



Memorandum of Understanding: Partnership Agreement for Community Collaborations

I. Introduction

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is designed to improve the response of the community to domestic violence and sexual assault and to send a consistent message that we, the undersigned, will work in partnership toward ending the occurrences of intimate partner violence and sexual assault in our community. The partners who participate in this MOU:

- Have a common goal of providing access for victims of intimate partner violence and sexual assault to services that enhance victim safety and respect the confidentiality of victim information. and
- Recognize that victim safety can be compromised by the failure to maintain confidentiality.
- Understand that information sharing may increase the effectiveness of services delivery and abuser accountability only when the victim is fully aware of the risks and benefits of sharing personal information and authorizes information sharing.
- Have various levels of confidentiality, obligations in regard to victim/service participant information, and the sharing of the information.

II. Definitions

In this MOU, domestic violence is termed intimate partner violence and is defined as abuse or aggression that occurs in an intimate relationship. This includes current or former spouses or dating partners who may or may not have lived together.

This MOU defines sexual assault as any nonconsensual sexual act proscribed by Federal, tribal, or State law, including when the victim lacks capacity to consent.

III. Primary Partner Agencies

- Crisis Services of North Alabama (CSNA)
- Huntsville Police Department (HPD)
- City of Madison Mayor (for Madison Police Department and Madison City Clerk)
- Madison County Sheriff's Department (MCSD)
- Madison County Circuit Clerk

IV. Partner Roles and Responsibilities

The partners in this MOU have created a multi-disciplinary partnership to provide access to intimate partner violence and sexual assault services that enhance victim safety and protect individual privacy. When there is a question about whether a certain approach should be taken in a given situation, the determining factor will be whether the proposed action will enhance victim safety and privacy.

Crisis Services of North Alabama (CSNA)

History: CSNA has a long history of working in partnership with law enforcement and the Madison County Courts to ensure that victims of intimate partner violence and sexual assault receive safe, confidential services.

CSNA offers a 24-hour crisis line, HELPLine, to all victims who are in need of a compassionate response to their trauma. Through HELPLine, victims of intimate partner and sexual violence can contact CSNA for emergency assistance including access to shelter or forensic exams. HELPLine is accredited by the International Council of Helplines.

In addition to HELPLine, CSNA offers victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) services including safety planning, emergency shelter, adult and child counseling and support groups, case management, and personal and court advocacy. Intimate partner violence victims may also utilize CSNA's Forensic Nurse Examiner Program to have any injuries documented by trained forensic nurses. CSNA's Intimate Partner Violence Program complies with standards established by the Alabama Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs Administrative Code Chapter 305-4-4.

For victims of sexual assault, CSNA also provides safety planning, crisis counseling, support group, case management, personal and court advocacy, and forensic evidence collection by a trained forensic nurse examiner. CSNA's Sexual Assault Program complies with standards established by the Alabama Coalition Against Rape.

CSNA's Forensic Nurse Examiners (FNE) are trained to provide forensic exams to victims of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, and child physical and sexual abuse within the guidelines of the local Children's Advocacy Center MOU. CSNA uses protocols established by the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN) and the FNE Program Director and Coordinator holds an IAFN SANE-A (Adults and Adolescent) and the FNE Program Director also holds an IAFN SANE-P (Pediatrics) certification.

CSNA's personnel and volunteers have over 300 years of cumulative experience in responding to people in crisis. No other agency provides such comprehensive crisis services in the area CSNA serves.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Provide confidential services to victims of stalking, intimate partner, dating, and sexual violence. Services include a 24-hour crisis line, emergency shelter, counseling, support groups, case management, personal and court advocacy, and forensic documentation of injuries.

- Identify and work to resolve problems that may impede victims' access to resources in the social services network, civil and criminal justice system, and other systems.
- Educate community partners on intimate partner violence and sexual assault issues that will enhance victim safety.
- Update community partners on emerging issues/research regarding intimate partner violence/sexual assault issues.

Resources:

- Staff and volunteers
- 24-hour shelter and comprehensive services
- Office and meeting space
- 24-hour crisis line
- Forensic medical facilities
- Educational brochures and materials

Confidentiality Obligations:

CSNA has a strict confidentiality obligation to the victim/services participant. The program will not share individual, personally identifying information about any individual who has received or sought services without the informed, written, and reasonably time-limited release of the victim/service participant except for the mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect as required by state law.

Law Enforcement

History: CSNA and law enforcement have been working together to ensure that victims of domestic violence and sexual assault who report to law enforcement are provided information and referrals to CSNA's forensic and supportive services. These partnerships have been in place since the inception of domestic violence services in 1982 and sexual assault services in 1986. CSNA and law enforcement agency officials maintain ongoing dialogue regarding the programs and projects on which they partner to ensure that goals are met.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Refer the following to HELPLine, CSNA's 24-hour crisis line, at 256-716-1000:

- Intimate partner violence victims for shelter and supportive services
- Intimate partner violence victims not in need of shelter for advocacy and supportive services
- Sexual assault victims for advocacy and supportive services
- Victims of crime for emotional support.

Law Enforcement will contact CSNA's Forensic Nurse Examiner Programs at 256-430-1407 for:

- Intimate partner violence victims for documentation of physical injuries and/or strangulations
- Adult victims of sexual assault for documentation of injuries and collection of forensic evidence
- Child victims of sexual assault or physical abuse for collection of forensic evidence and documentation of injuries within the guidelines of the local Children's Advocacy Center MOU
- Elderly abuse victims for documentation of injuries

Resources:

- Law enforcement officers
- Office space for Domestic Violence Responders in Huntsville Police Department
- Access for DV Responder Coordinator to domestic violence cases to assist victims
- Referrals to CSNA for services

Circuit Clerk

History: CSNA and the courts in Madison County have a longstanding relationship dating back to the early 1980s when then District Attorney Bud Cramer assembled a group of interested residents and agencies to form HOPE Place. As laws have been passed and enhanced to protect victims of intimate partner violence, CSNA advocates have been allowed to provide assistance to victims in filing for Protection From Abuse Orders and in understanding the court process. Courts have allowed CSNA advocates to be in courtrooms to provide support to victims.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Refer the following to, HELpline, CSNA's 24-hour crisis line, at 256-716-1000:

- Intimate partner violence victims for shelter, advocacy, and support services
- Intimate partner violence victims to the Madison County Domestic Violence Victim Services Coordinator for court advocacy and assistance in filing for a Protection From Abuse Order
- Victims of crime for emotional support.

Resources:

- Quiet space to meet with victims
- Access to courtrooms and Magistrate's office to accompany victims and provide support
- Referrals to CSNA for services

V. Duration

By signing the MOU, the parties agree to uphold the terms of this MOU. Any party may amend their roles and responsibilities of the MOU by written request. This MOU shall become effective upon signature by the representative and shall be reviewed and revised as needed.

Signature _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Title: _____

Agency: _____

Signature _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Title: _____

Agency: _____

Signature _____

Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Title: _____

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