

Survivor Focus Group Questions

Purpose: Fairfax County's Council to End Domestic Violence has created an Accountability Workgroup to explore ways the community can promote change and responsibility in those who cause harm through domestic violence. One of the goals of this workgroup is to learn from survivors' experience what ways of doing this are best for survivors. During this discussion, we will use the words "survivors", "victims", and "thrivers" interchangeably at times. Survivors are the most valuable source of information on what they need from their community. This focus group was created to gather input from survivors.

Commitment and Compensation: Your time is valuable. This focus group is scheduled for 90 minutes. [If this is an in-person session, refreshments will be served.] For your participation, you will receive a \$25 gift card to thank you for your time and your input.

Considerations: This focus group will cover a variety of questions and cover several topics. Not all topics will apply to you. We encourage you to answer as many questions as apply to you, and that they feel comfortable answering. If there are additional questions that participants think should have been asked, we will gather that information at the end.

Victim Services Questions: These questions are designed to gather information about your interaction with victim services. This will include victim services offered through the court system or any community organization. Questions are directed toward survivors who have interacted with victim services in the past, but we would also like the opinions of survivors who did not receive these services.

- 1) At what point, if any, during your interaction with victim services have you not felt heard, regarding your needs during the accountability process for the person who caused you harm?
- 2) Were you asked whether you wanted to stay in or leave your relationship? Did the options you were provided fit with your decision process whether to leave the relationship or stay? What would have been most helpful for you?

Partner Services Questions: These questions are designed to gather information about your interaction with services or programs offered to your partner/ex-partner, if applicable. These services might have included a Partner Abuse Intervention Program (also called a Batterer Intervention Program). These services may have been court-ordered or received directly from the community. Again, questions are directed toward survivors who have interacted with such a program, but we invite the opinions of all survivors, whether or not your partner participated in such a program.

- 1) If you are still interacting with your partner/ex-partner, what changes or lack of changes did you notice as a result of participation in such a program?
- 2) What barriers made it harder for your partner/ex-partner to make changes or take responsibility during the program?
- 3) What would you want such a program to do to make that process better for survivors?

Legal System Questions: These questions are designed to gather information about survivor interaction with the police, courts, or magistrates. Again, questions are directed at survivors who have interacted with the legal system regarding their abuse, but we would like your input even if you have not yet interacted with police or courts.

- 1) At what points during your interactions with the police or court system have you felt that your partner/ex-partner was being held accountable for the harm they caused you?
- 2) At what points during your interactions with the police or court system have you felt that your partner/ex-partner was **not** being held accountable for the harm they caused you or that the legal process did **not** support your needs?

Community Accountability Questions: These questions are designed to gather information about how survivors view community accountability. For the purpose of this survey, “community accountability” refers to the way that the entire community (not just social services, law enforcement, and the legal system) is responsible for taking an active role in ending domestic violence.

- 1) What role do you want the community (including family members, friends, churches, neighbors, or other community members) to play in preventing domestic violence and supporting accountability in persons who cause harm?
- 2) If you called the police regarding your abuse, would a community response option have been preferable? Would there have been any differences in how/when you reached out to a community response option compared to a police response option?
- 3) What options do you wish you had been provided? What would you like the community to do differently to support accountability, and who are the key people in the community to do so?

General: These questions are designed to get feedback about our focus group process.

- 1) Are there any changes you suggest to the way we locate survivors/invite survivors to participate in answering these questions?
- 2) Are there any questions that you feel we should ask in the future?