Crisis and Supportive Listening

This project was supported by Victims of Crime Act Training Grant awarded by the Division of Victim Services , Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and Federal Award 2020-IW-AX-0013 from the Department of Justice, administered by the Office on Violence Against Women. The Victims of Crime Act Training grant award is from the Federal Crime Victims Fund, established by the Victims of Crime Act of 1984. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Justice or the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

Overview

- The goal of this presentation understand the advocate’s role in crisis response and supportive listening

Motivation for Calling

- Crisis
  - Caller may inquire about intervention or assistance.
- Safety Planning
  - Caller may inquire about assistance with setting a safety plan in place.
- Shelter
  - Caller may inquire about short-term housing/shelter options available.
- Advocacy
  - Caller may inquire about advocacy services, and if they qualify for those services.

Welcome and Assessment

- Each call should begin with a greeting and an assessment
  - An assessment should include an evaluation of safety
  - Let the caller know that their contact is held in confidentiality

Dialogue Techniques

- The goal is to allow the caller to speak at their pace, but open-ended questions can assist if they get nervous or stuck proceeding with their story or questions.
  - Examples of open-ended questions to utilize in crises calls can vary from situation to situation, some examples would be:
    - “What brought you to call us today?”
    - “You mentioned… can you tell me more about that?”
    - “It’s perfectly natural to feel…”
    - “I am sorry to hear that you experienced that violence.”

Techniques to Assist with Dialogue

- Every call should include Empathy, Validation and Trust
- Every call should begin with a compassionate and kind tone
- Every attempt should be made to make the caller feel safe, not just by telling them your agency is confidential because of requirements, but you are confidential in that their story is sacred and will be honorably held.

Active Listening

- Active listening is a skill acquired over time that requires energy, full concentration, and applying specific techniques.

- It is not the same as listening and responding.

- The Advocate’s role is to understand, reflect, and respond to the callers tone, concerns, and feelings during the crisis call.

Crisis Call Intake Template

Victim Services Initial Phone Contact Form

Victim Services, this is _____ how can I assist you today?

Proceed if you have an active crisis call…

Yes, you are inquiring about services, I can certainly help you with that, can you tell me at this moment, are you currently in a safe location?

If the caller responds they are in a safe location, proceed with asking what type of services they are inquiring about and remember to offer them services that they may not even be aware of that they may qualify for.

If the caller is not in a safe location…

Ask the caller if they are able to leave safely and get to a safe location. If they are not able to leave, ask if they are in need of law enforcement and if they would give you permission to call LE on their behalf.

If they need you to call law enforcement at any time during the call, information you will need will be:

Name of caller/victim:

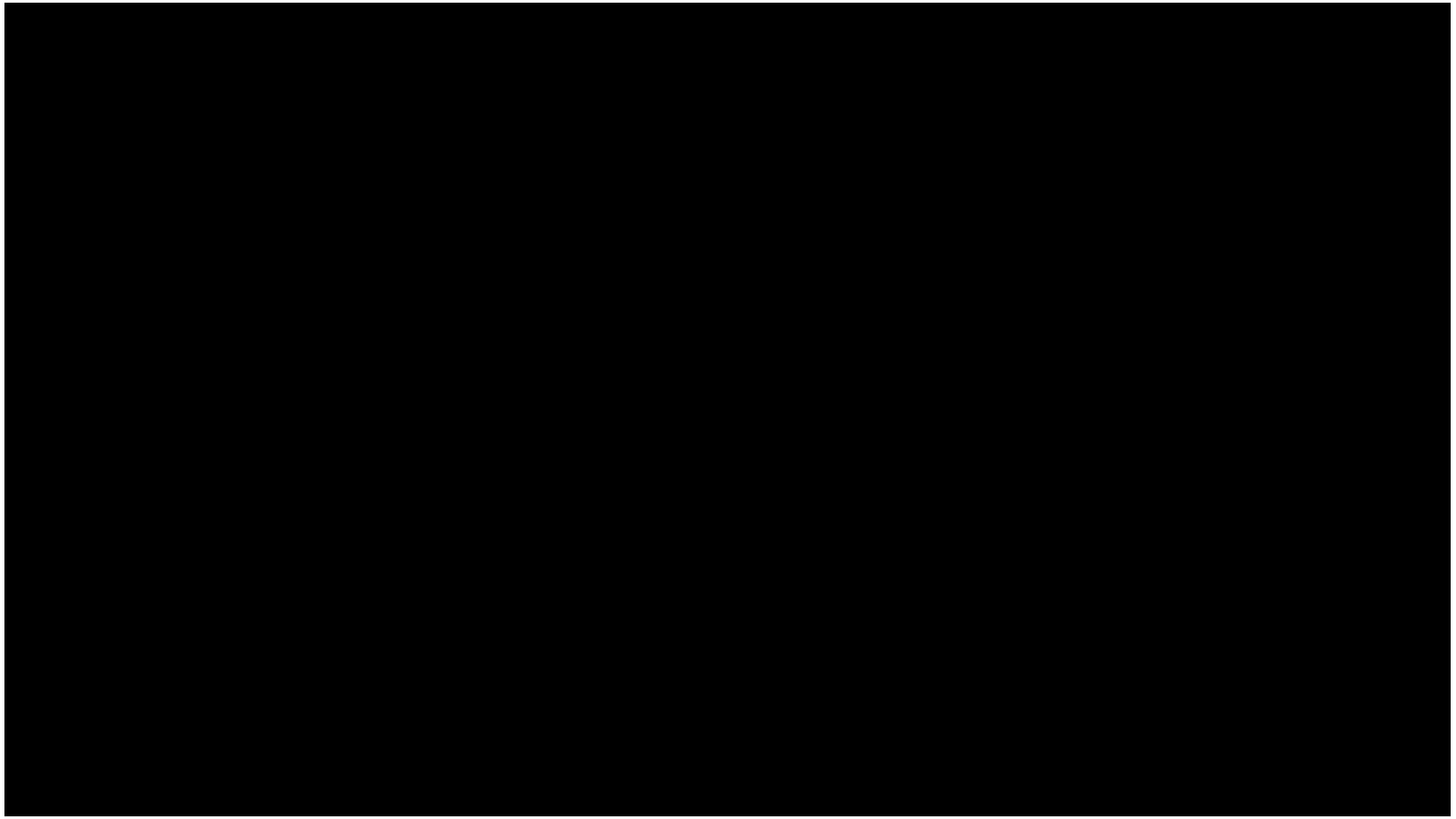
Perpetrator to caller/victim:

Address of assault:

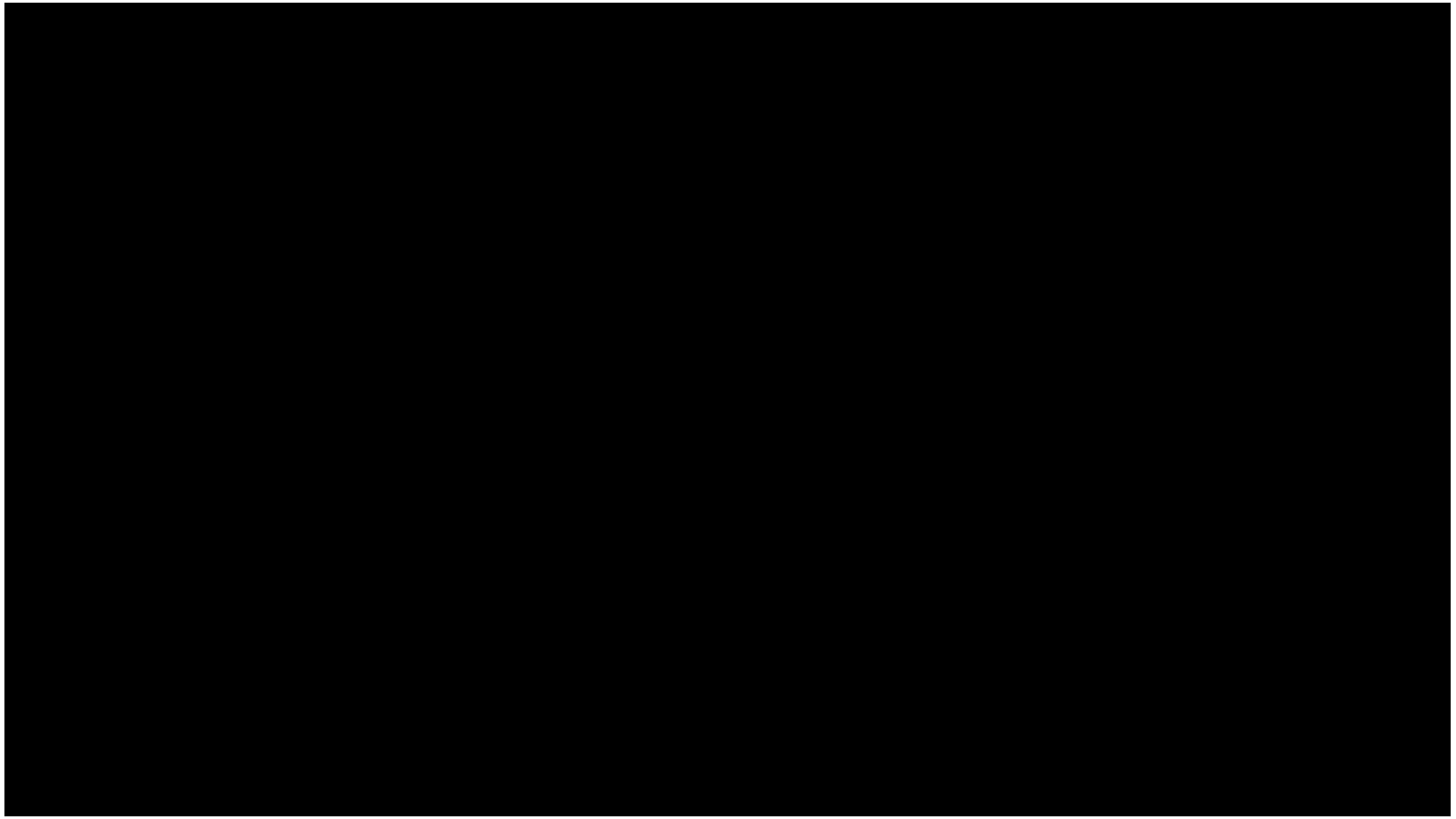
Contact number to Victim if you are disconnected:

NOTES:

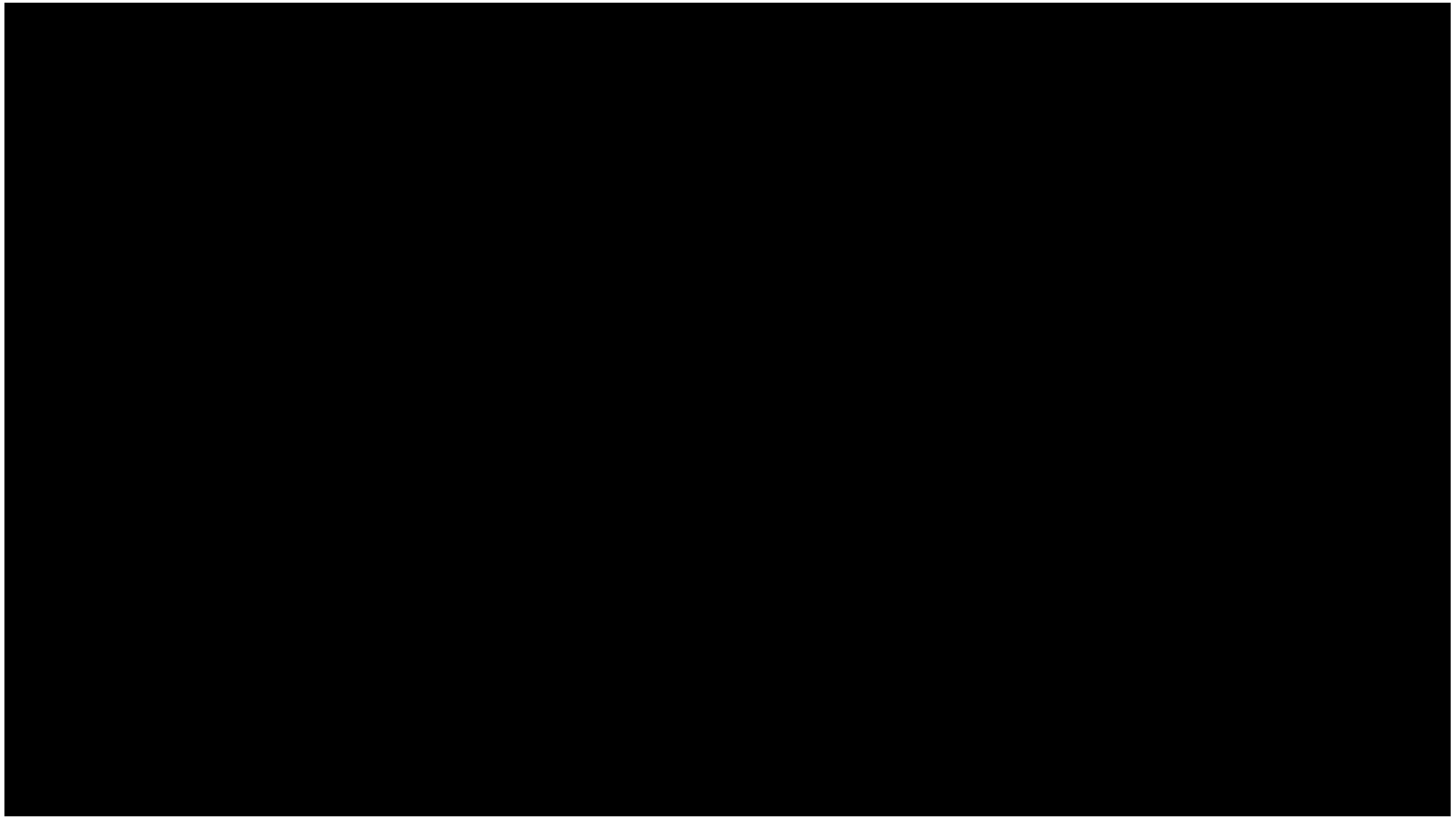
Mock Crisis Call 1



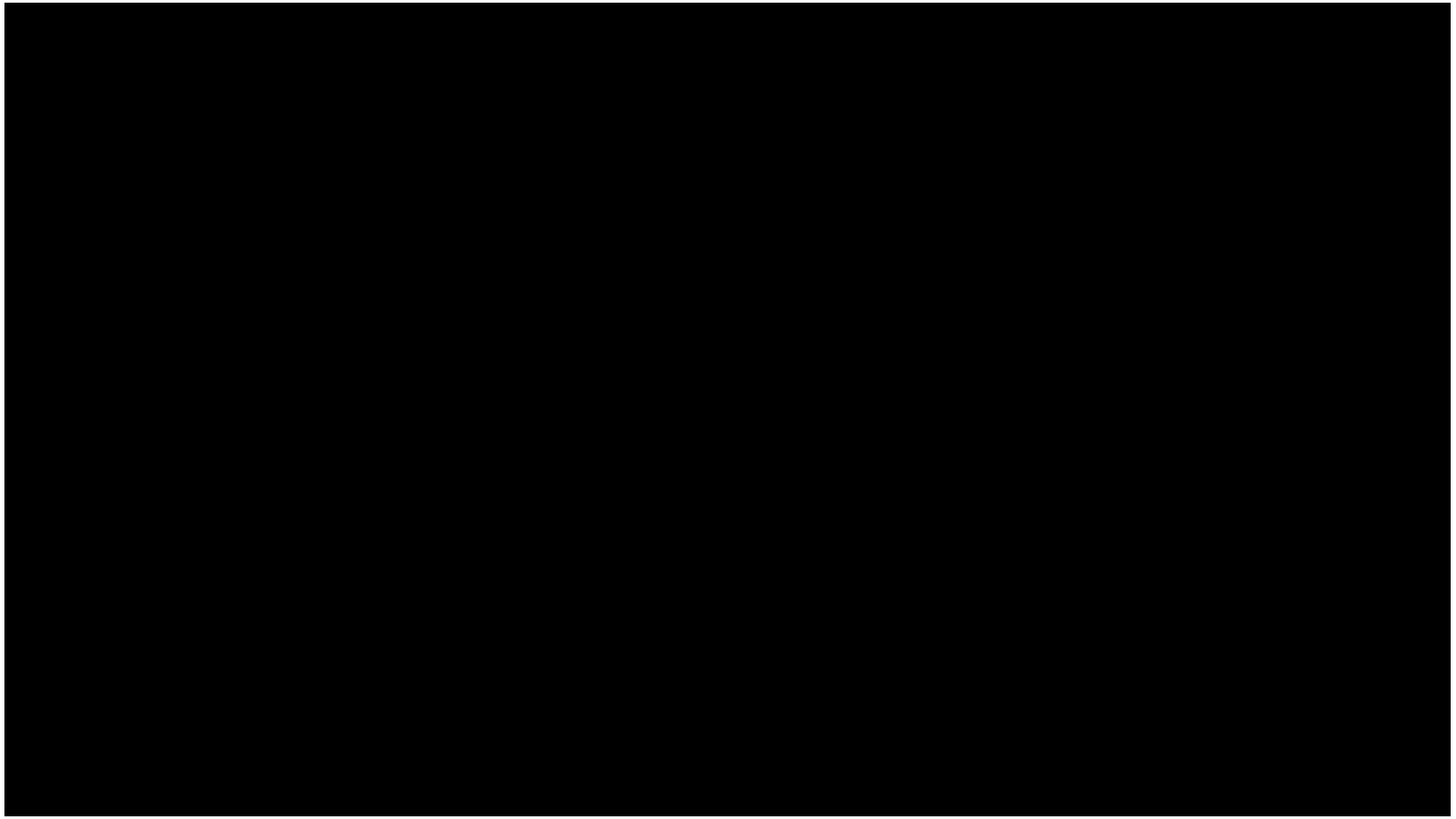
Mock Crisis Call 2



Mock Crisis Call 3



Mock Crisis Call 4



If a Caller is Reaching Out for Services

- Most potential clients that reach out are not in current danger and are contacting your agency for services they have come to understand you provide.
- It is essential you begin a dialogue with each caller to decipher what services they are looking for, but also what services they could qualify for and they don’t even know exist.
- From there, you can forward them on to the proper advocate/worker for further discussion and outreach.

If the Caller is in Current Danger

- If the victim is in immediate danger ask them if they can get to a safe location
- Remind them that you have shelter services and staff that are able to assist from a safe location

If a Caller is in Current Danger Cont.

- Best practice for crisis intervention when caller is in danger:
  - Have a signed release of information in file of client in crisis
  - Do NOT reach out to authorities on behalf of client, unless there is written consent (signed release of information)

- Is there an exception to calling 911?
  - Yes, but in an extremely rare circumstance. This is NOT best practice.
  - Refer to agency policy and procedures

Crisis Call Confidentiality Exceptions adapted from NNEDV FAQ's on Survivor Confidentiality Releases Confidentiality Institute & The Safety Net Project.

In an Urgent situation, can the signed release be emailed or digitally signed?

Yes, although best practice is to have a signed release in your file that is signed in person, organizations can decide on an individual basis when to accept an emailed or digitally signed release to ensure that the release was signed by the survivor. Since abusers can easily access another person's email account and/or make an email (or digital signature) appear to be from someone else, always confirm an emailed or digitally signed release with the survivor by phone prior to sharing survivor information.

*Information from: FAQ's on Survivor Confidentiality Releases Confidentiality Institute & The Safety Net Project at the National Network to End Domestic Violence

Crisis Call Confidentiality Exceptions cont…

When, in an emergency, we get an oral release for a particular piece of information, should we still fill out a form? What do other programs do?

Because VAWA and FVPSA require a written release, oral releases are not recommended and oral releases are never best practice. However, programs that do, on rare occasion, use oral releases generally go through the full release form, reading it aloud over the phone, and then note on the signature line that oral consent was given and the date it was given. The advocate should verify the person's identity before reading the form and signing it, and ensure that the survivor signs the form at the next possible opportunity.

*Information from: FAQ's on Survivor Confidentiality Releases Confidentiality Institute & The Safety Net Project at the National Network to End Domestic Violence

Things to Remember

- Make the caller feel welcome and safe to share their story and experience with you
  - Every call needs to be met with empathy
  - Every caller needs to be met where they are at, and have THEIR needs assessed to what they need.
- The caller is looking for support and validation
- Confidentiality prevents you from calling 911 on their behalf
  - If they are in immediate danger you can instruct them to hang up and dial 911.
  - You can get their verbal permission in crisis to call 911 and get a written release of information as fast as possible

Empathy

- Make the caller feel welcome and safe to share their story and experience with you
  - Every call needs to be met with empathy
  - Every caller needs to be met where they are at, and have THEIR needs assessed to what they need.

Provide Peer Support

- Help focus on specific needs and explore options
  - What services within the **advocacy** agency would this caller benefit from and would be willing to be referred to – explain services and how they are helpful and beneficial
  - Are there any other tribal services that this caller could utilize to assist them to safety
  - Work with the caller to create solutions and strategies to be safer

Validation

When speaking with a caller, give them validation with their story…

- I’m hearing that this has been a horrible experience for you…
- It sounds like it has been very, very frustrating…
- That must have been scary, I am so sorry you had to go through that…

Confidentiality

- Confidentiality prevents you from calling 911 on their behalf
- If they are in immediate danger, you can instruct them to hang up and dial 911.
- You can get their verbal permission in crisis to call 911 and get a written release of information as fast as possible

Resources

- FAQ's on Survivor Confidentiality Releases Confidentiality Institute & The Safety Net Project at the National Network to End Domestic Violence