

## INTRODUCTION

### Trauma-Informed Care Best Practices for Nevada's Domestic Violence Programs

#### Trauma and Domestic Violence

Victims of domestic violence are survivors of traumatic experiences. Injury and abuse caused by those you love and trust can damage one's beliefs about oneself, other people, and the world. Advocates working in domestic violence programs need a basic understanding of how traumatic experiences impact individuals. Understanding trauma and trauma reactions should inform and guide domestic violence staff in all of their dealings with children and adults who seek their services.

In 2010, only 14% of respondents from Ohio's domestic violence programs stated that they felt all staff and volunteers in their organizations had a working understanding of trauma reactions and regularly incorporated that knowledge into their services provision.<sup>1</sup> With support from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office on Women's Health, we hope to increase the capacity of Nevada program staff to respond to survivors experiencing trauma through the development and dissemination of this toolkit.

In recent years, scholars and practitioners have produced a large body of writing on domestic violence and trauma. We now have evidence to support the inclusion of this knowledge into our work with both child and adult victims. If we fail to incorporate this new information into our policies and practices, we risk causing secondary traumatization to the survivors of domestic violence we serve.

#### Development of the Toolkit

This toolkit was developed by Nevada Network Against Domestic Violence (NNADV) staff, with the assistance of a multidisciplinary advisory committee of trauma specialists, Executive Directors of Nevada domestic violence programs, advocates, and other direct service providers. Specifically, we would like to thank Trish Evans, Clelia Garrity, Jennifer Jacobsen, Stephanie Liester, and Debbie "SAM" Smith for their participation in four advisory committee teleconferences with NNADV staff to outline the content and design of this toolkit.

With their assistance, we developed a toolkit that we hope will be a hands-on tool providing basic information about trauma and responding to trauma, best practices in trauma-informed care for survivors of domestic violence, and understanding vicarious trauma.

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<sup>1</sup> S.D. Ferencik & R. Ramirez-Hammond (2010). Trauma-informed care: Best Practices and protocols for Ohio's domestic violence programs. Columbus, Oh: Ohio Domestic Violence Network.

Prior to dissemination, this toolkit was reviewed by a small group of anonymous domestic violence advocates at the Committee to Aid Abused Women in Reno. We also wish to thank them for their evaluation and feedback.

### How to Use the Toolkit

The toolkit is broken into four parts:

- **Part I** describes trauma and its impact. This part of the toolkit provides a definition of trauma from three perspectives, the relationship between trauma and domestic violence, the compounding nature of trauma, common reactions in traumatic situations, understanding trauma responses as adaptations, the impact of trauma, and an explanation of trauma triggers.
- **Part II** provides an overview of trauma-informed care, including foundational principles of trauma-informed care and creating trauma-informed services.
- **Part III** provides information about trauma-informed advocacy. This part of the toolkit includes best practices, policies and procedures, an advocacy checklist, and information about vicarious trauma.
- **Part IV** provides suggested resources for further reading.

We hope you will find the toolkit informative and easy to use as you continue your work with survivors of domestic violence in your communities.