



Advocacy with Incarcerated Survivors State Assessment Summary 2015

WCSAP continues to work with the Washington Department of Corrections (DOC) and the Office of Crime Victims Advocacy (OCVA) to develop and implement a streamlined statewide approach to services for incarcerated survivors of sexual assault in prison and work release facilities. As we continue to refine and expand those services, we requested input from community sexual assault program staff across the state, to guide and inform our efforts.

In addition to prison focused work, WCSAP remains actively engaged in dialogues about service provision to survivors in jails and juvenile detention/rehabilitation facilities. WCSAP prioritized gathering information about working with incarcerated and detained survivors and contacts from and relationships with correctional systems because we want our work in this area to respond to your needs. Correctional systems are difficult to understand and navigate, and working with incarcerated survivors presents challenges different from other advocacy work.

We gathered information from community sexual assault programs during connection calls, site visits, requests for technical assistance, and via a survey assessment tool. The connection calls were held using other funds and conducted solely with the 14 community sexual assault programs that currently receive DOC grants to serve survivors in prison and work release facilities. Other information-gathering avenues were not limited to these programs. In February and March 2015, WCSAP conducted a survey assessment tool of Washington State sexual assault advocacy program staff about advocacy with incarcerated and detained survivors and contacts from correctional facilities.

WCSAP is continually working to improve correctional facilities' response to survivors and to meet advocates' needs around this work. The purpose of the survey was to help WCSAP prioritize and guide future activities such as training, collaboration, resource development, and system advocacy. Below is a short summary of selected results from the survey assessment tool, which highlight the most pertinent issues using data, relevant themes identified, and quotes from survey respondents.

Survey Respondents:

- 32 people took at least a portion of the survey, representing 27 different programs in communities across the state of WA
- 17 respondents were from programs currently receiving DOC funds
- Respondents were primarily: community based sexual assault advocates and Executive Directors/Program Managers

Topic Areas:

Advocacy with Survivors in Prison & Work Release Facilities

This section asked respondents who advocate with survivors in prison and work release facilities under the DOC grants to identify their greatest need for support. Seventeen survey respondents provided an answer to this question, and common themes were:

- Ability to ask questions of WCSAP when they arise
- Support with partnership building, systems advocacy, and relationship development with DOC
- Continued funding for work with survivors in DOC facilities
- Training about talking to corrections staff about advocacy services and their availability to all incarcerated victims of sexual assault, whether incident occurred in facility or in community
- Confidentiality with survivors in an incarcerated setting

These programs currently provide phone advocacy and support at the forensic exam, in addition to systems advocacy with their corrections partners. This section asked them what questions or concerns they have about moving toward providing in person advocacy services at prison and/or work release facilities next fiscal year, and respondents identified:

- Development of procedures for responding to prison facilities
- Safety and confidentiality concerns with providing advocacy in a correctional setting
- Need for additional funding to support expanded work
- Information for managers about organizational structure to support staff with vicarious trauma related to this work

Advocacy with Survivors in Jails

This section asked respondents about the number of jails in their community and contacts they have had with jails about providing services to incarcerated survivors:

- Most respondents have 1 – 2 jails in their community (65%), followed by 3 – 4 jails (30%).
- A little over half of respondents have been contacted by a jail in their community about services to incarcerated survivors (52%).
- Most of these programs (67%) were contacted in the following ways:
 - Asked about posting their hotline number in facility
 - Received calls from inmates without contact from jail personnel
 - Invited to an in person meeting with jail personnel
- Programs had also been:
 - Asked about a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
 - Sent an MOU to sign
- A small number of programs (4) had entered into formal agreements with jails and the majority of those programs (75%) have noticed an increase in calls to their hotline from incarcerated survivors since entering into the agreement.

We also asked what questions or concerns (such as privacy, confidentiality, access to services) were raised as a result of contacts with jails, and respondents identified:

- Confidentiality concerns about the location of phones in facilities and how to ensure calls are not recorded
- How to obtain a release of information if one is requested by the survivor
- Clarifying the different partners' roles
- Concerns about funding restrictions and capacity to take calls from these survivors
- Guidance about serving incarcerated survivors who may have previously perpetrated against someone else

Advocacy with Survivors in Juvenile Rehabilitation/Detention Facilities

This section asked respondents about the number of juvenile facilities in their community and contacts they have had with these facilities about providing services to detainee or resident survivors:

- Most respondents have 1 – 2 juvenile facilities in their community (85%).
- Half that many respondents have been contacted by a juvenile facility about providing services.
- Most of these programs were contacted by being invited to an in person meeting with juvenile facility personnel (90%).
- Programs had also:
 - Been asked about posting their hotline number in the juvenile facility (55%)
 - Been asked about an MOU (45%)
 - Received calls from juveniles without contact from facility personnel (36%)

- Been sent an MOU to sign (27%)
- The two respondents that had entered into a formal agreement with a juvenile facility reported an increase in calls from juvenile residents since entering into the agreement.

We also asked what questions or concerns (such as privacy, confidentiality, access to services) were raised as a result of contacts with juvenile facilities, and respondents identified:

- Maintaining confidentiality
- Understanding their role if the juvenile wants to report, and understanding how reports are made in juvenile facilities
- Coordinating their services with juvenile facility staff and improving communication

Overall, respondents reported positive interactions with juvenile facilities, prior relationships with these facilities that will support this work, and that juvenile facility staff have a “victim-centered approach” and are “eager to work together.”

General Concerns, Training and Support Needs

This section asked respondents if they had concerns about serving multiple correctional facilities in their community and what their needs for training and support were.

- Respondents were concerned about:
 - Capacity (e.g. funding, staff time) to address the needs of survivors in multiple facilities in addition to current workload
 - Building trusting working relationships with correctional facilities
 - Being a small and/or rural agency that covers a large region
 - Resources to work with these survivors
- Respondents identified the following training and support needs:
 - Continued information about correctional facilities
 - Training on working with these populations and working in jails
 - How to do this work with limited resources, specifically, creative ways to provide safety planning and support when survivors have few choices
 - Understanding the culture of each facility type, and restrictions for people detained in each facility
 - Training on breaking stereotypes and working with correctional facility personnel
 - Talking points for going into a meeting with facility staff, especially regarding confidentiality

We also asked respondents if there was anything else they wanted to share with us about this work. Many respondents provided positive feedback, including:

- “Thank you for your amazing support! We love how helpful...WCSAP has been with PREA!”
- “We have been thankful for WCSAP resources, webinars and in person meetings to review, discuss and get support!”
- “We were well trained and prepped for providing these services.”
- “Providing this work makes me a stronger advocate! Believing that no one deserves to be sexually abused is a fundamental part of this work and providing services to incarcerated survivors allows us to share this belief even further.”

Conclusion:

The information, concerns, and needs for support shared in the survey assessment tool mirror what we have heard from programs in other forums. Advocates are committed to supporting incarcerated and detained survivors and excited about advancing their advocacy with this population, but are concerned about capacity and need support, training, and resources to do this work well.

Over the next nine months, WCSAP will be responding to programs’ identified needs in a variety of comprehensive ways. We are convening a work group of corrections stakeholders representing prisons, jails, and juvenile facilities to get answers to the questions advocates have about those systems. We will provide training, including: (1) workshops at the WCSAP conference, (2) distance learning opportunities, and (3) a one-day in person training about advocacy with incarcerated survivors in corrections systems in Washington State. We are developing resources, including new website content, about working with incarcerated and detained survivors and building sustainable relationships with correctional facilities and systems. Finally, we are available to support your complex work in this area with consultation via phone, email, and in person support. We are excited to partner with you in moving this work forward in our state!