

Survivor-Informed Practice

DEFINITION, BEST PRACTICES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This document was developed by fellows of the 2017 Human Trafficking Leadership Academy (HTLA) organized through the National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center (NHTTAC) and Coro Northern California. A team of six non-government service providers and six survivor leaders worked together to develop recommendations on how to enhance service provision to survivors of human trafficking or those at risk of human trafficking using trauma-informed practices and survivor-informed principles. The fellowship is funded by the Office on Trafficking in Persons (OTIP) and the Office on Women's Health (OWH) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The recommendations and content of this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of OTIP, OWH, or HHS.

Definition

A survivor-informed practice includes meaningful input from a diverse community of survivors at all stages of a program or project, including development, implementation and evaluation.

The term “survivors” refers to foreign and domestic victims of severe forms of trafficking in persons as defined by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000.

A survivor-informed practice involves [victim-centered¹](#) and [trauma-informed²](#) approaches to outreach, public awareness, case management, direct services, and coalition-building activities developed with input from survivors. Meaningful input may be obtained through survivors serving as staff or management, on the governing board of an organization, or in another advisory capacity.

Survivor-informed case management, service provision, outreach, public awareness, and coalition-building activities must be implemented in such a way that the needs of those impacted by human trafficking are understood and met by those who provide services and engage in outreach and public awareness activities. A survivor-informed practice acknowledges the unique perspectives of survivors with relevant expertise based on knowledge of their trafficking experiences and challenges they have faced in their efforts to regain and rebuild their lives.

“Those impacted by human trafficking” refers to the individual who was victimized by human trafficking, as well as family members and others who are adversely affected by the trafficking experience.

Meaningful survivor input helps case managers, service providers, and others conducting outreach, public awareness, coalition building, or other related activities to human trafficking understand how [trauma³](#) affects the recovery of those impacted by human trafficking and how to effectively meet the needs of those impacted by human trafficking. These efforts are intended to prevent instances of re-victimization to those impacted by human trafficking.

¹ More information available at <https://www.ovcttac.gov/taskforceguide/eqguide/1-understanding-human-trafficking/13-victim-centered-approach/>

² More information available at <https://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions>

³ More information available at https://www.samhsa.gov/samhsaNewsLetter/Volume_22_Number_2/trauma_tip/guiding_principles.html

Best Practices for Grantees

1. Grantees should continuously and appropriately access survivor expertise at all appropriate stages throughout program development, implementation, and evaluation.
2. Grantees should incorporate diverse human trafficking survivor perspectives (sex and labor trafficking survivors, adult and minor survivors, LGBTQ survivors, and foreign-national and domestic survivors) and integrate best practices among other parallel movements, including domestic violence, sexual assault, and labor exploitation, when appropriate.
3. A strengths-based approach should be used to determine appropriate places and levels of engagement for survivors within an organization or project. Such an approach should consider survivors' expertise and strengths; length of time out of their trafficking situation; training on trauma-informed, victim-centered, and survivor-informed practices; and effective management of the survivor's triggers. This approach should also consider organizational or project need, along with the organization's capacity to appropriately support the survivor.

Recommendations

To support implementation of the above best practices among grantees, the 2017 Human Trafficking Leadership Academy (HTLA) proposes the following recommendations:

Recommendation	Best Practices
1. Adopt the definition of "survivor-informed practice" proposed by the HTLA Fellows to establish a uniform understanding among grantees.	1, 2, 3
2. Provide the proposed definition of "survivor-informed practice" to current grantees and include in all future funding opportunity announcements (FOAs), agreements, and/or handbooks.	1, 2
3. Adopt the "Survivor-Informed Checklist" proposed by the HTLA Fellows for use as a metric by current and future grantees and partnering organizations to assess the extent to which practices are survivor informed. Agencies or programs can contact NHTTAC to connect with a qualified survivor consultant to help the agency or program become more survivor informed.	1, 2, 3
4. Require OTIP grantees to access input from survivors and/or survivor consultants (through NHTTAC or otherwise) at all appropriate stages of program development, implementation, and evaluation in accordance with the Survivor-Informed Plan (refer to Best Practices for Grantees 1, 2, and 3 and Recommendation 6).	1
5. Require OTIP grantees to vet any non-NHTTAC survivor consultant/s and/or survivor/s considered for a significant leadership role by utilizing NHTTAC's Survivor Consultant Eligibility Form (which should be revised to include criteria that the Survivor has engaged in personal healing, professional development, and training in trauma-informed, survivor-	3

informed, and victim-centered practices).	
<p>6. In partnership with one or more survivor consultants, develop an annual training for grantees on enhancing survivor-informed practices within their organizations and communities. Provide access through in-person seminars, webinars, and/or online training modules that facilitate skill development and sharing best practices. Include a training participation requirement in all future FOAs and/or agreements.</p>	1
<p>7. Develop accountability measures for survivor-informed practice and monitor implementation among grantees. Suggested measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Require FOA applicants to develop a survivor-informed plan and to outline in the project narrative how the applicant is currently implementing or intends to implement a survivor-informed approach. Suggested practices include hiring survivors in leadership positions; accessing survivor expertise in development of program design, protocols, and materials; contracting survivor consultants to evaluate program effectiveness; and including survivors in public speaking opportunities. b. Require grantees to include successes and challenges in implementation of their survivor-informed plan in their performance progress reports. c. Require grantees to designate a minimum line item (suggested 2–3 percent of annual budget) for implementation of their survivor-informed plan, including consultant fees, speaking engagements, and program evaluation (whether incurred by the survivor consultant or grantee). d. Pair grantees with a NHTTAC survivor consultant to provide training and technical support based on identified needs (via remote support, site visits, etc.). The consultant will assess areas for improvement utilizing the “Survivor Informed-Checklist” and will provide a report to OTIP on grantees’ progress in implementing survivor-informed practices. Implement corresponding corrective action plans to grantees that need assistance to meet identified criteria. 	1,2,3