

Virginia Department of Social Services OFFICE OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Voluntary Services Learning Module 5



Review



- In the last module, we covered some specific challenges that can come up when making the shift to voluntary services such as handling conflict, children, substance & alcohol use/ abuse, and facility challenges.
- Many situations- whether it's a conflict over property or substance abuse- can be handled by an honest conversation that is supportive in tone.
- Tell the client what behavior you are observing and it's impact (if any) on others. Then ask what is underneath that behavior and what you can do to support the client.

Review



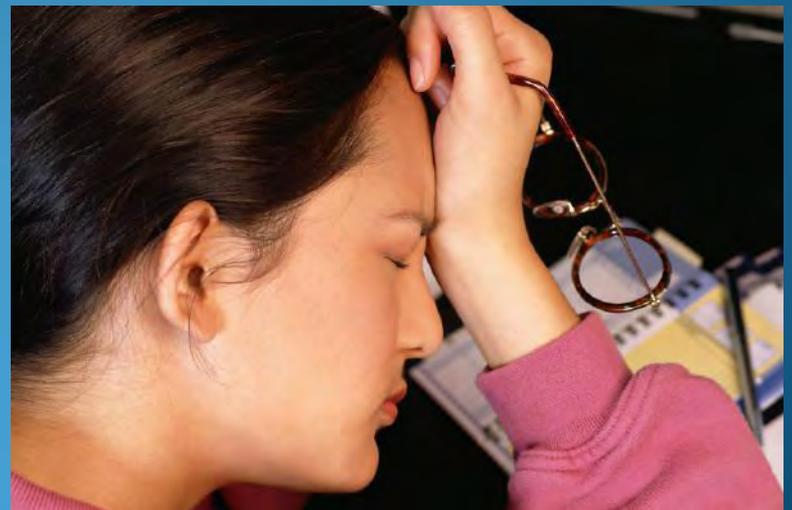
- Many challenges can be reduced or eliminated by looking at the program facility and making modifications such as adding personal lockers, extra storage or a way for parents to observe children from living & kitchen areas.
- Finally, in the last module, we had you write about you, your agency's core values, the impact of any special challenges you experience as well as the role your agency plays in self-care. This was done to highlight the importance of values, belief systems and self-care on providing trauma-informed services.

This module

- In this module, we will look at some examples from model policies/ practices for voluntary services that may be helpful.
- You will have the opportunity to examine your own agency documents given to clients about rules or guidelines.
- Also, throughout this module you will see quotes from shelter workers in Washington state. Hopefully, they will serve as a reminder that this process can be meaningful, both personally and professionally.

Voices of Shelter Workers

- *“I totally understand the feeling some clients get that they have left one controlling relationship just to get into another. Sometimes I feel more like a rule keeper than an advocate.”-Shelter Advocate*



Planning for change

- It is important to remember, most domestic violence programs come to the voluntary services model from different stages of change.
- Some programs have been implementing voluntary services for awhile, while others are still discussing it and feel very unsure about the change.
- As we engage in this process, you will be reminded that change can be very difficult. It is especially challenging in an environment in which clients are in crisis and experiencing traumatic stress.

The Stages of Change

- Understanding the stages of change can be helpful to understanding where your agency, individual staff, and community members are in this process.
- Knowing how people deal with change can help to develop a unified approach and allow time for transition.



The Stages of Change

1. **Pre-contemplation**—Not yet acknowledging a problem or need for change.
2. **Contemplation**—Acknowledging a problem but not being ready for or certain of wanting change.
3. **Preparation/ Determination**— Getting ready to change.
4. **Action/Willpower**—Changing behavior.
5. **Maintenance**— Maintaining the behavior change.
6. **Relapse**— Returning to older behaviors and abandoning the new changes. Just as relapse is an expected sixth stage, so is a return to other previous stages of change.

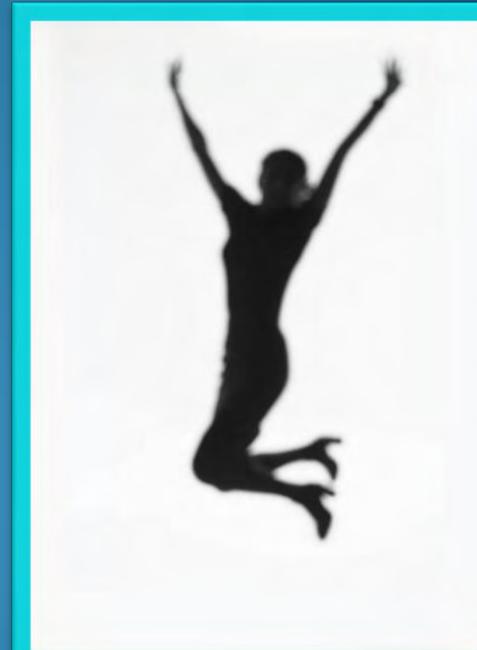
Planning for Change

- Regardless of where your program is in the stage of change, it will be helpful to complete this next step because there are most likely improvements and adjustments that all programs can make.



Voices of Shelter Workers

- *“Taking the time to say ‘Yes, there is a problem’ and admit being part of the problem is a great thing. This is how you can begin to be a part of the solutions.”- Shelter Manager*



Model Policy/ Practice

- In an effort to shift away from a punitive model, and more toward a strength –based one, some programs have decided to reframe “Client Rules” as “Rights and Responsibilities.”
- Making this shift automatically changed the tone of document from a punitive to positive.
- It also created an opportunity to think about accountability for both clients and staff.
- For instance, a rule concerning not allowing physical discipline could be reframed as the following:
 - “You and your children have a right to live in a violence-free environment. You are responsible for disciplining your children in a non-violent way. Staff are available to support parents who would like additional information on positive discipline.”

Model Policy/ Practice

- Another example about a requirement for weekly case management meetings could still highlight the importance of attending those meetings by changing the language to say the following:
 - “You have the right to work with staff to plan strategies and goals toward independent living. Staff are available by appointment to provide information and resources in a non-judgmental and respectful manner. It is your responsibility to attend appointments made with the case manager to work on those strategies and goals.”

Voices of Shelter Workers

- *“I felt attached to structure and rules as providing safety and stability. Now I realize that I was really trying to control things that are impossible to control and creating so much undue stress for everyone. With or without rules, programs have the same reoccurring challenges. Knowing that some of this is unavoidable and making the best with what we have and not feeling so responsible for every little thing frees us up to do great DV work. Working for permanent solutions has worked much better than having lists of rules.”*
-Shelter Manager

Before You Begin

- The next step involves examine your own agency's policy or guidelines on rules or requirements for clients.
- Before you begin, we ask that you think about the following:
 - What will it take to engage in this process, i.e. staff time, office supplies, etc?
 - What challenges may come up during the process?
 - What are some solutions to possible challenges? For instance, deciding ahead of time that groups will continue working until a consensus has been achieved may eliminate some stress.
 - What will we need to make this process as comfortable as possible? For instance, frequent breaks, snacks, a comfortable meeting room.



Before You Begin

- Reviewing your agency's document can be done in a variety of ways. Some ideas include:
 - Assign a small workgroup, which could include board members, to review/ revise the document, then review proposed changes in a larger group.
 - Review document and make changes together during a staff meeting.
 - Review document individually, with each staff member making notes, then discuss as a group.

Voices of Shelter Workers

- *“Finding innovative ways to encourage trust....and keep everyone in harmony! What a challenge! It is a goal I try to meet everyday. Every time we succeed at this, it is a gold star on my heart.”-Shelter Advocate*



Model Practices

As you review your document, try to keep some general things in mind:

- Rules/policies/guidelines should positively reflect your agency's mission and values.
- There is a distinction between behaviors needed for communal living and behaviors needed for safety.
- Examples of behaviors that don't threaten safety:
 - Not performing chores
 - Not being dressed or wearing shoes in living area
 - Not attending support group

Voices of Shelter Workers

“The rules we do have are taken seriously, because they are about health and safety.” - Shelter Manager



Model Policy/ Practices

- All materials given to clients should invite cooperation, collaboration and mutual accountability in tone and wording.
- Best practices separate information and expectations about communal living from safety issues, such as guns, drugs or threats of violence.
- In general, if you would not ask a client to leave over it, it should not be in the rules or requirements.
- When a client first arrives, it's not necessary to go into great detail- verbally or in writing- of all of the ways they may be asked to leave. It can feel alienating and may trigger a traumatic memory.



Voices of Shelter Workers

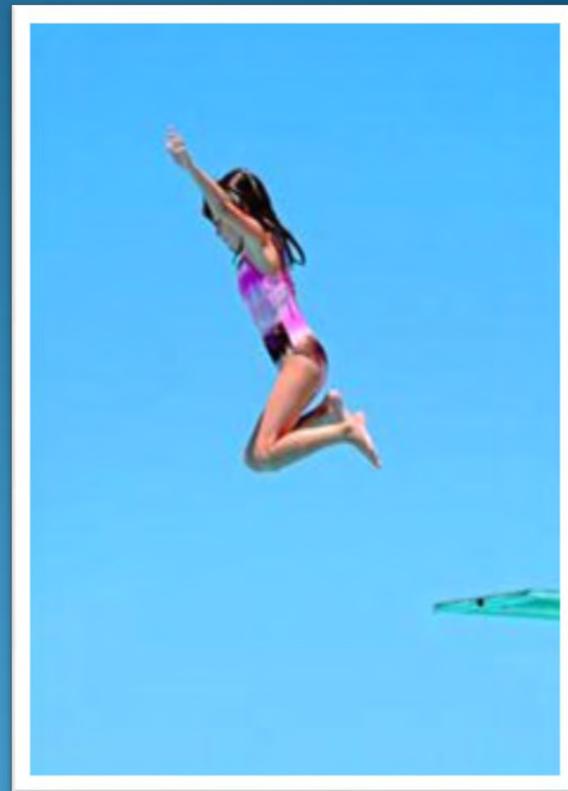
- *“I don’t feel that I came to this work very skilled in boundaries, and I had to really work hard to be flexible because my tendency is to become rigid.”*
-Shelter Advocate



Client Rules/ Guidelines Review

Now it's finally time to jump in!

“Change itself is a subject of empowerment”-Advocate



Reviewing Rules/ Guidelines

- When your program reviews the rules or guidelines for clients, ask the following questions about each rule or guideline and make notes.
- The next few slides consist of the questions but can also be viewed in one document attached with this learning module.



Reviewing Rules/ Guidelines

- Why do we have this rule? What is the problem we are trying to solve?
- Is this rule consistent with our mission and core values? Does this rule create the kind of environment we are seeking?
- Is this rule enforced consistently? Why or why not?
- If we did not have this rule, what would happen?
- Is this rule frequently broken? If so, are there any ways to prevent many of those occurrences?
- Can we address this rule less punitively or in ways that do not involve a rule?
- Does this rule mirror abuser's control?

Reviewing Rules/ Guidelines- cont.

- If we think we have this rule due to a law, fire/ health code, or grant requirement, have we double-checked recently?
- If the rule is some type of requirement, such as a law, what is the exact wording pertaining to the requirement? Does the rule satisfy the requirement with the least impact possible?
- Does this rule undermine the parent's authority, in the eyes of his or her children?
- Does this rule actually work? For instance, does it actually create safety and harmony or does it just create an illusion of it?

Reviewing Rules/ Guidelines- cont.

- Does this rule shut down opportunities for a conversation? Would it be better to invite the conversation rather than threaten consequences? For instance, forbidding the client from contacting the abuser, rather than having a conversation about the reason for doing so and any needed safety planning, as well as debriefing afterward.
- Is the rule burdensome for clients? Or to a particular group of clients such as those with disabilities or with Limited English proficiency?
- Is the risk that someone may occasionally engage in the behavior addressed by the rule worth the cost of subjecting ALL clients to the rule all of the time?

Reviewing Rules/ Guidelines- cont.

- Is this rule more controlling than basic social norms and accountability would be outside of the program?
- Are we asking clients to make up for shortcomings in our facility, funding or staff? Is there a way the organization can take responsibility, rather than putting the burden on the client?
- Does the rule reflect mutual accountability between staff and clients?
- If the rule/ guideline is needed, is there a less oppressive/ more supportive way of asking?

After Reviewing Document

- Typically, going through these questions will result in the elimination of some program rules or guidelines because staff have realized they are not helpful.
- Through answering the questions and having the discussions, alternate solutions are often discovered along the way.
- An example of a model document on Client Rights and Responsibilities from the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence can be found [here](#).

After Reviewing Document

- If you have gone through this process and still do not have it all figured out, please do not worry!
- There will be additional information, as well as time, for working through policies at the conference in the Fall.
- Additionally, your grant monitor is available to work each agency individually, to work through specific challenges.
- *This will be an ongoing process.*

Voices of Shelter Workers

- *“There is always a theory and a practice; rules can be written the best way, but enforcing them this is another topic. Nothing will be different, if our spoken language and our behavior stays the same. So for me, any change should be not only on the paper – it should go deeper. Basically, first of all, we need to want to change ourselves.”-Shelter Manager*



Conclusion

- *This concludes the 5 part Voluntary Services Learning Modules. Please respond to the final questions below as a reflection of the process:*
- What were some challenges you faced during this process?
- What were some of the solutions you/ your agency developed?
- Where would you say you, as an individual, are in the stage of change for voluntary services?
 - Pre-contemplation
 - Contemplation
 - Preparation/ determination
 - Action/ Willpower
 - Maintenance
 - Relapse

Conclusion

- Where is your agency in the Stages of Change for voluntary services?
 - Pre-contemplation
 - Contemplation
 - Preparation/ determination
 - Action/ Willpower
 - Maintenance
 - Relapse
- Are there any specific issues or challenges you would like to see addressed through technical assistance?
- What can we do to help?



Thank you!!!!