

**TRAINING MANUAL: SAFETY PLANNING FOR GBV SURVIVORS IN THE DEAFBLIND COMMUNITY
FOR USE BY WOMEN'S REPRESENTATIVES – DEAFBLIND SOUTH AFRICA (DBSA)****PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL**

This training manual is designed to equip DBSA Women's Representatives with the knowledge and tools to support DeafBlind survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) in developing personalized safety plans. It provides step-by-step guidance on building trust, offering structured support, and empowering survivors to take control of their personal safety, without requiring a background in counselling or psychology.

FACILITATOR PRINCIPLES

Your role as a facilitator is to listen deeply, communicate clearly, and guide survivors with empathy and consistency. Survivors may need information delivered through spoken word, tactile sign, braille, or gestural methods. Always ensure communication is respectful, accessible, and trauma-informed.

SESSION ONE: THE CONCEPT OF SAFETY PLANNING

Begin by introducing the idea of a safety plan. Emphasize that it is not simply a means of escape but a framework for making safer decisions under threatening circumstances. A safety plan empowers the survivor by offering choices, restoring a sense of control, and preparing them for both urgent and long-term needs.

SESSION TWO: IDENTIFYING PATTERNS OF HARM

Encourage the survivor to reflect on when and how abuse typically occurs. Guide them in recognizing behavioral cues or emotional triggers that often precede violence, such as raised voices, silence, hostile language, or abrupt mood shifts. Understanding these warning signs is key to early mental and physical preparedness.

SESSION THREE: MAPPING OUT SAFE SPACES

Support the individual in identifying safe locations they can reach in an emergency. This may include a neighbor's house, a DBSA community space, a local place of worship, or a nearby health clinic. Help them mentally rehearse their exit routes from each room in their home. Ensure that mobility or communication aids are always kept accessible and ready for rapid departure.

SESSION FOUR: ASSEMBLING A SAFETY BAG

Discuss the value of having a small, discreet bag prepared with essential items. These should include identification documents, SASSA cards, prescribed medication, a mobile phone with charger, and personalized communication aids such as braille cards or tactile messages. Advise storing the bag in a concealed, yet easily accessible location or entrusting it to someone reliable.

STRENGTH IN SILENCE, VISION IN TOUCH

SESSION FIVE: ESTABLISHING EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Help the survivor select two or three trusted individuals they can contact quickly in an emergency. Where phone use is limited, consider alternative alert systems such as unique sounds, touch signals, or symbolic messages. Introduce national helplines and SMS services like 0800 428 428 or 31531, and teach them how to use these safely and discreetly.

SESSION SIX: STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION PATHWAYS

Ensure the survivor has a reliable method of seeking help that matches their communication style—be it tactile sign, braille writing, gestures, or vocalizations. Practice these methods together in simulated scenarios. Confirm they understand how to draw attention and communicate danger when under stress.

SESSION SEVEN: INCLUDING DEPENDENTS IN THE PLAN

Inquire about children, elderly family members, or pets who may be present in the home. Work with the survivor to incorporate basic instructions for dependents, such as where to go or whom to call during an emergency. Keep directions simple and age-appropriate. Encourage shared routines that prioritize collective safety.

SESSION EIGHT: EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE AND SUPPORT

Normalize feelings of fear, guilt, confusion, and grief. Healing begins with small, manageable steps. Suggest comforting items—such as familiar textures, calming words, or photos—that offer emotional grounding. Encourage survivors to regularly connect with someone trustworthy, whether a DBSA counselor or a peer supporter.

SESSION NINE: LEGAL RIGHTS AND PROTECTION ORDERS

If the survivor is interested in legal protection, offer support in accessing a protection order from the local magistrate's court. Assist with contacting legal aid or advocacy services specializing in disability and GBV. Ensure important legal and identity documents are copied and stored securely. Guide the survivor in reporting abuse to police, if they choose to do so.

SESSION TEN: REVISITING AND ADAPTING THE PLAN

Safety plans are living documents. They should be updated to reflect any changes in the survivor's relationships, living environment, or support network. Offer to review the plan monthly or at regular intervals. Encourage the survivor to practice aspects of the plan when calm, building confidence in their preparedness.



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FINAL GUIDANCE FOR FACILITATORS

Speak in a calm, steady tone. Use familiar tactile signals and always seek consent before touch. Pause frequently to allow for reflection, expression, or clarification. Reassure the survivor that their experiences are valid and that they are not alone. Your role is not to provide all answers, but to walk alongside them in safety, dignity, and solidarity.

If at any point you require additional support, materials, or advice, please contact DBSA leadership or affiliated partner organizations.