

thoughtful documentation:

*model forms for
domestic violence programs*

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ABOUT MCADSV

The Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (MCADSV) is the membership coalition of those working in the Missouri movement to end violence against women. Founded in 1980, MCADSV has more than 120 member programs that provide services to victims of domestic and sexual violence and stalking. Since its beginning, MCADSV has worked to ensure there is someone to talk to, someplace to go and someone to help women victimized by violence when they need it most. MCADSV's members—individuals and organizations from throughout the state—count on the Coalition to provide them with the resources, training and expertise to further social justice in their own communities as well as a unified voice at the state level to improve public policy, systems and responses to violence against women. To further these aims, MCADSV provides the following services to its members and the communities they serve:

▶ EDUCATION

MCADSV educates the general public about domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence and stalking; trains professionals; and advocates public policy to prevent and alleviate violence against women.

▶ ASSISTANCE

MCADSV provides technical assistance, training and support to members and related communities of service providers.

▶ ALLIANCE

MCADSV provides opportunities for communication among those working in the movement to end violence against women.

▶ RESEARCH

MCADSV researches the extent of domestic violence, sexual violence, dating violence and stalking to more effectively reduce its impact and occurrence in the lives of Missouri's women.



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Model Forms for Domestic Violence Programs

IN 2005, the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (MCADSV) began conducting a thorough examination of the types of information collected by residential and non-residential domestic violence programs during their intake process with those seeking services. Through this effort, the Coalition analyzed what information is collected, why it is collected and how long is it retained. The forms that follow are a result of this work.

While Missouri programs are required to follow MCADSV Service Standards and Guidelines, it is not a requirement that all Missouri programs adopt the forms recommended herein. Also, it is important to note that documenting services and providing services are two different things. Just because certain data elements are not written down, that does not mean services are not being provided or questions are not being asked. When advocates are truly engaged in survivor-defined advocacy and providing comprehensive services, they will ask many questions and learn many details of the lives of those seeking services. However, the documentation retained about the data collected and the services provided should be minimal—not a detailed explanation about everything that has been discussed.

It is important that all programs think about and discuss what information they keep and why. Engaging in the process of critical analysis of your programs collection and retention of information is what is most important about this work—not the actual forms in this packet. Just as advocates constantly question systems in our communities, MCADSV challenges advocates also to question systems of our own creation.

HISTORY OF THE PROJECT

The National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) began this discussion at a meeting of Coalition Executive Directors in November 2003. In January 2004, NNEDV invited states to participate in two national workgroups—one focusing on data collection and the other on data sharing. Staff from MCADSV participated in both workgroups. The two workgroups agreed that an examination had to occur—of what we collect, for what reason or why it is collected, and where and how long it is kept—before an analysis of what is shared could happen.

A preliminary examination of data collected took place during a two-day meeting of 10 states with 31 participants in Topeka, Kansas. MCADSV staff and representatives from two MCADSV member agencies attended the Topeka meeting. Before the meeting, participants conducted their own

analyses of intake forms and arrived prepared to talk about the experience and what they had discovered. The meetings in Topeka fostered discussions not only about the technical aspects of data collection but also the philosophies of the movement that inform the work of today's advocates.

Missouri participants, intrigued with the idea of creating model intake forms for Missouri, pursued a way to bring this experience to Coalition members. In June 2005, 46 MCADSV members attended a statewide training modeled on the Topeka experience—*Documentation: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly*. The sample forms used in the training included a compilation of intake forms used in Missouri that MCADSV staff had requested from members. The rich discussion at the training validated the need to continue the project. Later that year, program leaders discussed documentation at the *MCADSV Leadership Institute*, an annual two-day event attended by administrators from member programs and all MCADSV staff.

In the fall of 2005, the MCADSV Board of Directors established the Data Initiative Workgroup. MCADSV received an overwhelming response to a request for volunteers to participate in the workgroup. During the course of the following year and a half, 19 workgroup members from throughout Missouri and MCADSV staff met to discuss, debate and reach consensus on what would comprise model intake forms. The forms created reflect the experience and expertise of this diverse workgroup. In addition to philosophical and ethical considerations, much of this rationale for the forms is supported by law. Specific references and resources are listed at the end of this publication.

THE PROCESS

The Data Initiative Workgroup began its process with an eight-page intake form that included more than 130 questions. Slowly, the group made its way through the form, discussing which items should be included and why. The group's work was based on a few key tenets. First, an intake should be as short as possible so that a woman in crisis can begin taking care of her needs rather than sit through a lengthy intake process. Second, given that information contained in intake forms may be used against a woman in criminal, civil and child custody proceedings, intake forms should contain only information that is absolutely necessary to advocate on her behalf. Members of the workgroup set a high standard for determining which data elements should be included in the forms, asking themselves:

- ▶ What is the most critical information needed to provide services?
- ▶ Does it document what we provided or is it something we would just like to know, or think we need to know, about the survivor?
- ▶ What can wait or be asked later?
- ▶ What could be potentially harmful to the survivor?
- ▶ What must be collected to report to funders?

As the discussions progressed, three standards for including data elements emerged. Included data elements needed to meet one of the following requirements:

- ▶ Advocates need the information immediately in order to provide basic advocacy for a survivor.

- ▮ Grant funders require the information.
- ▮ The information is necessary in the event of an emergency.

If the data element did not meet any of these criteria, the element was not included. Thus, items not included on the model intake forms reflect a purposeful decision on the part of the workgroup. For an explanation of data elements that were not included and why, see page 25.

THE FORMS

Because data elements are used and retained for different reasons, the group created separate forms to fulfill each need. The questions or data collected on all of the suggested forms provide both the name of the data element to be collected and offer advocates suggested questions to gather the information.

- ▮ The **hotline form** collects minimal information in order to ensure that the caller remains anonymous. The hotline form should not be stored in a survivor's personal file. It should be stored with other hotline forms and retained at the program according to grant requirements. A hotline call should be conversational in nature and the caller should not get the impression that the advocate is gathering information in order to fill out a form.
- ▮ The **residential intake form** is designed to capture only the most essential information needed to provide basic advocacy services. The form should be kept as a part of a survivor's permanent file as a basic record of her stay. While there is much discussion on what "permanent" means, it is recommended that organizations have a policy to detail how long a permanent file is retained and, if destroyed after a certain time period, a policy about how that destruction will occur.
- ▮ The **emergency contact form** contains information that advocates would need in the event of an emergency. The form should be shredded once a person leaves the program so that information no longer needed by the program (i.e. medications, health conditions) are not contained in a permanent file. The information on this form should be an aspect of ongoing safety planning with a survivor and should be regularly reviewed to maintain current and accurate emergency contact information.
- ▮ The **aggregate data form** was created to record information that is required by grant funders. Separating aggregate information into a single form will allow programs to provide this information to grant writers and other administrative staff without disclosing survivors' names and other personally identifying information. The aggregate data form should not be stored in a survivor's permanent file. It should be stored with other aggregate data forms and retained at the program according to grant requirements. It is unlikely that any funding agency would require forms to be kept longer than five years, at which point the aggregate data form could be destroyed.

Some items on the aggregate data form are repeated on the intake form or the advocacy form. Rather than asking these questions again, it is suggested that advocates copy the information from the other forms. The aggregate data form does not need to be completed the moment a survivor walks through a program's doors. Instead, the aggregate data form could wait for another time when the woman is not in crisis and her immediate needs have been met.

- ▶ The **advocacy form** contains questions and data elements that will assist the program in advocating for the survivor but are not immediately necessary in order to provide services. The advocacy form helps to accomplish the goal of asking the bare minimum of questions at intake while at the same time continuing to collect important information. The form can be completed during the first few visits with a person and should be destroyed when the person leaves shelter or is no longer seeking services from a non-residential program.
- ▶ The **non-residential intake form** collects essentially the same information as the residential intake form. The non-residential form also records information regarding a safe way to contact the survivor to allow the program to communicate with her. As with the residential intake form, the non-residential intake form would be a part of a survivor's permanent record.
- ▶ The **service provision form** collects information on the services provided by advocates of the program. This form will assist advocates in collecting the data needed to report to funders and MCADSV. Services provided include, but are not limited to: face-to-face crisis intervention, case management, support groups, therapeutic groups, licensed therapy, life skills/parenting groups, and court advocacy. This form should be kept in the survivor's permanent file.

In addition to what is asked, the way that information is gathered during an intake is critical to welcoming a survivor to a program. Instead of rattling off a list of questions, advocates should make the intake process conversational and view it as an opportunity to get to know the survivor as an individual, not a collection of demographic information. Advocates can begin the empowerment process immediately by informing survivors of their rights, such as the right to know why the program wants the information and the right to refuse to disclose information. Programs should be prepared to offer services to individuals regardless of whether they answer all of their questions. Advocates should not make assumptions about anyone's reading ability and should not ask a survivor to fill out the forms herself. It is not necessary for an intake to be conducted immediately after a survivor arrives at a program. If more pressing issues exist, such as a need to eat, sleep, bathe or get children ready for school, these needs should take precedence over obtaining this information. Mothers should be given an option of not having their children present during conversations about violent incidents; programs should be prepared to watch children during these times. However, it should be up to the mother to decide about the presence of her children and their care. Ideas for how to craft questions for discussion are located on the forms in parentheses and italics.

RECORD RETENTION

Programs should have a policy about record retention that includes how long specific forms are kept, destruction of paper files, and destruction of electronic files. These policies should take into consideration the needs of the program and the requirements of funders when setting the length of time documents are to be kept. It is unlikely that any funding agency would require forms to be kept longer than five years but programs should confirm that with their specific funders. The workgroup recommended that electronic records be destroyed no later than 30 days after any paper copies are shredded.

Programs will need to consult with information technology professionals about how to purge electronic data within the context of a program's existing systems and backup protocols.

The workgroup suggested using a different color of paper for each form. So, for example, advocates could easily know that the “green” form is given to the grant writer, the “pink” form contains information to be used in the event of an emergency, and the “white” form is retained in the permanent file. Upon a survivor's decision to leave shelter or end services at a non-residential program, the folder can be quickly and efficiently processed with only the permanent file form being retained.

Lastly, it is important that survivors seeking services are informed about the program's policies regarding record retention. Advocates should fully explain that the only document that will be kept by the residential program is the residential intake form, and in the case of a non-residential program, the non-residential intake form. Further, a survivor should be informed of the reasons why this purging of information occurs and that it is intended to protect her privacy rights and her safety concerns. Domestic violence programs must be safe havens for survivors—both their physical needs as well as protecting the content of what is collected as records and what records are retained. This is an essential ethical practice of informed consent and an important recognition of each survivor's autonomy.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The recommendations and forms that follow may not be appropriate for all programs or agencies. Agencies or employees with specific legal restrictions, professional accreditation rules or policies guided by local government may have different documentation needs. Much of the work conducted by advocates in this workgroup is supported by legal requirements regarding protecting information, the handling and recording of medication, and the rights of the disabled. For information regarding these specific resources see page 30 of this document.

Additionally, the attached forms focus on the data elements used by domestic violence programs and not those of sexual assault programs. At the project's commencement, MCADSV had not yet expanded its mission to include sexual violence. The efforts of the Data Initiative Workgroup remained focused exclusively on domestic violence.

As programs discuss data collection and documentation, MCADSV invites comments and questions. These forms will likely change and evolve as discussions continue.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

MCADSV extends its gratitude to the members of the Data Initiative Workgroup for their time, expertise and willingness to think “outside the box.” We hope that the workgroup process and the model forms help Missouri programs explore how advocacy that is truly survivor-defined begins with the very first question a woman is asked when she contacts a shelter or non-residential program.

Hotline Form

A hotline call should be anonymous. A name is not required but it may be helpful to ask what you can call the survivor. A hotline call should be conversational. At no time should the caller feel like you are asking questions in order to fill out a form.

VICTIM/SURVIVOR INFORMATION

Are you safe right now? Yes No

(If not, how can I assist you? Do you want me to call the police, hang up so you can call the police, arrange transportation to a safe place, etc.?)

Reasons for seeking assistance *(What prompted you to call today? Check all that apply.)*

- Domestic violence
- Sexual violence
- Stalking
- Dating violence

First name *(What can I call you?)* _____ County (optional) _____

Immediate needs *(What can I help you with?)* _____

PROGRAM INFORMATION

First name of person taking call _____

Date _____

Beginning time _____

Ending time _____

Time spent on call _____

Residential Intake Form

All information is confidential. This form will be kept in your file after you leave.

VICTIM/SURVIVOR INFORMATION

Name _____

Birth month/year _____

Communication needs (*Do you have any communication needs that we should be aware of? For example, some people need interpreters or assistance with filling out forms.*)

Reasons for seeking assistance (*What has brought you here today seeking services? Check all that apply.*)

- Domestic violence
- Sexual violence
- Stalking
- Dating violence

ABUSER INFORMATION

Name _____

Gender _____

Special concerns (*Periodically, we have individuals from the community—plumbers, law enforcement, etc.—who come to the shelter. Please let us know if you have any specific concerns with allowing these service providers into the shelter.*)

CHILDREN

Name	Birth month/year	Related to abuser?

IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Immediate needs (*Are there any immediate concerns that we can help you with? Do you require special accommodations or assistance?*)

PROGRAM INFORMATION

First name(s) of advocate(s) working with victim/survivor

Date of entry _____

Date of exit _____

Emergency Information

The information on this emergency contact form is used to assist you in planning for safety during your stay in shelter. It is not required for program participation and will not be released without your prior approval. In the event that you become unconscious, unable to respond to questions or unable to make decisions for yourself, information on this form will be shared on an as needed basis. We will ask you to review this form periodically for accuracy and to use in your plan for safety. Because the information on this page is potentially harmful, it will be destroyed after you leave.

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Emergency contact (*In case there is an emergency, whom would you like us to contact? How would you like us to contact them?*) _____

Work phone number (*In case there is an emergency, and we need to contact you while you are at work, what is your work phone number?*) _____

Cell phone _____

Child/children's emergency contact _____

MEDICAL INFORMATION

Special needs (*Do you or your children have any needs that will require special accommodations or assistance?*) _____

Medical/health conditions (*In case we need to call medical personnel, is there anything you would want them to know about you or your children?*) _____

Allergies (*Do you or your children have any allergies that we should be aware of?*) _____

OTHER INFORMATION

Make and model of your vehicle _____

Aggregate Data Form

The specific options listed on this aggregate data form are collected to fulfill grant reporting requirements. If you do not identify as any of the listed options, please select "Not specified" or "Unknown." Some questions might seem obvious, but we do not want to make assumptions. This form is anonymous. It will not be connected to you or stored in your file.

County (*What county were you living in when the abuse occurred?*) _____

Age (*What age range do you fit into?*)

- 16 -17 qualified minor
 18-24
 25-35
 36-45
 46-59
 60 +
 Unknown

Gender (*What gender do you identify yourself as?*)

- Female
 Male
 Not specified

Ethnicity/Race

- Black or African American
 Asian
 White or Caucasian
 Latino/Hispanic
 Multiracial/Biracial
 American Indian/Alaska Native
 Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
 Unknown/Other

Individual income

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$0-\$12,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,001-\$60,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$12,001-\$20,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$60,001-\$70,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20,001-\$30,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$70,001-\$90,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30,001-\$40,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> \$90,001+ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$40,001-\$50,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown |

Relationship status (*What is your abuser's relationship to you?*)

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Boyfriend | <input type="checkbox"/> Child in common | <input type="checkbox"/> Ex-wife |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ex-boyfriend | <input type="checkbox"/> Girlfriend | <input type="checkbox"/> Other family member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Husband | <input type="checkbox"/> Ex-girlfriend | <input type="checkbox"/> Not specified |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ex-husband | <input type="checkbox"/> Wife | |

Reason for seeking services (*What has brought you here today seeking services? Check all that apply.*)

- Domestic violence
- Sexual violence
- Stalking
- Dating violence

Special needs (*Do you have any needs that require special accommodations or assistance?*)

Yes No If yes, explain _____

Children

	Gender	Age	Special needs or accommodations?
Child 1			
Child 2			
Child 3			
Child 4			

Advocacy Form

All information is confidential. This form will not be kept in your file after you leave.

CURRENT NEEDS

Needs (*What do you need right now? What are you worried about?*)

Financial needs (*Do you have any financial needs? Do you want or need assistance in finding a job or improving your job skills?*)

SERVICES

Counseling services (*Do you want counseling services for yourself or your children?*)

Legal services (*Do you have any legal needs or do you need assistance with any civil or criminal matters?*)

CHILDREN

Children's school (*What school do your children attend? Do you need any assistance with transportation to your children's school?*)

Custody status (*Are you the legal guardian of your children? Do you have authority to make decisions on behalf of your children? Do you want help or support in addressing custody issues?*)

Visitation arrangements (*Are there any requirements or agreements about visitation arrangements that we should be aware of?*)

PETS

Pet safety (*Do you need any assistance finding a safe place for your pets?*)

Non-Residential Intake Form

All information is confidential. This is the only form that will be kept in your file after you leave.

VICTIM/SURVIVOR INFORMATION

Name _____

Birth month/year _____

Communication needs *(Do you have any communication needs that we should be aware of? For example, some people need interpreters or assistance with filling out forms.)*

Reasons for seeking assistance *(What has brought you here today seeking services? Check all that apply.)*

- _____ Domestic violence
- _____ Sexual violence
- _____ Stalking
- _____ Dating violence

Contact information *(What is a safe way to contact you?)* _____

ABUSER INFORMATION

Name _____

Gender _____

CHILDREN

(If services related to children are not requested, this section can be omitted.)

Name	Birth month/year	Related to abuser?

IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Immediate needs (*Are there any immediate concerns that we can help you with?*)

PROGRAM INFORMATION

First name(s) of advocate(s) working with victim/survivor

Date of initial contact _____

Date of last contact _____

Rationale for Data Elements Included

HOTLINE FORM

This form should not be stored in a survivor's file or connected to her in any way. It is anonymous.

► VICTIM/SURVIVOR INFORMATION

- **Are you safe right now?:** This question should be asked early in the conversation in order to provide basic advocacy to the survivor. If the person is not safe, the advocate should assist her in planning for her immediate safety. This could include calling the police, having her hang up and call the police, or arranging for transportation to a safe place.
- **Reasons for seeking assistance** (*What prompted you to call today?*): This information is necessary for providing basic advocacy and is required by grant funders. Often the reason the survivor is calling is clear throughout the conversation, and though documented, the question does not need to be asked.
- **First name** (*What can I call you?*): This data is optional. Survivors should be afforded a choice in the amount and types of information they are required to give. A survivor can provide any name, or choose not to provide a name, and still receive services.
- **County:** This data is optional. Funders ask for this information and programs use it to report demographics of those served by a program but the information is not crucial for providing services. If the question is asked it should be asked at the end of the call and the advocate should explain that the information is for statistical purposes only.
- **Immediate needs** (*What can I help you with?*): Asking about a survivor's needs is necessary to provide basic advocacy. This question allows her to define her own needs.

► PROGRAM INFORMATION

- **First name of person taking call:** What is the name of the advocate or volunteer taking the call? This information is needed for quality control and follow-up.
- **Beginning time/ending time/time spent on call:** This information can be used by the program to determine how much staff time is spent on the hotline.

RESIDENTIAL INTAKE FORM

This form is kept in a survivor's permanent file.

► VICTIM/SURVIVOR INFORMATION

- **Name:** A name is needed in order to provide basic services. A survivor can provide any name and still receive services. Although common practice has been to require a legal name in order to determine whether or not a woman has received services in the past and if she is eligible for services again, this practice is not consistent with survivor-defined advocacy. From the very first question, survivors should be afforded a choice in the amount and types of information they are required to give.
- **Birth month/year:** Including a survivor's month and year of birth can be helpful in distinguishing between women of the same name. It is not necessary to know a complete date of birth in order to provide her with services. The aggregate data form will capture age in order to satisfy grant funding requirements.
- **Communication needs** (*Do you have any communication needs that we should be aware of? For example, some people need interpreters or assistance with filling out forms.*): Asking a survivor if she has any "communication needs" is necessary to provide basic advocacy. Staff and volunteers should be trained in how to ask for the information in a non-intrusive manner and understand it is not required for participation in the program. The information is collected to ensure service delivery that will meet survivors' needs and not to screen them from the program.
- **Reasons for seeking assistance** (*What has brought you here today seeking services?*): This information is necessary for providing basic advocacy and is required by grant funders.

► ABUSER INFORMATION

- **Name:** Asking her partner's name can help facilitate advocacy, so it is asked on the residential and non-residential intake forms. However, a survivor does not have to provide this information if she does not feel comfortable doing so.
- **Gender:** It can be helpful to know how to refer to the person who is abusing her. However, this question can be sensitive, and this information does not have to be provided. If a woman is in a same-sex relationship, advocates should explain that there is the potential that her abuser could be allowed in shelter and what will be done in that situation.
- **Special concerns** (*Periodically, we have individuals from the community—plumbers, law enforcement, etc.—who come to the shelter. Please let us know if you have any specific concerns with allowing these service providers into the shelter.*): Including information about special concerns will help advocates better assist women with safety planning and providing for the general safety of program participants.

► CHILDREN

- **Name(s):** If a program is working with a survivor's children, it is necessary to know what to call them.
- **Age(s):** This information is required by grant funders and used to report demographics of those served by a program. This information also is helpful in assisting advocates to determine what services and activities are age-appropriate.

- **Relationship to abuser:** This information is required by some grant funders and used by advocates to provide services related to child custody, visitation, etc.

► IMMEDIATE NEEDS

- **Immediate needs** (*Are there any immediate concerns that we can help you with? Do you have any needs that will require special accommodations or assistance?*): Asking about a survivor's needs is required to provide basic advocacy. She should be asked what her immediate needs are at the time of intake so accommodations can be made right away, if necessary. The advocacy form solicits information on what the survivor needs or is worried about. These questions allow her to define her own needs and give the program valuable information.

► PROGRAM INFORMATION

- **First name(s) of advocate(s) working with victim/survivor:** This information is needed for quality control and follow-up.
- **Date of entry:** Needed to determine start date of service.
- **Date of exit:** Needed to document the number of days services were received from the program.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION FORM

The data on this form could be potentially harmful to a woman and her children if the information were released. Upon her departure, this information is no longer needed by the program. Therefore, this form is destroyed when a woman leaves the shelter or is no longer seeking services.

► EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

- **Emergency contact** (*In case there is an emergency, whom would you like us to contact? How would you like us to contact them?*): Emergency contact information is needed as a part of safety planning. It should not be required for program participation or as a part of the intake. The information collected should be kept on a separate form specifically designated for emergency contact information. Advocates should discuss with the survivor the types of situations where an emergency contact would be contacted and inform her that the information will be destroyed once she leaves the program.
- **Work phone number** (*In case there is an emergency, and we need to contact you while you are at work, what is your work phone number?*): In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary to contact a woman at work.
- **Cell phone:** In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary to contact a woman by her cell phone.
- **Child/children's emergency contact:** Emergency contact information is needed as a part of safety planning with an individual. A child's emergency contact may or may not be the same as the mother's emergency contact. It is important for programs to know whom a mother would want to be called in case there is an emergency involving her or her children.

► MEDICAL INFORMATION

- **Special needs** (*Do you or your children have any needs that will require special accommodations or assistance?*): This information can be helpful for providing basic advocacy and/or accommodations if needed. The survivor is in control of how much information she chooses to share. She is not required to disclose any disability.
- **Medical/health conditions** (*In case we need to call medical personnel, is there anything you would want them to know about you or your children?*): This information is helpful in an emergency and for providing resources and referrals to women and their children. The survivor is in control of how much information she chooses to share. She is not required to disclose her medical history.
- **Allergies** (*Do you or your children have any allergies that we should be aware of?*): This information is helpful for basic advocacy and in a medical emergency. The survivor is in control of how much information she chooses to share.

► OTHER INFORMATION

- **Make and model of your vehicle:** This information might be necessary if a program needs to account for all vehicles on or near the shelter's property, or as a part of a survivor's safety plan.

AGGREGATE DATA

The information on this form is collected to fulfill grant reporting requirements. It should not be stored in the survivor's file or connected to her in any way.

► VICTIM/SURVIVOR INFORMATION

- **County** (*What county were you living in when the abuse occurred?*): This information is required by some funders and used to report demographics of those served by a program.
- **Age:** This information is required by funders and used to report demographics of those served by a program. This data can be transferred from the intake form instead of asking the question a second time.
- **Gender:** This information is required by funders and used to report demographics of those served by a program. Do not assume you can tell a person's gender by appearance. Participants should self-identify their own gender.
- **Ethnicity/Race:** (*What ethnicity do you identify yourself as?*): This information is required by funders and used to report demographics of those served by a program. Do not assume you can tell a person's ethnicity/race by appearance. Participants should self-identify their own ethnicity/race.
- **Individual income:** This information is required by funders and used to report demographics of those served by a program. The range of the individual's income is what is required by funders. Asking about the income range is less intrusive than asking for a specific income. Asking for the individual's income instead of family income is most relevant since many women seeking services only will have access to their individual incomes.
- **Relationship status** (*What is your abuser's relationship to you?*): Information about a woman's relationship to the abuser is required by funders and used to report demographics of those served by a program. Instead of asking about marital status, the data form asks, "What is your abuser's relationship to you?" Advocates should not assume that a survivor is in a heterosexual relationship or that marriage is the expected or preferred type of relationship. For survivors

facing many other challenges, wondering if someone will pass judgment on them should be the least of their concerns. Although the question is worded inclusively, advocates should be sensitive when asking. Some women may not feel comfortable answering this question or responding truthfully. A woman should determine how much information she is comfortable sharing and should not have to “come out” to an advocate during the intake process.

- **Reasons for seeking assistance** (*What has brought you here today seeking services?*): This information is required by grant funders. This data can be transferred from the intake form instead of asking the question a second time.
- **Special needs** (*Do you have any needs that will require special assistance?*): This information is required by funders. This data can be transferred from the intake form instead of asking the question a second time.

► CHILDREN

- **Age:** This information is required by funders and used to report demographics of those served by a program. This data can be transferred from the intake form instead of asking the question a second time.
- **Gender:** This information is required by funders and used to report demographics of those served by a program. Do not assume you can tell a person’s gender by appearance. Participants should self-identify their own gender.
- **Special needs or accommodation:** This information is necessary for providing basic advocacy and is required by funders.

ADVOCACY FORM

The data on this form could be potentially harmful to a woman and her children if the information were released. Upon her departure, this information is no longer needed by the program. This form is destroyed when a woman leaves shelter or is no longer seeking services.

► CURRENT NEEDS

- **Needs** (*What do you need right now? What are you worried about?*): Asking a woman what she needs is necessary to provide basic advocacy. A survivor is asked what her immediate needs are at the time of intake. The advocacy form solicits information on what a woman needs or is worried about. These questions allow a woman to define her own needs and give programs valuable information.
- **Financial needs** (*Do you have any financial needs? Do you want or need assistance in finding a job or improving your job skills?*): This information is important to providing basic advocacy services but does not need to be asked immediately. Since many survivors have suffered from economic abuse, financial security and ability to provide for herself and her family is often one of her greatest concerns. Domestic violence programs can provide a valuable service by assisting women in obtaining government benefits, a job or job training.

► SERVICES

- **Counseling services** (*Do you want counseling services for yourself or your children?*): This information can be helpful in providing basic advocacy and/or counseling services. The woman is in control of how much information she chooses to share. She is not required to disclose her mental health history.
- **Legal services** (*Do you have any legal needs or do you need assistance with any civil or criminal matters?*): This information can be helpful for providing basic advocacy and/or legal services. The survivor is in control of how much information she chooses to share. She is not required to disclose any legal problems or criminal history but may do so in the course of advocacy services.

► CHILDREN

- **Children's school** (*What school do your children attend? Do you need any assistance with transportation to your children's school?*): In order to be able to assist a mother in meeting her children's needs, it would be helpful for a program to know where the children attend school and if the mother needs assistance in transporting them to school. Since this question does not need to be asked immediately, it was included on the advocacy form.
- **Custody status** (*Are you the legal guardian of your children? Do you have authority to make decisions on behalf of you children? Do you want help or support in addressing custody issues?*): This information is needed to provide basic advocacy services to the survivor and her children. When a woman is seeking services for her children or bringing her children into shelter, the program would need to know if a woman is a legal guardian of her child or children and if she has the ability to make decisions on their behalf.
- **Visitation arrangements** (*Are there any visitation arrangements that we should be aware of?*): This information is needed to provide basic advocacy services to the woman and her children. Advocates should assist women in addressing child custody issues.

► PETS

- **Pet safety** (*Do you need any assistance finding a safe place for your pets?*): Information about pets or companion animals is needed as a part of safety planning with an individual. Pets are often in danger of physical abuse or death at the hands of an abusive partner. A growing number of residential programs now offer programs that assist survivors with a temporary safe placement for their animals.

NON-RESIDENTIAL INTAKE FORM

This form is kept in a woman's permanent file.

► VICTIM/SURVIVOR INFORMATION

- **Name:** A name is needed in order to provide basic services. A survivor can provide any name and still receive services. Common practice has been to require a legal name in order to determine whether or not a woman has received services in the past and if she is eligible for services again. This practice is not consistent with survivor-defined advocacy. From the very first question, survivors should be afforded a choice in the amount and types of information they are required to give.

- **Birth month/year:** Including a survivor's month and year of birth can be helpful in distinguishing between women of the same name. It is not necessary to know a survivor's complete date of birth in order to provide her with services. The aggregate data form will capture age in order to satisfy grant funding requirements.
- **Communication needs** (*Do you have any communication needs that we should be aware of? For example, some people need interpreters or assistance with filling out forms.*): Asking a survivor if she has any "communication needs" is necessary to providing basic advocacy. Staff and volunteers should be trained in how to ask for the information in a non-intrusive manner and understand it is not required for participation in the program. The information is collected to ensure service delivery that will meet survivors' needs not to screen them from the program.
- **Reasons for seeking assistance** (*What has brought you here today seeking services?*): This information is necessary for providing basic advocacy and is required by grant funders.
- **Contact information** (*What is a safe way to contact you?*): If contact is necessary, the survivor can decide what form of contact would be safest for you to use. Contact options include: physical address, email, work phone, cell phone, home phone, communication through friend/family member, etc. Whichever method she chooses, advocates must safety plan with a survivor regarding future contact. For some, the safest option may be for her to contact you when needed.

► ABUSER INFORMATION

- **Name:** Asking her partner's name can help facilitate advocacy, so it is asked on the residential and non-residential intake forms. However, a survivor does not have to provide this information if she does not feel comfortable doing so.
- **Gender:** It can be helpful to know how to refer to the person who is abusing her. This question can be sensitive, though, and she does not have to provide it. If a woman is in a same-sex relationship, advocates should explain that there is the potential that the woman's abuser could also receive services from the program. Though all information is kept confidential, services such as support groups could present a risk if her abuser partner is also receiving services.

► CHILDREN

- **Name(s):** If a program is working with a survivor's children, it is necessary to know what to call them.
- **Age(s)** (*month and year only*): This information is required by funders and used to report demographics of those served by a program. This information is also helpful in assisting advocates to determine what services and activities are age appropriate.
- **Relationship to abuser:** This information is required by funders and used by advocates to provide services related to child custody, visitation, etc.

► IMMEDIATE NEEDS

- **Immediate needs** (*Are there any immediate concerns that we can help you with?*): Asking a survivor what she needs is necessary to provide basic advocacy. A woman should be asked what her immediate needs are at the time of intake. Later, the advocacy form solicits infor-

mation on what she needs or is worried about. These questions allow survivors to define their own needs and give programs valuable information.

► PROGRAM INFORMATION

- **First name(s) of advocate(s) working with victim/survivor:** This information is needed for quality control and follow-up.
- **Date of initial contact:** This information is needed to determine start date of service.
- **Date of last contact:** This information is needed to document the number of days the woman received services from the program.

SERVICE PROVISION FORM

This form is kept in a woman's permanent file and can be used for residents and non-residents. Documentation of services is required by funders and MCADSV and can be a tool for a program's accountability to survivors.

- **Name:** A name is needed in order to provide basic services. A survivor can provide any name and still receive services. From the very first question, survivors should be afforded a choice in the amount and types of information they are required to give.
- **Date:** A date is needed to know when a service was provided.
- **Service provided:** Documentation of service provision is required by grant funders and MCADSV for the Monthly Service Reports. Documenting services also is a way to ensure a program's accountability to survivors. Services include but are not limited to: face-to-face crisis intervention, case management, support groups, therapeutic groups, life skills/parenting/other groups, court advocacy and legal representation.
- **Name of service provider:** A first name of the person providing the service should be included in order to ensure accountability of service delivery. The person providing the service could be an advocate, a counselor, a case manager, a volunteer, etc.
- **Length of time:** Documentation of the amount of time advocates spend providing services is required by funders and MCADSV. The length of time should be rounded to the nearest quarter hour spent with the survivor.

Rationale for Data Elements Not Included

Data elements not included were not necessary, potentially harmful or illegal to women.

▶ **Not necessary**

- The data does not need to be documented in order to provide basic advocacy services
- The data is not required by funders

▶ **Potentially harmful**

- The data could be used against a woman in criminal, civil and child custody proceedings
- The data had traditionally been used to "screen out" women from receiving services

▶ **Illegal**

- The data should not be documented according to the Americans with Disabilities Act regulations, confidentiality statutes and/or Fair Housing (Shelter) Laws

Data elements traditionally included on forms that have been omitted:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ▶ Abuse history | ▶ Length of relationship |
| ▶ Abuser's address, email, phone | ▶ Living conditions status |
| ▶ Abuser's criminal history/lethality assessment | ▶ Located in Urban/Rural |
| ▶ Abuser's employment information | ▶ Medical coverage specifics |
| ▶ Abuser's identifying information | ▶ Medical history |
| ▶ Abuser's physical description | ▶ Medications |
| ▶ Addictions | ▶ Mental health history |
| ▶ Address | ▶ Number of years in the U.S. |
| ▶ Childrens' Social Security numbers | ▶ Other shelters used |
| ▶ Childrens' history of abuse | ▶ Physical descriptions |
| ▶ Country of origin | ▶ Reason for leaving shelter |
| ▶ Disability | ▶ Referral source |
| ▶ Driver's license number | ▶ Referrals made |
| ▶ Educational level | ▶ Religious belief/practice |
| ▶ Email address | ▶ Sexual assault history |
| ▶ Employment specifics | ▶ Social Security number |
| ▶ Homelessness status | ▶ Survivors' goals/safety plan |
| ▶ Immigration status | ▶ Suspicions of child abuse |
| ▶ Jail: warrants, arrests, etc. | ▶ Transportation accessibility |
| ▶ Law enforcement response | ▶ Victim status |
| ▶ Legal remedies | ▶ Where survivor went upon exit |

► IDENTIFYING/CONTACT INFORMATION

- **Social Security/driver's license number:** This information is unnecessary and can be potentially harmful if the information were released. Advocates may feel they need this information to secure housing or other state benefits for survivors. In the spirit of survivor-defined advocacy, advocates should work with women to assist them in applying for and securing the benefits they need rather than mandating collection of personally identifying information for everyone. The workgroup did recognize that agencies conducting specific work for the individual (i.e. actually doing legal work on their behalf) may need to collect this information.
- **Address:** A home address is generally unnecessary. It may be relevant for a non-residential program that may contact survivors as a part of their court advocacy or general advocacy program. However, the survivor should choose which contact information they would like to provide. The model non-residential intake form asks a woman "What is a safe way to contact you?"
- **Email address:** An email address is not necessary but could be an option used to communicate with a survivor using non-residential services. The model non-residential intake form asks "What is a safe way to contact you?" An advocate should discuss safety issues associated with electronic communication when a woman provides an email address.
- **Physical Characteristics: such as eyes, hair color, height, weight, scars, marks, tattoos:** Documenting this information is unnecessary. Advocates and survivors may choose to use this information as a part of safety planning or may choose to include information on the physical characteristics of a woman on an emergency contact form.

► PERSONAL INFORMATION

- **Education level:** This information is unnecessary. Advocates and survivors may discuss this during advocacy or case management but it does not need to be documented.
- **Homelessness status:** This information is unnecessary unless the organization, in addition to providing domestic violence services, also provides services to individuals who are homeless. Programs can add "homeless, not due violence" under the question of "reason for seeking assistance" if a program provides services to homeless individuals.
- **Living condition status:** This information is unnecessary and does not need to be documented.
- **Relationship length:** This information is unnecessary. Advocates may discuss this during advocacy, but it does not need to be solicited or documented.
- **Religious belief/practice:** This information is unnecessary. Advocates may wish to support a survivor in her religious or spiritual practices as a part of advocacy services, but it does not need to be documented in her file.
- **Survivor located in urban/rural:** This information is unnecessary. If this information is needed for a grant application or reporting, it could be estimated by looking at the "County" section of the aggregate data forms.
- **Transportation accessibility:** It is not necessary to document this information. Advocates may wish to solicit information about a survivor's means of transportation during the provision of advocacy services.

► ABUSE HISTORY

- **Abuse experience—duration, type, narrative:** A narrative about the specifics of the abuse is not necessary for providing basic advocacy services and could be potentially harmful to survivors if the information were released. At some point, it might be appropriate for an advocate or therapist to speak to a woman about her abuse history. However, these questions would only be asked after establishing a relationship of trust and not as a part of early routine documentation. Survivors should be informed that their abuse history is not routinely included in their file. If a woman requests that this information be retained, her advocates should discuss the pros and cons of doing so with her.
- **Sexual assault—history, narrative:** This information is not necessary, potentially harmful and can be particularly uncomfortable for a survivor to answer. The forms include a question about the reason for seeking services but not for advocates to specifically probe about sexual assault history with multiple questions. At some point, it might be appropriate for an advocate or therapist to talk to a survivor about past sexual victimization. However, these questions should only be asked after establishing a relationship of trust and do not need to be documented.
- **Survivor witnessed DV as a child:** This information is not necessary to provide services and could be intrusive to ask a victim before trust in her advocate is established.
- **Victim status (primary, secondary, etc.):** This information is not necessary in order to provide services and is not required by grant funders.

► EMPLOYMENT/INCOME

- **Employer address:** This information is not necessary in order to provide services nor is it required by grant funding agencies. It may be helpful in the course of advocacy or in filing a petition for an order of protection; however, it does not need to be documented in her records.
- **Government benefits:** This information is not necessary for providing services, not required by grant funders, and may make survivors uncomfortable. This may be a part of advocacy discussions but does not need to be documented.
- **Income sources:** The source of a woman's income is not necessary for providing services or required by funders. This may be a part of advocacy discussions but does not need to be documented.

► MENTAL HEALTH

- **Mental health hospitalization/Disability:** In addition to being illegal to discriminate on the basis of disability, it is not necessary to know if a survivor has been hospitalized for mental health issues, and it could be harmful if the information was released. The question could also be uncomfortable for a woman to answer or seen as assuming all women seeking services have mental health issues. It is appropriate to ask if the person requires special accommodations.
- **Suicidal thoughts:** This information is not necessary for providing services and is potentially harmful if the records are released. It may be an appropriate question for an advocate or counselor to discuss with survivors, but it does not need to be a part of basic program documentation.
- **Suicide attempts:** This information is not necessary for providing services and is potentially harmful if the records are released. It may be an appropriate question for an advocate or counselor to discuss with survivors, but it does not need to be a part of basic program documentation.
- **Medications:** This information is not necessary for providing services and is potentially harmful if the records are released. It may be an appropriate question for an advocate or counselor to discuss with survivors, but it does not need to be a part of basic program documentation.

► MEDICAL

- **Contagious/infectious diseases, need for medical attention, pregnancy status, disability, other medical issues:** In addition to being illegal to discriminate on the basis of disability, it is not necessary to ask multiple, specific questions about a person's medical history. All programs should practice universal precautions for preventing the spread of contagious disease. Since the information is helpful for proper referrals and in case of an emergency, it is solicited on the emergency information form under "medical information," "medical/health conditions." This phrasing is more compatible with the philosophy of survivor-defined advocacy and puts the survivor in control of the information she chooses to share. Since this information is potentially harmful, it is included on a form that will be destroyed once the survivor leaves the program. It is appropriate to ask if the person requires special accommodations.
- **Insurance number, Medicaid number, insurance source, insurance contact information, primary care providers, hospital preferences:** This information is unnecessary and potentially harmful to the program if released. Retaining information could potentially expose the program to liability.
- **Medications:** This information is unnecessary and potentially harmful to the program if released. Retaining information could potentially expose the program to liability.

► ADDICTIONS

- **Latest use of drugs or alcohol, self-assessment of misuse, substance abuse history, treatment, types of drugs used:** This information is not necessary, potentially harmful and can be particularly uncomfortable for a survivor to answer. She may fear that if she responds honestly, she won't receive services. Also, information on drug abuse could be used against her if it was obtained by an unfriendly party. Often drug use during her entire life time is documented. This ignores that she may have been sober for a number of years, experimented as a teen, or makes an assumption of addiction rather than social use. Because of the sensitivity of these questions, they are not included on model forms. At some point, a survivor may want assistance in addressing these issues or a therapist or advocate may feel the need to inquire about addictions. However, this information should not be solicited or documented.

► LEGAL ISSUES

- **Legal remedies:** This information is unnecessary. Although it might be helpful to know which legal remedies a woman has sought, the question is not critical enough to merit inclusion. She will offer this information if it is relevant as a part of advocacy and discussion.
- **Law enforcement response:** This information is unnecessary and is not required by funding agencies. A survivor may supply this information, if she so chooses.
- **Jail—time in jail, reason for, legal actions, outstanding warrants, pending charges, probation:** This information is not necessary, potentially harmful and can be particularly uncomfortable for a woman to answer. Since certain legal information can be helpful for proper referrals and service, it is solicited on the advocacy form under "Services," "Legal services." This phrasing is more compatible with the philosophy of woman-defined advocacy and puts her in control of the information she chooses to share. Since this information is potentially harmful, it is included on a form that will be destroyed once the woman leaves the program.

► CITIZENSHIP INFORMATION

- **Country of origin:** This information is neither needed to provide basic services to a victim nor is it required by grant funding agencies. Additionally, asking about country of origin could make a

woman fear that she will not receive needed services or be treated fairly. If the woman supplies this information, it could be discussed during advocacy but not documented.

- **Immigration status:** This information is not needed to provide basic services, is not required by grant funding agencies, and can be potentially harmful if the information were to be released. Additionally, asking about immigration status could make a survivor fear that she will not receive needed services or be treated fairly. Often women may share this information during the course of advocacy. While advocates are not legally required to document it, the information can be helpful for providing appropriate referrals.
- **Number of years in the U.S.:** This information is neither necessary in order to provide services nor is it required of grant funding agencies.

► SHELTER PROGRAM INFORMATION

- **Other shelters survivor used:** This information is unnecessary and potentially harmful. This question is often asked to determine if a survivor “hops” from shelter to shelter. Programs have an ethical obligation to provide services to all domestic violence victims who seek assistance, not to find reasons to screen out women from services.
- **Reason for leaving shelter:** This information is not necessary and is potentially harmful. In the past this question has been used to document if a survivor was asked to leave a shelter. Programs should not refuse women re-entry if they have been asked to leave previously. She may be in a different situation now, and it is a shelter’s mission and purpose to serve those who need their assistance.
- **Where survivor went upon exit:** This question is not necessary and the information does not need to be documented. Some may choose to return to an abuser and may not feel comfortable telling a program.
- **Referral source:** While it might be helpful for a program to know how a survivor found out about the program, the information is not critical for providing services and does not need to be documented.
- **Referrals made, survivor’s goals, survivor’s safety plan:** This information does not need to be permanently documented and could be potentially harmful if the information were to be released. It may be helpful for advocates to keep notes of where a woman was referred, her goals, and her safety plan. These notes should be destroyed when a woman is no longer seeking services from a program.

► CHILDREN’S INFORMATION

- **Social Security number:** This identifying information is not needed by a program in order to provide services. As social security numbers are particularly vulnerable to misuse, it is never a good idea for programs to collect this information.
- **History of child abuse, suspicions of child abuse:** These two data elements are extremely sensitive and should not be documented as they could be very damaging to a woman in criminal and civil legal matters. A program should have a policy regarding what to do if a staff member suspects that children are being abused.

► ABUSER INFORMATION

- **Employment:** In general, it should not be required that a survivor provide her abuser’s employer information to receive services. However, women should be asked if they have any concerns about law enforcement or maintenance or social service providers (any of which could be her abusive

partner's employer) visiting shelter and let her know that though advocates will do their very best to protect her identity, these individuals may be in and out of shelter at some point during her stay.

- **Physical characteristics, such as: age, eyes, hair color, height, ethnicity/race, weight:** Collecting details regarding the abuser's physical characteristics is not necessary as a part of documentation. Programs should have a policy and practice of how to handle strangers at the residential program and do not need abuser characteristic information to verify or deny entry.
- **Email, address and/or phone number:** A program has no reason for needing a way to contact an abusive partner by email, mail or phone. Any harassing contacts a survivor may get from her partner are generally handled by law enforcement or the courts and not through a local program. Asking for this information and not explaining what it would be used for may leave the survivor feeling uneasy.
- **Social Security number, driver's license number, referrals, education level, employer address, employer phone number, income, vehicle information:** A program has no need for this detailed information on an abuser, and it should not be collected.
- **Abuser criminal history, abuser looking for survivor, abuser's abuse history, abuser's weapons use/access, danger/lethality assessment:** These elements might be discussed or documented as a part of safety planning and case management, but they do not need to be systematically included in initial intake and documentation. If an advocate makes notes of these data elements, they should be destroyed when a survivor leaves the program.

Resources

The following supports much of the rationale of this publication.

- Confidentiality statutes, Missouri law §455.220 RSMo and federal law 42 U.S.C. §§11383, 13925(b)(2), 10604(d) and 10402(a)(2)(e).
- Pharmacists and Pharmacies statute, §338.010 RSMo
- Americans with Disabilities Act home page: www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada
- United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Disability Rights Section. *A Guide to Disability Rights Laws* (September 2005). www.ada.gov/cguide.htm
- United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. Joint Statement of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Justice - Reasonable Modifications Under the Fair Housing Act (March 5, 2008). www.hud.gov/offices/fheo/disabilities/reasonable_modifications_mar08.pdf