

LOUISIANA COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

CORE STANDARDS FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMS THROUGHOUT LOUISIANA

Adopted by the LCADV Executive Committee: July, 2004

These Core Standards are intended for use by organizations seeking to start up family violence programs and to provide a blueprint of required minimum standards for existing programs. They are derived from standards which were established in collaboration with LCADV and all of the state's domestic violence programs. They are not a substitute for the LCADV Quality Assurance (QA) Standards, which are referenced throughout. LCADV officially adopted these QA Standards for Domestic Violence Programs in 2000. The following Core Standards include services as well as administrative areas such as: Board responsibilities, personnel matters, safety and health codes. These Core Standards will provide the 'bottom line' of required standards for LCADV active member programs.

SERVICES

ALL SERVICES ARE FREE, CONFIDENTIAL, SURVIVOR CENTERED, NON-JUDGEMENTAL, CULTURALLY SENSITIVE AND STRIVE TO EMPOWER ALL PERSONS SERVED.

A. General Intervention Services

Residential and Non-Residential:

- 1) Programs must have a back up system for the hot line during emergencies. A supervisor or designee must be available 'on call' by way of a pager or in some manner of contact that allows for immediate response, and this system must be documented as written policy/protocol within the program (QA Standards, pg. 38, #2- pg 33, #4).
- 2) All survivors are assisted with the development of individualized safety plans or safety planning updates during each advocacy session, as well as during each crisis call (QA Standards pg. 18, #20,21,22 – pg. 19, #23,24,25,26,27).
- 3) Participation in all services by survivors is always voluntary, and all services are offered during times when most survivors need to access them. (QA Standards, pg. 21, #20- pg. 39, #8,9A)
- 4) All survivors are made aware (daily if in shelter) that counselor/advocates are available to them for at least one full continuous hour at a mutually agreed upon time during the advocates' five day work week, and that support group sessions for survivors and their dependents (separately) are provided no less than once a week. (QA Standards, pg. 34, #9 – pg. 39, #9E,9F,9G)
- 5) Couples counseling and mediation services are completely disallowed at any time (QA Standards pg. 39, 10A,10B,10C).
- 6) Batterer Intervention Services are not allowed to take place on or near the premises of the program. Individual staff is not allowed to work with both survivors and batterers (QA Standards, pg. 40, #10D).

- 7) Family counseling that includes the presence of an alleged batterer is not provided by the program (QA Standards, pg. 40,10B).
- 8) All services are confidential and survivor centered (QA Standards pg. 20, #5 – pg. 14, #3,4).
- 9) Support group services provide understanding and support, recognizing that survivors are responsible for their own life decisions and that batterers are responsible for their own violent behavior. Support groups are empowerment based, survivor driven, domestic violence education groups, not mental health therapy or general education. (QA Standards, pg. 43, #18,23).
- 10) Persons eligible for the services of family violence programs include family violence survivors, their legal dependents, and those that are or have been in danger of being physically, sexually or emotionally abused and meet the criteria of the QA Standards (pg. 30, #1,2,3,4).
- 11) All staff and volunteers will be trained and supervised (QA Standards, pg. 29, #28 – pg. 28, #14).

B. Crisis Line Services

Guiding Principle:

All services are rooted in the principle that domestic violence is caused solely through the willingness of a batterer to resort to emotional, physical, sexual and/or spiritual violence to gain and maintain power and control over their victim(s). It is a behavior of choice and is never caused by any action or inaction by the survivor or her children.

- 1) Assessment for Immediate Safety including lethality/danger of survivor and children is first priority (QA Standards, pg. 38, #38A,C).
- 2) Confidential, toll-free, 24/hour, seven days/week, crisis line available to all survivors and utilizing no answering service or devices (QA Standards pg. 46, #32,33,35)
- 3) Persons answering and staffing crisis line are trained and supervised, QA Standards pg. 46, #35 – pg. 47, #43).
- 4) Staff answering the crisis line is in a confidential place (QA Standards, pg. 47, #39)
- 5) Rollover lines are utilized so that survivors do not receive busy signals when calling the crisis line (QA Standards, pg. 46, #36).
- 6) Survivors are placed on 'hold' only in emergency situations, only after safety has been established, and only for two minutes or less (QA Standards, pg. 47, #38).
- 7) All crisis calls are documented on an appropriate form, including the services offered, referrals made, and a plan of action, and forms are kept in a secure confidential location (QA Standards, pg. 47, #40,41 – pg. 11, #14).

C. Emergency Shelter Services

Adults:

- 1) Survivors are informed that safe shelter is offered for a minimum of six weeks and of any criteria which may impact or shorten this stay (QA Standards, pg. 31, #7 - pg. 35, #15 – pg. 36, #17,19).

- 2) No limits on the number of admissions to a shelter are allowed without the presence of at least one of the ineligibility criteria listed in QA Standards (pg. 37, #20 – pg. 30, #1,2,3,4,).
- 3) If the shelter is full, every effort must be made to secure and facilitate admission to safe alternate accommodations such as sister shelters, safe homes, hotel/motels, or other facilities which can be safely and confidentially provided (QA Standards, pg. 32, #12)
- 4) Each program follows written protocols outlining the location(s) and methods by which shelter, advocacy/counseling, and other services are delivered to eligible male adult and minor male survivors needing services (QA Standards, pg 32, #15).
- 5) Access to safe shelter is available 24 hours/day, seven days/week, 365 days/ every year. (QA Standards, pg. 33, #1)
- 6) Conduct a formal face-to-face intake process with a new survivor upon admission (QA Standards, pg. 34, #10A).
- 7) Shelter guidelines are written in positive and respectful language, including those guidelines posted throughout the shelter. The sole purpose of the guidelines is for protection, safety or health as described in the QA Standards, pg. 34, #11 – pg. 35, #11).
- 8) Sign a written agreement with each survivor about services to be provided by the shelter, with the minimum to include Program Services, its staff and volunteers; Confidentiality Agreements, including records; House Guidelines; and grievance procedures, rights and privacy matters (QA Standards, pg. 34, #10C).
- 9) All survivors in the shelter for more than 72 hours are provided with an individualized service plan that reflects assistance with survivor's needs (QA Standards, pg. 35, #12).
- 10) Shelters must make every effort to work with survivors in order for them to remain in shelter, except for situations which compromise the safety of others (QA Standards, pg. 36, #17). No survivor may be asked to leave shelter services for any reason other than protection, safety, or health (QA Standards pg. 36, #19).
- 11) Shelters do not discriminate against a survivor by limiting the number of times of re-entry or by requiring a time limit between re-entry, nor do programs retain a 'do not admit' list (QA Standards pg. 37, #20).

D. Children's Services

- 1) All programs provide children's services and have on staff a minimum of one child advocate who has the required training (QA Standards, pg. 44, #30A – pg. 45, #30B,C,D,E,F,G,H).
- 2) All residential programs conduct a child intake interview (in such manner as required by the QA Standards, pg.45, #31B) with the mother of the child(ren) within 48 hours of shelter arrival, and all nonresidential programs do so as soon as possible after the survivor's initial contact with the program (QA Standards pg 45, #31A).
- 3) All Children's Advocates provide a social and physical assessment of each child within the first 72 hours of shelter and make appropriate referrals and appointments, and in nonresidential programs, the assessment follows the initial intake(QA Standards, pg.45, #31C).
- 4) At the intake interview, child guidelines are discussed in detail with the mother, including discipline guidelines and offers of help are given in following the guidelines.

Child services that are offered by the program are also explained to the survivor (QA Standards, pg. 45, #31B).

5) Child Advocates have a face-to-face meeting with each child or sibling group within 48 hours of the shelter intake interview with the mother. (QA Standards, pg. 45, #31D)

6) Child Advocate(s) and trained volunteers in the shelter setting conduct a daily (M-F) two hour playgroup for children from the ages of 3-11 years. In both residential and nonresidential programs, a children's playgroup is held during the survivor's support group time, with playgroup goals and structure as outlined in QA Standards, (pg. 46, #31E,F).

7) Child Advocate(s) are available to meet with each mother at least once a week (M-F) in an individual session, and advise the mother of this availability (QA Standards, pg. 46, #31I).

8) A criminal background check is completed on every employee who works with children in all programs, and on all volunteers who will work alone with children (QA Standard, pg. 28, #12).

E. Policy and Governance

The role of the governing body and the executive director are clearly differentiated; staff do not govern and the governing body does not administer the day-to-day activities. The governing body establishes policies and the staff, at the direction of the executive director, implements programs reflecting those policies. A clear governance structure is in place (QA Standards, pg. 8, 1st paragraph).

F. Collaboration The program works collaboratively with other family violence programs through-out the State and in other States as appropriate to meet the safety and security needs of survivors (QA Standards, pg. 21, #18).

G. Safety/Health Codes The program adheres to all applicable zoning, building, fire, health and safety codes, laws of the State and of the community in which the organization is located. Programs are annually monitored by the Office of Public Health and the State Fire Marshall (QA Standards pg. 24, #3).

H. Personnel Matters Programs are equal opportunity employers and service providers (QA Standards, pg. 10, #8 - pg. 13, #2,3)

I. Religious Activities Survivor-directed initiatives for religious activities shall not be prohibited but must not take place in common, community shelter, or in program areas when those areas are being utilized for program activities. Every resident will have the option of practicing their religious/spiritual beliefs so long as they do not interfere with the rights of other shelter residents. Under no circumstances will the receipt of services be contingent on attendance at religious services or adherence to particular religious beliefs or practices. Staff who work directly with survivors are encouraged to be aware of the survivor as a whole person. Such staff will include the survivor's spiritual as well as physical, mental, and emotional well being as a necessary part of their work with the survivor. (Amended 7/21/04 from QA Standards, pg. 18, #19)

