**Guidelines for Domestic Violence**

**Support Group Facilitators**

**\*adapted from** THE POWER TO CHANGE

**The Domestic Violence Support Group Facilitator**

**INTRODUCTION**

* **Roles and responsibilities of the facilitator (and co-facilitator, if applicable)**
* **Skills, knowledge,**
* **Training & experience needed to run domestic violence survivor support groups**

The facilitator of a domestic violence support group has a central role to make the sessions safe, supportive and inclusive. Her skills, experience and knowledge on domestic violence, as well as the self-help group dynamics, assist the participants to maintain group cohesion, respect and stability.

If a facilitator and co-facilitator will work together, the co-facilitator’s function is to support the facilitator in each session, particularly in a crisis situation. For example, if a participant needs one-to-one support during a session, the co-facilitator is able to withdraw from the group setting with the participant, while the facilitator carries on with the session. Having two facilitators means there is always someone to run the group in case of unexpected absence, e.g. illness. Also, being a co-facilitator is an opportunity to learn about self-help group processes, and can act as hands-on training for the main facilitator role.

The facilitator and co-facilitator will need similar skills, knowledge and training. If both facilitators have similar levels of experience, these roles can be flexible from session to session.

For the purposes of the domestic violence support groups, facilitators *must* be women. Women are more likely to access a service and feel comfortable within it, if it is run for women only. This helps to avoid the unconscious or conscious repetition of the male/female power imbalance that is so prevalent in violent partnerships. One of the goals of support groups is to empower women through the example of female leadership and, in this case, female facilitators.

**CORE BELIEFS AND PRINCIPLES**

**A facilitator of a self-help group must believe in the strengths and capabilities of the survivors themselves, and in their ability to change, adapt and discover their own solutions to their problems.**

**Key Principles**

A facilitator of a support group should fully embrace these key principles as the foundation of “best practice” in providing service for domestic violence survivors:

* safety, security and dignity
* understanding domestic and sexual violence and its impact on women & children
* confidentiality
* empowerment and participation
* diversity and fair access to services
* advocacy and support
* supervision by a collaborative agency
* zero tolerance of domestic and sexual violence; holding perpetrators accountable
* governance and accountability

**Core Beliefs**

A facilitator should always believe survivors and never ask for proof or evidence of their abuse. A facilitator should also uphold the following core beliefs:

* Domestic violence is preventable.
* Domestic violence is never the survivor’s fault.
* Domestic violence is rooted in the relations of power and control in intimate relationships.
* Perpetrators have sole responsibility for their violence.
* Children may also be victims of the abuse, and need a violence-free environment.

These fundamental principles and core beliefs will enable the group participants to:

* recognize their individual strengths, maintain their independence
* acknowledge their rights to respect, dignity, independence, choice and control (where safety is not compromised).

In order to create an empowering atmosphere within the support group, it is important that the facilitator acts in an empowered, assertive, non-judgmental and empathetic way, to promote the skills that are discussed throughout the sessions and maximizing the potential of the group.

**KEY FACILITATOR COMPETENCIES**

**Knowledge**

The facilitator should have an accurate and current working knowledge of domestic violence and its impact on women and children, as well as local resources and support agencies. The facilitator should also have a broad overview of all types of gender-based violence, gender discrimination and equal opportunities.

*Before* the support group begins, the facilitator should have an in-depth knowledge of the following areas:

* Definition, history and the basic fundamentals of domestic violence; historical & feminist perspectives; societal & institutional issues; myths & realities.
* Statistics and dynamics of domestic violence: cycle of violence; power & control wheel; types of abuse; barriers or challenges to leaving an abuser; identifying victim / survivors.
* Intervention skills needed to work with victims/survivors: listening skills, service planning, confidential communication, personal & professional boundaries, empowerment perspectives, defining advocacy; basic crisis intervention skills; documentation/files & victim/survivor’s rights.
* Skills needed to develop and implement safety plans, how to identify tools and skills to assist in assessing the possible danger levels that the victim/survivor may be facing and how to assesses/intervene in potential suicidal crisis situations: safety planning; lethality assessment; suicide assessment.
* Abuser profile and batterer intervention services.
* Negative effects domestic violence has on children and the ways that advocates, counselors and non-abusing parent can intervene to lessen those effects: Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting Act; DCFS issues; safety planning for children; working with children.
* How to intervene and work with teens in a dating or domestic violence situation: dynamics; legal issues for teens; safety planning for teen dating violence.
* Issues of culture, ethnicity, race and religion from a culturally competent perspective: Anti-racism; religion & domestic violence.
* Unique needs of specialized populations that are affected by domestic Violence: older battered women; Elder Abuse & Neglect Act; rural women; immigrant battered women; people with unique challenges; mental health issues; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender issues & homophobia; substance abuse & domestic violence; sexually transmitted diseases including HIV & AIDS; prostitution/trafficking.
* Legal issues related to domestic violence: IDVA Act, criminal or civil Court orders, Orders of Protection; criminal offenses such as domestic battery, violation of Order of Protection, stalking; conditions of bond; VAWA –immigration issues; prohibitions against firearm possession.
* Certification Code of Ethics; Referrals to and Working with Other Agencies/Systems;
* Knowledge of the local community demographics in which the support group is set.
* Self-care

*Illinois Certified Domestic Violence Professionals Board approved 40 Hour Domestic Violence Training Program*

***Experience***

To ensure the group participants receive the best service, the facilitator should ideally have

the following experience:

* experience of working with survivors of domestic violence, in a professionally *supervised* capacity; however, comparable voluntary experience is also acceptable
* experience of providing emotional & practical support to survivors of domestic violence
* experience of safety planning and conducting risk assessments
* experience of planning and facilitating group work

**Skills**

The facilitator should possess skills that enable them to run the group effectively and

ensure that collective and individual needs are met.

The following specific facilitatorskills are essential for a successful self-help group:

* excellent group management skills, including the ability to plan and facilitate group sessions effectively;
* excellent communication skills, including clear verbal delivery & positive body language;
* active listening skills, and the ability to respond empathetically to the group members;
* the ability to challenge participants, where relevant and necessary, in a non-confrontational but assertive manner;
* the ability to handle issues, such as anger, in the group;
* an understanding of professional boundaries and the facilitator’s limitations within the group, e.g. not getting personally involved with the women’s lives; not counseling;
* self-initiative to plan and execute their group facilitation responsibilities effectively;
* ability to apply anti-discriminatory practice and equal opportunities into all aspects of the support group;
* ability to evaluate the effectiveness of the support group and report on the outcomes;
* the ability to use basic information technology, such as searching the internet and word processing is preferred.

**Education, qualifications and training**

At this time there is no legislative educational credential or qualification requirement in Illinois for a facilitator to run domestic violence survivor support group. However, it is uniformly recommend {by licensed domestic violence agencies} that facilitators should successfully complete the 40-hour Domestic Violence Training at a certified training site and have a good combination of relevant experience and knowledge. It is further recommended that the 40-hour trained facilitator of a domestic violence survivor support group is supervised by a licensed, professional clinical counselor at a collaborating agency.

A facilitator who has prior experience of working with survivors will generally possess the fundamental knowledge, skills and attitudes needed. In addition, some facilitators may have some relevant training for work within the domestic violence field, and/or a relevant degree or qualification such as social work. Such training courses might include the following topics:

• domestic violence;

• sexual violence;

• diversity and equal opportunities;

• group facilitation skills;

• counseling skills;

• child abuse protection;

• criminal and civil law;

• immigration; human trafficking;

• risk assessment and safety planning;

• human rights awareness;

• basic psychology

**FACILITATOR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Roles of facilitator**

**The facilitator’s role is to promote the principles of empowerment and self-help within the group and to ensure that the group works as a constructive and cohesive unit**.

The facilitator should encourage the participants to:

* share their experiences as domestic abuse survivors,
* encourage participants to share new ideas to create a non-violent environment for themselves
* help shape discussion of emerging issues such as basic rights, self-esteem, assertiveness and boundaries.

The facilitator uses her knowledge and experience to:

* create a safe, welcoming, informal atmosphere that provides support and trust;
* create an inclusive environment to allow equal participation for everyone in the group;
* create an empowering environment that enables participants to increase their assertiveness and self-esteem;
* help the participants understand the dynamics and processes of the group;
* help women to recognize, validate and explore what they are feeling and why;
* monitor individual and group growth and change;
* help the participants to understand the meanings behind certain behaviors and issues pertaining to domestic abuse;
* share knowledge and information on violence against women in general and domestic violence in particular;
* promote understanding that domestic violence is an unacceptable violation of human rights;
* refer participants to other services in addition to/ in place of, the support group if needed;
* make referrals for one-to-one counseling or therapy for the group members if needed;
* **let the group do most of the work: it is important to stress that the facilitator does not always need to take the initiative, nor does she know all the answers.**

Participants should be given ample opportunity to express their opinions and discuss the issues with one another. However, if the group strays too far from the original objectives, or fails to adhere to the agreed group rules, it is the role of the facilitator to guide the participants gently back into productive discussion and to ensure the group rules are respected by all.

**Responsibilities of facilitator**

The facilitator has a range of key responsibilities:

**a) Organize the group:**

* ensure the set-up and proper functioning of the meetings;
* prepare any material, if needed, for each session before the group meets;
* take into account access, mobility and other needs of the group participants.

b) **Within the group:**

* conduct sessions from the standpoint that all participants are believed and respected;
* adopt effective means to structure the group and encourage everyone to participate;
* explain the necessary group rules, and ensure they are adhered to;
* encourage the women to take responsibility for their own behavior;
* challenge any myths or stereotypes about domestic violence that arise within the group.

**c) Support participants:**

* ensure participants feel listened to, and not judged;
* recognize the individual needs and experiences of all group members;
* support group participants to make informed choices and decisions by providing relevant, available options.
* maintain knowledge of relevant local agencies that may be able to support the participants in different ways . The facilitator should provide a support handout detailing the contact details of services and other types of support (such as websites and self-help books). This type of resource is available in the Domestic Violence Manual on the Archdiocese of Chicago website.
* where appropriate, recognize the needs and provide referral support for group participants that have regarding immigration status, access to social or welfare benefits, or information regarding work visas;

**d) Safety:**

* **ensure the safety and security of the group and its participants are always the first priority; do no harm**;
* ensure the support group is always held within a safe and secure women-centered environment;
* make the group participants aware of the processes of risk assessment that are in place throughout the sessions;
* take appropriate action if any risk of serious harm to the group participants is identified, by providing relevant information and conducting realistic safety planning;
* prevent crisis situations in the group by referring participants on a timely basis to a professional counselor for effective intervention.

**e) Diversity and fair access:**

* respect the diversity of all participants; demonstrate anti-discriminatory practices;
* ensure that the support group is accessible and welcoming to all participants;
* promote diversity within the support group’s literature and environment; avoid jargon;
* monitor access to the support group, to ensure it fairly reflects local demographics and takes into account individual needs;
* recognize potential additional barriers some groups may face when attempting to access the group; for example race / minority ethnicity, refugee or asylum-seeking women, migrant women, older women, lesbian and bisexual women, and disabled women;
* challenge any unfair prejudice and/or discrimination if it arises within the group, and document any specific incidents.

**f) Confidentiality:**

* safeguard the confidentiality of the group at all times and clarifying with the participants those situations where confidentiality may be limited e.g. reporting obligations based on child protection;
* ensure that all electronic or hard copy information regarding the group sessions is stored securely and confidentially. Note: any information that might individually identify a group member cannot be released outside the group;
* at the beginning of the sessions, agree with group participants that anything confidential will only be released with their express consent.

 **RUNNING THE GROUP**

**There are several management issues that should be considered when running the group.**

**Initial session**

It is valuable to meet each woman who is referred to the support group *before* it starts. If participants are referred to the group from a collaborating agency, it is likely that an initial one-to-one session has taken place already. However, it is advisable to begin the initial group session to discuss each woman’s expectations of the group.

It is important to acquaint future participants with the structure of the self-help group:

* to clarify the aims and objectives of the group in order
* to ensure that the expectations of the participants and what is provided in the group are compatible.

This is recommended for collaborating agency referrals, as well as external or self-referrals.

**Risk assessment**

Risk assessment can be defined as the evaluation of risk in a concrete situation and a recognized threat. In the context of domestic violence, the facilitator must consider her ability to manage risk, and put a support plan in place.

It is important to assess the venue where the support group will be held to ensure both the location and building are safe and secure. Regarding the participants, it is likely that the initial risk assessments have taken place *if* the participant is receiving another type of support from a collaborating domestic violence service provide agency.

If admission to the group is external or self-referral, then it is “best practice” to determine the women’s risk levels with the assistance of a licensed, professional counselor to:

* assess the likelihood of further abuse;
* evaluate likely harm;
* assess future security;
* decide, along with the survivor, with whom to work and what resources (i.e. support outside the group);
* evaluate risk to other participants in the group and possibly endanger other participants.

**It is important for the facilitator to communicate with the collaborating agency to assure a risk assessment had been completed.**

Risk assessment should be integrated within the whole support group process. Risk should be assessed at the beginning, during the sessions and at the end. When a risk assessment is conducted with a woman, it may be concluded that this may not be the right time for her to join a support group. For example, if she is in a very dangerous situation, attending the group may increase the danger she is in, or put other participants at risk. If a woman is in a dangerous situation, she should be assisted to draw up a safety plan.

**Depending on the facilitator’s ability to manage risk within the group, she may or may not be able to offer services to women who are high-risk.** In some cases, the initial risk assessment might result in a referral to individual counseling or other appropriate services, instead of, or in parallel to, the support group. **This type of decisions will require a licensed, professional counselor.**  If you are unable to offer a service to high-risk women, it is important that the woman is referred to more appropriate services that have the resources to meet her needs.

**Confidentiality and data protection**

Participants, facilitators and possibly the administrative staff of the organization offering

the support group will inevitably get to know certain sensitive information about participants

of the group. The facilitator needs to know the legal requirements relating to mandatory reporting and disclosure, and the obligations of staff/others if they become aware of ongoing child abuse.

Participants, the facilitator and administrative staff all need to be clear about their rights and

obligations regarding sensitive data and confidentiality. **It is recommended to prepare written confidentiality guidelines to the staff, and that these guidelines become part of the written agreement or contract between the participant and the facilitator/organization**.

**Complaints procedure**

It is “best practice” to have a complaint procedure in place *before* the support group starts. Participants must be able to initiate a complaint externally, and not just to the facilitator, if they choose to. At the first session, the women must be informed about the complaint procedure and how to make a complaint.

**Facilitator support**

It is important that support mechanisms are in place for facilitators. It is recommended as “best practice” for facilitators to have periodic supervision sessions with a licensed clinical counselor from a collaborating agency. It is a recommended that a network of facilitators from neighboring parishes, [vicariate or deanery] be created to provide regular communication link. The network of facilitators can then meet regularly as an opportunity for trouble shooting, to discuss the support groups they run, share information and offer suggestions on how to improve. Alternatively, the network could be online in the form of a message board and expand access to facilitators further afield.

**Childcare**

Women who participate in the support group will often need to find care for their children for the duration of the sessions. It is recommended to discuss childcare policies (including the need for childcare provision) with the participants *before* the group begins. The following questions should be explored with potential participants:

* “ Do you a need organized childcare?”
* “ Do you need organized childcare for every session or only occasionally?” “If so: please be specific.”
* “What are is age and gender of the child?”
* “Does the child have any special needs?”

It is also important to decide any rules regarding children and childcare. For example: no children are allowed into the group setting; if there is a problem with a child, the mother must leave the group to attend to her child outside.

 **GROUP RULES**

**Why should you set norms and rules in a group?**

**Norms and rules may be used to:**

* provide predictable group interaction
* provide stability for a group
* support the main goals of group
* establish communication based upon trust, acceptance, and respect
* act as a guide to agreed behavior, particularly if in written form.

**At the very beginning of the support group, it is important to explain that group rules are**

**necessary, and that having process guidelines in place helps to facilitate group discussions.**

It is recommended to involve group participants in the development of their support group regulations. By sharing their own opinions, suggesting ideas on how to organize the group, and creating their own rules, participants may be more motivated to follow them. More significantly, it may also be the first time in a long while that the participants have had an opportunity to say something about rules that they would, and would not, like to follow.

To begin developing these guidelines with the group. You could ask questions such as:

* “What would help you participate most fully in this group?”
* “What would make it possible to talk about your own experiences?”
* “What would prevent you from expressing yourself?”
* “What do you think fosters communication?” (E.g. “I”-statements.)
* “What do you think shuts communication down?”

Part of the work of the support group will be to work on recognizing and changing abusive patterns. Therefore, it is essential to set the ground rule that any belittling or abusive language or attitudes will not be tolerated. It may be appropriate for the participants to agree on how to appropriately challenge and prevent such behavior.

In order to demonstrate their commitment to the rules created by the support group, the facilitator can write the group rules on a flipchart or poster. Each group participant is then asked to sign the shared set of rules in agreement. The flipchart or poster should remain visible at every session in order to make it easy to refer to any of the rules.

**Basic process guidelines**

The following are recommended guidelines, although each group can come up with

additional rules.

* **Give everyone an opportunity to speak. Each person should avoid dominating the discussion (including the facilitator).**
* **Good listening is important. Actively listen to what a person is saying before speaking.**
* **Don't interrupt others.**
* **Speak from your own experience.**
* **Be honest.**
* **Value and validate others' differences and experiences. Put downs of other people will not be tolerated.**
* **Confidentiality & trust are shared responsibilities – no personal information ever leaves the support group meeting without express consent.**
* **No drugs or alcohol are allowed on the premises, nor should they be consumed immediately before attending the group.**
* **Consistent & punctual attendance is expected of everyone. Group participants need to contact the facilitator if they are unable to attend a meeting. If the participant has decided to leave the group for the time being, she should try to attend one more session, to notify the group and facilitator. If this is not possible, she should contact the facilitator to explain her reason(s).**

**Inform newcomers about group rules**

Groups that have established a calendar of sessions will probably be “closed” – i.e. participants will sign up at the beginning and will commit to attending until the end. However, some informal groups may remain open, allowing additional participants to join at any point, or at least until the support group reaches its agreed maximum size.

If a participant has missed the first introductory session, or if working in an open group, newcomers must be informed about the group rules that already exist. Newcomers should not be left to discover the group rules on their own. And a newcomer should not face sanctions just because she did not know that a group rule existed. Newcomers should also get the chance to add to the rules, or suggest modifications. Any rule change should be approved by the group.

**When group rules are violated**

Most of the time, support group participants will adhere to the agreed rules, and will be supportive and cooperative towards each other. Unfortunately, there are exceptions when, intentionally or not, a participant may break the established group rules. If this happens, the facilitator should clearly indicate as soon as the violation is noticed, and use effective

techniques to resolve it. Repeated violation of group rules are best solved with one-to-one sessions to discuss the meaning behind the behavior, and try to come to an agreement on how this can be worked through. Such situations may require the intervention of a licensed professional counselor.

 **In what kinds of situations should a participant be excluded from a group?**

Ideally, the facilitator will not be faced with a situation in which a participant has to be excluded from the group. However, in cases when an individual’s behavior is such that it prevents the group from functioning, exclusion should be considered as one option. While the need for exclusion may be rare, it may be appropriate if the excluded group participant is alleged to have done one or more of the following:

* jeopardized the safety of the group;
* disclosed personal information of group participants outside of the group setting;
* attended the group while severely under the influence of alcohol or other substances;
* repeatedly broken the group contract and/or rules;
* behaved abusively towards other participants.

You might also consider excluding someone who has participated ineffectively in the group, due to a change in her life situation. This reason is different from the others in that it does not involve breaking any of the rules. Sometimes the life situations of participants change while they are attending the group, and this may impact on their participation in, or commitment to the group.

In this situation, it is recommended that the participant be referred to the supervising licensed, professional counselor for further risk assessment. If a decision to exclude a participant from the group for any reason, it is imperative that this is done with the utmost possible care. Never talk about the exclusion in front of other group participants. It is also important to look at other support that does not involve group settings, and work out a support plan that is more appropriate for her at this point in her life.

**GROUP CONTRACT**

Some participants may be uncomfortable with the concept of signing a contract. However,

to make the group sessions safe and consistent, **some non-negotiable rules must be set.**

In order to ease the participants’ anxiety, the facilitator should explain the reasons behind signing a contract, and that it is not a legal document, but an aid to help everyone keep to the essential rules of the group The following topics are subjects that all participants must be aware of and agree to uphold at the beginning of the support group:

**a) Confidentiality**

Group participants, including the facilitator/s, are responsible for keeping the location of

the group meetings and the names, identities and other personal information of support group

participants confidential. All information shared inside the group should never be discussed outside the sessions at any time, during or after the session. Some groups even agree to use code names instead of real names of the group participants. Although others may think this could make the group work too light-hearted. It is important to note that if, for example, women see each other in public outside the group setting, they should be aware that an abusive partner or ex-partner may be present, and they need to act with caution.

**b) Legal issues related to disclosure**

Group participants should be informed of the fact that laws relating to safeguarding

children/child protection will require facilitators to inform the authorities (police, social care, child and family services, or other child care specialists) of cases where there is a serious risk of harm to the life or health of a child or other vulnerable person.

**c) Restrictions**

It must be made clear at the outset what kind of behavior is not accepted in the group; for example, groups should be free of alcohol, illegal substances and violence (verbal, psychological and physical) at all times. Some support groups may decide they are unable to offer support to women who currently have high-level support needs (for example in relation to their mental health and/or their use of alcohol or other substances), as they lack the resources to give appropriate support.

**d) Group rules**

Group participants should affirm that they are aware of the group rules and willing to follow them. Group rules in written form can also be part of the contract.

**SUPPORT GROUP DYNAMICS**

A support group run by women for women can be one of the best ways to empower survivors of domestic violence. Discussions in the group help the women to understand that domestic violence is not only an individual experience but is also a product of women’s position in society, and that it affects one in four women in their lifetime, regardless of race, ethnic or religious group, class, disability, sexuality or lifestyle. Understanding this helps the survivors to overcome their feelings of guilt, shame and loneliness as they become aware of the fact that their experience was not “their fault”.

The support group is a resource that gives the participants access to collective strength. It is an opportunity to share their own feelings, reactions, thoughts and coping skills with others.

Informal support groups can meet for varying lengths of time, from a couple of months to several years, depending on the decision of the participants.

**a) Starting phase**

In order for women to feel comfortable talking about their abuse and sharing their stories, there must be a sense of the group belonging together and of a mutual trust between participants. Therefore, it is essential that this phase allow time for informal communication to enable positive personal contact between group participants, e.g. coffee breaks, ice-breakers and name-games.

**b) The phase of active participation**

During the phase of active participation, the participants usually perceive the group as an essential, or even an indispensable, part of their lives. However, it is important for a group to assess its ‘health’ periodically. A ‘healthy’ group would mean that meetings are stimulating and constructive, participants are motivated, co-operative and interested, and misunderstandings or problems are solvable. Sometimes an evaluation needs to be done by an outsider(such as a licensed clinical counselor) because members cannot always detect unhealthy behavior, and this can help facilitators to gain a fresh outlook on the situation.

**c) Concluding phase**

It is good practice to remind the participants half way through the session calendar that the group will be coming to an end in the near future. Once the group starts approaching the end, it is important to prepare the participants by incorporating discussions on closure within the last few sessions. For the last session, the following are points to remember:

* Ask the participants what they feel they have gained from the support group experience.
* Allow time for socializing, e.g. a farewell party with music, food and drink.
* Stress the positives of closure, e.g. it is a new beginning and a chance for the women to practice what they have learned.

**d) Evaluation**

It is recommended that all participants should complete a final evaluation. This is an effective way to evaluate the support group experience and a useful way to assess how far the women have come.

It is generally not good practice for you to agree to meet up with the group again. However,

the facilitator, together with the supervising licensed, professional counselor should evaluate the situation, and some flexibility may be needed. For example, follow-up groups may be arranged, provided clear boundaries are set before the group is re-formed. Group participants are, in any case, free to meet up as friends and individuals in their own time.

Group participants may need time to get used to living and coping without the group. You should stress that the ending of the group doesn’t mean that the women are alone when facing difficulties. Setbacks can occur in anyone's life and the best thing that a woman can do for herself in such a situation is to seek help; e.g. in a women’s refuge, counseling center, or another support group. The women may also continue the friendships they have made during the group – this is a great source of informal support and makes the end smoother and more natural.

**GROUP CONTRACT FOR**

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT GROUP**

**In order to help make domestic violence support group sessions pleasant and safe for every group member, all participants of the group, including the facilitator, agree to comply with the clauses stated in this contract.**

**Confidentiality**

I agree that the location of the group meetings and the names, identities and other personal information of group participants will not be disclosed to anybody outside the group, at any time during or after the group. The only exception is when there is a serious threat to the life or health of a child; in such cases the facilitator is obliged by the law to inform the authorities (the police, child and family support services, etc.) about the child in danger.

**Restrictions**

I agree that alcohol and illegal substances should not be brought to the group at any time. Participants should not come to the group if they are under the influence of alcohol or any other mood-altering substances. No form of violence (emotional, verbal or physical) is allowed in the group under any circumstances.

**Commitment**

I agree to attend all sessions of the calendar and to be punctual for each one, unless my absence is unavoidable (e.g. due to illness). If I am unable on any occasion to arrive on time, or to attend a session, or if I decide not to finish the course, I agree to contact the facilitator to make her aware of my situation.

**Group Rules**

I agree to follow the group rules at all times.

I am aware that if I breach any of the above clauses, I may face expulsion from the group.

Participant Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Witness \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT GROUP Bill Of Rights**

I have the right to say ‘no’.

I have the right not be abused.

I have the right to express anger.

I have the right to change my life.

I have the right to freedom from fear of abuse.

I have the right to request and expect assistance from police and social care agencies.

I have the right to want a better role model of communication for my children.

I have the right to raise my children in safety.

I have the right to be treated like an adult, and with respect.

I have the right to leave the abusive environment.

I have the right to be safe.

I have the right to privacy.

I have the right to develop my individual talents and abilities.

I have the right to prosecute and get protection through the law from my abusing partner.

I have the right to earn and control my own finances.

I have the right to make my own decisions about my own life.

I have the right to change my mind.

I have the right to be believed and valued.

I have the right to make mistakes.

I have the right not to be perfect.

I have the right to love and be loved in return.

I have the right to put myself first.

I have the right to be me.

THE POWER TO CHANGE

How to set up and run support groups for

victims and survivors of domestic violence

This manual has been written and produced by the organisations participating in the Daphne project Survivors speak up for their dignity - supporting victims and survivors of domestic violence, 2007-2009.

**Project coordination**

NANE Women's Rights Association (Hungary)

**Project partners**

AMCV – Association of Women Against Violence (Portugal)

Associatione Artemisia – Centro donne contro la violenza ìCatia Franciî (Italy)

NGO Women's Shelter (Estonia)

Women's Aid Federation of England (UK)

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**Design/Layout**

Szilvia SebÙk

ISBN: 978 0 907 817 32 7

ISBN: 978-963-88116-0-8

Printed by Possum Ltd: Budapest, 2008

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NGO Women's Shelter, Women's Aid Federation of England.

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