



RHY & DV TOOLKIT

RUNAWAY & HOMELESS YOUTH AND RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE TOOLKIT

GUIDANCE AND MATERIALS FOR PRACTITIONERS

Getting Ready to Collaborate: Steps to Consider in Developing Your Plan

Collaboration is been defined as a “mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve results they are more likely to achieve together than alone.” In the case of addressing relationship violence among runaway and homeless youth, the broad scale motivation to collaborate and partner together is to provide comprehensive services that address this intersection with the common goal of increasing the overall safety and well-being of youth living in unstable housing situations.



Often, the most challenging aspect is just getting started. This tool is designed to help service providers from both fields identify keys steps for a productive outcome; note that this is not an exhaustive list, other steps may be added depending upon the unique needs of each community. It is possible that programs will determine that some of these steps are not needed. However, it is best to intentionally and creatively consider each step to determine whether it would be beneficial, if modifications may improve its applicability, or if it may be omitted.

Identify the Scope

Generally this first step emerges out of trends being seen by service providers that are not being addressed or lack comprehensive response. A meeting is convened to discuss the issue and information that has been gathered by each partner is shared to expand a mutual understanding of the issue. A [logic model](#) to address the concern might be drafted to frame the conversation.

Assess your Service Community

Identify the organizations that would share this concern or issue and develop a plan to gather the information needed to inform your work. For example, are there any groups that are already connected and looking at this issue or an aspect of the issue? What resources are currently available in your service community for youth experiencing relationship violence and how do they access them? What can you learn from the youth themselves through focused conversations and program data and reports? Are there trends emerging locally that impact this issue?

If you are unsure of the DV/SA resources in your community, review this listing of [state domestic violence and sexual assault coalitions](#) to locate the program in your community.

A similar listing of [RHY service providers](#), including basic center and transitional living programs, maternity homes, outreach programs, and other support systems for RHY should be consulted.

Identify a Point of Contact

Within each potential partner organization there should be a specific person whose role is related to the focus. Contact them to engage in an initial conversation about the concern, issue, or community strengthening opportunity. All service providers should confirm whom the primary point of contact will be at each organization to ensure continuity of dialogue, planning, and implementation.

Define the Scope of Focus

Convene a meeting to discuss the scope of the problem from the perspective of each organization and explore possible strategies that would address the concern. Provide specific data to document the scope of the problem and [research based information](#) that can assist in developing a common understanding of the scope of the issue. Be cognizant of the tendency for a group to want to “do it all” and keep the focus clear and specific.

Share Related Organizational History

Allow time for each partner to share a brief history of their organization and the specific programs and services relative to the scope of the project. This would include any previous relationships with partners at the table.

Secure Commitment to Move Forward

Gain commitment from the organizations interested in further pursuing the partnership. Make sure all understand that while there may be other related concerns, the agreed upon focus of the partnership will be primary.

Define Shared Intent

Each partner should agree to a clear, well-defined intention of the partnership. What is the purpose, outcome/results, and how will the group know if it has been realized? For example, in a referral relationship, one would expect to see increased referrals for services in which clients were engaged successfully. When [Building Partnerships](#), it is important to be clear about what each partner is seeking to achieve and how success will be defined.

Define the Process

All partners must reach consensus on how the scope will be addressed. This should be a highly detailed conversation that might include several case examples in order to ensure it has been sufficiently examined.

Define the Roles

Once the process is defined, the role of each partner can be clearly outlined and corresponding deliverables or commitments developed.

Recognize Potential Roadblocks

While there may be areas in which the partners do not reach consensus, this does not need to present as a barrier to the partnership. There may be areas where partners must “agree to disagree” but they also agree to honor and respect the others perspective and focus on [finding their common ground](#).

Understand the Service Delivery Protocols

Each partner organization will have an established set of policies and procedures in place to guide their work. Many partnerships begin to fracture in implementation when issues emerge around established protocols.

One way to avoid this is to ensure that these potential issues have been explored in the planning stage, particularly when examining case examples, and that strategies to address them fully discussed. Have an open dialogue about policies in place with respect to the focus of the partnership. Take time to learn and understand your partners’ [specific service system](#).

Document the Agreement with an MOU (Memoranda of Understanding) or LOA (Letter of Agreement)

Many collaborative relationships operate well with a non-verbal agreement, particularly when the arrangement is simple and no services or funding are exchanged. However, having a document that clearly defines the relationship is good practice overall in order to sustain the relationship when realities change, such as a change in key staff. See this [MOU tip sheet](#) and [MOU Services Template](#) to learn more about developing an MOU.

Develop a Plan for Meeting Regularly

Despite all planning and good intentions, other challenges may arise. Developing a pre-determined forum or process in which these issues can be discussed and resolved is important to the health and strength of any partnership. The schedule for regular meetings will vary based on the scope of issues and services being addressed. At a minimum, parties should meet annually to review the agreement and update the commitment. Quarterly or even monthly meetings might be considered for new or more complicated agreements.

Shared Outcomes and Recognition

With the crisis-based nature of services provided by program partners, it is all too easy to miss the benefits and results of your efforts. Agree on key benchmarks and celebrate them when reached. [Document services delivered and outcome data](#) and make sure it is shared with all partners.