?"
- "Why are you still with your partner?"
- "How can you love someone like that?"
- "Why don't you just leave?"