

Public Benefits 101

Lesson 1: Information for domestic violence victim advocates

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How to use this presentation

- Read and study all the slides
- Follow the links if you want to learn more
- Once you have read the entire presentation, take a quiz to test your knowledge and to complete Lesson 1 of this course
- Away you go!

Important Note

- The information contained in this presentation is intended for overview purposes only.
- Laws, rules, policies and practices related to public benefits change *often*.
 - Check with your local benefits offices or visit the main DSHS website for up-to-the-minute information.

Lesson 1: Contents

- Introduction
- How economics affect survivors
- A brief history of welfare
- Washington's public benefits system
- Review of benefits programs
- Strategies for advocates
- Resources

Introduction

- As a DV advocate, you probably already know that public benefits can be a crucial economic safety net for survivors.
 - And, you may wish you knew more about public benefits – how they work and how survivors can access them...

Introduction

- You probably also know that accessing public benefits can sometimes be tricky for survivors (for a lot of reasons).
 - And, you may wish you had a better understanding of some of the safety issues that domestic violence survivors encounter (both personal and institutional) when accessing public benefits...

Introduction

- Finally, you are certainly aware that as an advocate, you can be a big help to survivors by advocating with them and on their behalf as they access various public benefits programs.
 - And, you may wish you had a few more tools in your advocacy tool-box...

Introduction

- If any of these statements ring true for you, then this is the right course for you!
- In this lesson, we'll review:
 - A variety of public benefits programs,
 - Issues that impact DV survivors, and
 - Strategies for advocating within the public benefits system.
- Okay, let's get started!

What's money got to do with it?

The link between battered women
and public benefits

What's money got to do with it?

- Having money and resources gives people more options.
- For middle and upper class women who experience domestic violence, having access to money and other resources can provide more options when the batterer attempts to maintain or regain control. For example, they can hire their own attorney, or move to another home.

What's money got to do with it?

- Many research studies show that economic factors are among the top reasons battered women stay with or return to violent perpetrators.
- Findings from the Washington Fatality Review Project indicate that economic instability is a significant barrier to victim autonomy and self-determination.

Go to www.wscadv.org for more information about the Fatality Review Project.

What's money got to do with it?

- Since having access to money contributes to safety and stability, it makes sense that survivors seek public benefits when they are trying to secure safety for themselves and their children.
- Let's take a brief look at the history of welfare in the United States to better understand the politics of today's system.

A brief history of welfare

- Before the 1930s there was no federal system that administered public benefits. Those who needed help turned to their communities and the aid that may (or may not) be available from local churches and civic groups.
- But during the Great Depression, local and state governments as well as private charities were overwhelmed by needy families seeking food, clothing, and shelter.

A brief history of welfare

- To help pull the country out of the Great Depression, President Franklin Roosevelt implemented the New Deal.
- In 1935, welfare for poor children and other dependent persons became a federal government responsibility, which it remained for 60 years.

A brief history of welfare

- These new aid programs were available to those who needed them, with little to no strings attached.
 - Basically, if you were poor, you could get some money. If you were elderly or disabled, there was support available.

A brief history of welfare

- A federal welfare system was a radical break from the past. Americans had always prided themselves on having a strong sense of individualism and self-reliance. Many believed that those who couldn't take care of themselves were to blame for their own misfortunes.

A brief history of welfare

- From its inception, the system drew critics. Some complained that the system did not do enough to get people to work while others simply believed the federal government should not administer a welfare system. Criticism grew, especially in the 1980s and '90s.
- For instance, President Ronald Reagan perpetuated the myth of the “welfare queen” who wears her diamonds and drives her Cadillac to the welfare office to pick up her check.

A brief history of welfare

- In 1992, candidate Bill Clinton, a Democrat, ran for president promising to "end welfare as we know it." In 1996, a Republican Congress passed and President Clinton signed a reform law that gave control of welfare to the states, thus ending 61 years of federal responsibility. Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) was replaced with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

A brief history of welfare

- Unlike the previous entitlement program, TANF is a “welfare to work” program, meaning that you have to participate in work related activities in order to get assistance.
- TANF was created to move people off public assistance, not necessarily to end poverty.

A brief history of welfare

- While government programs like Social Security and Medicare are attacked for encouraging big government, no benefit programs have inspired attacks on the *people* who use them more than TANF.
- The majority of TANF recipients are women and children.
- It is important to examine the context in which these criticisms occur: a climate in which women and children can be oppressed by their intimate partners and society's institutions and culture.

From the history to the practical...

- So, now we know how welfare as we know it came about...
- What about where the money comes from and how it is distributed?

Where the money comes from

- Many public benefits programs are funded in whole or in part from federal funding sources. Some of these funds are:
 - block grants to the states and territories (like TANF and Medicaid).
 - competitive grants or specialized funding streams to specific providers (like Marriage Promotion and Responsible Fatherhood funds).

Where the money comes from

- Our state combines federal money with state money to fund programs, many of which are administered by state agencies.
- The Economic Services Administration within the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) administers most of our state's public benefits programs like TANF, Food Stamps, and Child Support.

Where the money comes from

- Just to orient you...DSHS is a giant institution in Washington, and Economic Services Administration is only one part of that.
- Survivors deal with various departments of DSHS in many parts of their lives.
- DSHS does not only oversee welfare but also manages: foster care, child protective services, juvenile justice, alcohol and drug treatment, and healthcare to name a few.

The Public Benefits System in WA

- Some local governments (counties or cities) develop their own public benefit programs using a combination of local, state and federal funds. Programs like Community Voicemail, rental assistance, and utility assistance are often funded this way.
- Check with your local Community Action Program (CAP)* for more information about local public benefits.
- *to find a CAP near you, check out:
<http://www.communityactionpartnership.com/index.php>

The Public Benefits System in WA

- Elements that all benefits programs have in common:
 - Application process
 - Eligibility and verification requirements
 - Rules about when, where, how long, and how often a person can receive the benefit
 - Other things a person is required to do in order to receive the benefit
 - Practices related to handling client information

The Public Benefits System in WA

- The process of getting benefits can range from arduous and scary to easy and quick.
- Different survivors accessing the same benefits will have varied experiences, comfort levels, and outcomes.
- It is your job to help survivors navigate the system.

The Public Benefits System in WA

- To put it mildly, the structure of the public benefits system is complex:
 - There are *so many* different programs
 - Each with their own eligibility rules
 - Each with their own program requirements
 - Funded by different pots of money
 - Administered by different kinds of agencies
- We know it's a lot for an advocate to keep up with! But hang in there, you'll learn more in this lesson!

Review of various benefits programs

- Now that you understand a little bit more about the structure of the public benefits system, we're ready to look at specific benefits programs in more detail.

Review of various benefits programs

- Note: There are *so many* benefits programs available in our state, and we could spend the rest of the year reviewing them.
- But, we know that your time is precious, and that you have a long line of actual survivors to help, so we're only going to focus on the most commonly used programs.
 - Remember, you can learn more about other programs online or by contacting us directly.

Review of various benefits programs

- For each program, we'll answer:
 - **What** benefit is offered by the program?
 - **Where** can you access the benefit?
 - **Who** may receive the benefit?
 - Are there **special issues** that DV advocates should be aware of related to this benefit?

Review of various benefits programs

- Now, let's zoom in and take a closer look at some key benefits programs, organized by the type of assistance provided:
 - Cash
 - Food and Nutrition
 - Healthcare
 - Utilities
 - Other Supports
 - Access to Services

Cash Assistance Programs

- In this section, we'll review the following cash assistance programs:
 - TANF
 - DCA
 - Disability Lifeline
 - RCA
 - SFA
 - CEAP
 - SSI
 - SSDI
 - Child Support
 - Other

TANF: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

- **What:** What most folks think of as welfare. Recipients can get:
 - Cash
 - Medical
 - Food stamps
 - Childcare (for participating in work related activities or job)
 - Help collecting child support

TANF: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

- **Where:** local CSO (Community Service Office aka the welfare office)
- **Who:** State residents who are responsible for the care of children or who are pregnant. To be eligible for TANF your family must have resources of \$1,000 or less.
- **Special Issues:** Main points to know about TANF
 - It is supposed to be temporary
 - There is a five-year limit (with some exceptions)
 - It is a “welfare to work” program, meaning that you have to “participate” in order to get assistance
 - It is tied to having a child support case

TANF: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

- **Special issues:**
- Family Violence Option (FVO)
- Adopted in 1997 by Washington, this amendment to TANF recognizes the need for additional support for survivors of domestic violence.
 - States have to:
 - screen and identify DV victims,
 - refer to services,
 - and can WAIVE any program requirement that puts DV victims at further risk or penalizes them for the abuse they have experienced

*** look for advocacy tips about the FVO near the end of this lesson*

TANF: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

- Some offices around the state have co-located DV advocates.
- This means that an advocate is employed by a local DV agency but is stationed at the welfare office (CSO) to support victims and survivors accessing TANF.
- To find out if your CSO has an advocate you can contact your local office. To find your nearest office, go to:
<https://fortress.wa.gov/dshs/f2ws03esaapps/onlinecso/findservice.asp>
- You can also contact Traci at traci@wscadv.org for more information.

TANF: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

- **Special issues:** Child Support and TANF...
- What does getting TANF or state medical assistance have to do with child support?
 - Many people who apply for TANF or state medical assistance do not understand that getting these services comes with strings attached. For DSHS, one big string is that everyone who receives TANF or medical assistance automatically gets a child support case opened and has to help DSHS identify the father and collect support.
 - DV Victims who have safety concerns about collecting child support have the option to claim “good cause,” which means they can still get TANF but DSHS may not or will not pursue child support.

TANF: Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

- Collecting child support is a huge issue for survivors on TANF. As advocates we MUST pay attention to this.
- For more info on child support and benefits go to:
www.getmoneygetsafe.org/childSupport.cfm
- Or, take the child support distance learning course!

DCA: Diversion Cash Assistance

- **What:** DCA provides up to \$1000* to families who are experiencing a short-term financial crisis but want to avoid TANF.
 - This \$\$ can help pay for child care, housing, transportation, expenses to get or keep a job, food and can entitle family to one year of Medicaid.

*within a 30-day period, once per 12-month period.

DCA: Diversion Cash Assistance

- **Where:** local CSO
- **Who:** Families must meet TANF eligibility requirements, must provide proof of their financial need, and must demonstrate that they will have income from other sources in the near future.

DCA: Diversion Cash Assistance

- **Special Issues: Warning!** If a family enrolls in TANF within 12 months of receiving a Diversion Cash Assistance grant, the family will have to pay back the money they got from DCA (it will be subtracted from their TANF grant until paid off).
 - Advocacy Tip: talk with folks about the likelihood of them needing assistance again so that they are not stuck having to pay back DCA later (which will decrease their TANF grant).

SFA: State Family Assistance

- **What:** Cash benefits, based on family size and income.
- **Where:** local CSO
- **Who:** For those not eligible for TANF such as:
 - Pregnant women with welfare fraud or drug convictions.
 - Certain “qualified aliens.”
 - Certain 19 and 20-year-old students that meet education requirements.
- Time limit of 60 months.

RCA: Refugee Cash Assistance

- **What:** Provides cash and medical assistance at the same standards as TANF (based on family size and income).
- **Where:** local CSO
- **Who:** For refugees or asylees who have resided in the US for less than eight months.
 - Must meet several requirements including providing the name of the voluntary agency who helped bring them to this country.

CEAP: Consolidated Emergency Assistance Program

- **What:** Cash to meet the following basic needs: food, shelter, clothing, minor medical care, utilities, household maintenance supplies, necessary clothing or transportation costs to get or keep a job.
- **Where:** local CSO
- **Who:** For pregnant women or families with dependent children, including those who have stopped receiving TANF grant in the last six months.
 - Must demonstrate financial need and not be eligible for TANF, SFA, RCA, or DCA.
 - Citizenship is *not* a factor in eligibility.

DL-U: Disability Lifeline- Unemployable *(formerly GA-U)*

- **What:** Provides medical benefits for people who are physically and/or mentally unable to work for 90 days from the date of application.
- **Where:** local CSO
- **Who:** Must be unable to work (incapacitated) and agree to have their needs for medical treatment assessed.
 - Must meet income and resource requirements.

DL-U: Disability Lifeline- Unemployable

- **Update!**
- DL-U used to provide cash assistance as well as medical.
- As of July 1, 2011, the Disability Lifeline-Unemployable cash program has been eliminated.
- Those who once qualified for DL-U may still be eligible for medical benefits.

SSI: Supplemental Security Income

- **What:** Monthly cash benefit for adults 65+ or who have a disability. Children with disabilities or who are blind can also qualify.
- **Where:** local CSO
- **Who:** A person has a qualifying disability if they are unable to “engage in any substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairments which can be expected to result in death or last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months.”
 - Must give information about income, resources, and expenses.

SSI: Supplemental Security Income

- **Special Issues:**
- Most people are denied SSI the first (and maybe even second) time they apply.
- Let the folks you work with know this, so they do not get discouraged.
- They should reapply for SSI, and apply for GAU in the meantime.

SSDI: Social Security Disability Insurance

- **What:** Monthly cash benefits paid to those unable to work for a year or more because of a disability.
- Benefits continue until recipient is able to work again, and includes “work incentives” that provide cash and medical care to help the transition back to work.
- **Where:** local CSO
- **Who:** For those who have worked the required number of previous quarters in jobs covered by Social Security, and have a medical condition that qualifies as a disability according to Social Security.

Child Support

- **What:** The Division of Child Support (DCS) helps families by:
 - establishing child support obligations
 - collecting and processing child support payments,
 - and reviewing and modifying child support obligations.
- **Where:** local CSO or local Child Support Office
- **Who:** This service is free for those currently or ever enrolled on TANF, and \$25/year for everyone else.

Child Support

- **Special Issues:**
- For critical safety information for survivors about child support:

<http://www.getmoneygetsafe.org>

- For the DSHS site that gives similar information:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/dcs/services/domesticviolence.asp>

Food and Nutrition Programs

- In this section, we'll review the following food and nutrition programs
 - Basic Food
 - Transitional Food Assistance
 - State Food Assistance
 - Senior Nutrition Program
 - Women, Infants, and Children

For more information about these programs as well as nutrition information and food banks, visit <http://foodhelp.wa.gov/index.htm>

Basic Food (Food Stamps)

- **What:** Use food stamps to purchase food, as well as seeds and plants to grow food.
- **Where:** local CSO
- **Who:** For WA residents who meet federal income and resource requirements.
- Must participate in the food stamp employment and training program.

TFA: Transitional Food Assistance

- **What:** Provides food benefits to families leaving the TANF or tribal TANF programs for up to five months after they stop receiving TANF cash benefits.
- **Where:** local CSO
- **Who:** For those leaving TANF who were
 - Receiving Basic Food at the time they were determined no longer eligible for TANF, and
 - Are remaining in Washington, and
 - Were not in sanction when TANF benefits ended, and
 - Are still eligible for basic food.

SFA: State Food Assistance

- **What:** Use food stamps to purchase food, as well as seeds and plants to grow food.
- **Where:** local CSO
- **Who:** For WA residents who meet certain income and resource requirements, but may not qualify for the federal program.
 - For example, non-citizens who are in the process of obtaining a Visa or other legal status.

SFA: State Food Assistance

- **Update!**
- As of July 1, 2011, SFA benefit amounts have been cut by 50%. Yikes!
- Prior to these cuts, SFA benefit amounts were identical to Basic Food (Food Stamps) benefit amounts.
- Most survivors probably don't know if they are on Basic Food or SFA, but will certainly notice once their benefit amount gets cut in half and may need help figuring out how to make up for that loss.

Senior Nutrition Program

- **What:** This program has three divisions of food benefits:
- **Congregate Nutrition Services:**
 - Provides meals, nutrition outreach and education in a group setting.
- **Home Delivered Nutrition Service:**
 - Delivers nutritious meals to homebound seniors unable to prepare meals.
- **Farmers Market Nutrition Program:**
 - Offers \$40 worth of \$2 checks redeemable at local farmers markets.

Senior Nutrition Program

- **Where:** Call the local Senior Information and Assistance program for the local programs. Call 1-800-422-3263 and ask for Senior Information and Assistance office in your area or link to ADSA state map
<http://www.adsa.dshs.wa.gov/Resources/clickmap.htm>
- **Who:** People age 60+ who are unable to prepare meals for themselves because of limited physical mobility.

Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

- **What:** Provides monthly food vouchers, (vouchers redeemable at grocery stores and local farmers markets), health screening, health education, and breastfeeding support.
- **Where:** Call Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies to find the nearest WIC clinic:
 - 1-800-322-2588
- **Who:** For pregnant women and mothers with children under age 5 who meet income requirements and have a medical or nutritional need.

Healthcare

- In this section, we'll review the following healthcare programs
 - Basic Health
 - Children's Health Insurance Program
 - Medicaid
 - First Steps

Basic Health

- **What:** A health insurance plan that provides doctor and hospital care, including preventative care, emergency services, and prescription drugs.
- **Where:** Basic Health currently has an enrollment freeze through fiscal year 2013. No new applications will be accepted.

Basic Health

- **Who:** For WA residents who do not qualify for Medicaid, are not institutionalized at time of enrollment, and are not a full-time student or on a student Visa.
- Monthly premiums based on income, family size and choice of health plan.
- **Special Issues:** Remember that this is a great resource for single women and men without kids!
- There is often a waiting list for basic health and sometimes the lists close. Go to the Basic Health website to find out more.

CHIP: Children's Health Insurance Program

- **What:** Provides free or low cost health insurance for children whose families have low incomes.
- **Where:** local CSO
- **Who:** Both citizen and non citizen children, regardless of legal status, are eligible.
- To be eligible for CHIP, a child cannot be covered by Medicaid, cannot be covered by other insurance, and the family must pay monthly premiums to DSHS (which can be as low as \$0 depending on income).

To find out what medical program a child is eligible for, go to Washington Apple Health for Kids at <http://hrsa.dshs.wa.gov/applehealth/index.shtml>

Medicaid

- **What:** Federal program that funds free medical care for those who are eligible.
- Healthy Options is the name of Washington's Medicaid Managed Care program.
- All those who enroll in Medicaid must enroll in Healthy Options.
- There are 2 categories for Medicaid-Categorically Needy (CN) and Medically Needy (MN).
- **Where:** local CSO

Medicaid

- **Who:** Those with the most limited income and resources are considered for Categorically Needy (CN) Medicaid.
- Those whose income is more than the qualifying level for CN Medicaid, but still below Medically Needy Income Level and have a medical need are considered for Medically Needy (MN) Medicaid.
- With MN Medicaid, often those who apply must fulfill a “spend down”- like a deductible- before their Medicaid coverage kicks in.

Pregnancy Medical & First Steps

- **What:** Provides medical and support services for pregnant women, such as home visits by a public health nurse, dietician services and counseling.
- **Where:** Referred by a financial worker at local CSO. If not referred, you can call 1-800-322-2588 to get connected to the program.
- **Who:** For pregnant women who meet income requirements. There are no resource limits.
- Once eligible for this program, women can remain throughout their pregnancy regardless of changes in income or household size.

Utilities

- In this section we'll review the following utility programs
 - Washington Telephone Assistance Program
 - Community Voicemail Program
 - Weatherization Assistance Program

WTAP: Washington Telephone Assistance Program

- **What:** Provides free basic installation, a waiver of deposit, and a low monthly rate. (current cap is at \$8/month)
- **Where:** through local phone company or call WTAP at 1-888-700-8880
- **Who:** For adults receiving financial or medical assistance from DSHS

CVMP: Community Voicemail Program

- **What:** Provides a personal voicemail number. Callers cannot tell the difference between CVM and a home answering machine or voicemail service.
- Participants can check their messages from any phone by dialing their voicemail phone number and entering a security code.
- **Where:** CVM is available across the state. For information about the CVM program in your area, check out: <http://www.cvm.org>
- **Who:** For anyone who needs it.

Weatherization Assistance Program

- **What:** Provides weatherization (energy efficiency measures) for your home, including ceiling, wall, and floor insulation, closing heat escaping gaps, and heating system improvements.
- **Where:** For a listing of local weatherization agencies:
http://cted.wa.gov/portal/alias_cted/lang_en/tabID_501/DesktopDefault.aspx
- **Who:** For low income state residents. Household income must be at or below 125% of the federal poverty level.

Other supports

- In this section, we'll review the following programs
 - Working Connections Childcare
 - Alcohol and Chemical Dependency Treatment and Support
 - Unemployment Insurance
 - WorkSource

WCCC: Working Connections Childcare

- **What:** Helps families pay for childcare at licensed or certified child care centers, family child care homes, or relatives who provide care in their home or your home.
- **Where:** local CSO
- **Who:** For families whose parents are working or participating in DSHS approved work activity and whose children meet citizenship requirements.
- Childcare costs are determined on a sliding scale.

WCCC: Working Connections Childcare

- **Update!**
- As of July 1, 2011, *new* WCCC enrollment will be restricted to those who qualify for TANF.
- At some point before December 31, 2011, those enrolled in WCCC will be required to cooperate with Child Support.
- For more information about this, please contact Traci at traci@wscadv.org

WCCC: Working Connections Childcare

- **Special Issues:** Typically the CSO will not grant childcare support for two parent families since presumably, the non-working parent can care for the child while the other parent is participating in WCCC sanctioned activities. We know that this is not always the case for DV victims who either cannot rely on their abusive partner for dependable daycare or who are nervous to leave their child in the care of that person. There are exceptions to this practice and advocates can and should help survivors access WCCC when they otherwise qualify.
- If you need help advocating on behalf of a survivor, contact Traci at traci@wscadv.org

ADATSA: Alcohol and Drug Addiction Treatment and Support Act

- **What:** A variety of supports including: cash assistance, alcohol/drug treatment and support, shelter services, or medical care.
- **Where:** local CSO
- **Who:** Must be 18+, Washington resident, meet citizenship requirements, provide SSN, and meet same income/resource criteria as GA-U or SSI or TANF

Unemployment Insurance

- **What:** Temporary cash benefits
- **Where:** Apply online at <http://www.esd.wa.gov/uibenefits/index.php> or by phone (get region-specific numbers off website)
- **Who:** If you have been laid off or lost your job through no fault of your own, you may qualify for unemployment insurance benefits. Individuals who leave their job due to domestic violence are eligible for benefits.

Unemployment Insurance

- **Special Issues:** Some domestic violence victims may have a difficult time “proving” they left their job due to domestic violence. If a survivor gets denied and would like to appeal, they can contact the Unemployment Law Project at 206.441.9178 or 1.888.441.9178.

WorkSource

- **What:** Job search assistance, referrals, resume, skill building. Job Seeker services include use of career resources such as copiers, phones and faxes, internet access to jobs, job referral and placement, classes on how to get and keep a job, referrals to training and other community services, Unemployment Insurance access, and translation services.
- **Where:** local WorkSource office
<https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/worksource/StaticContent.aspx?Context=WSDirectorySeeker>
- **Who:** anyone who needs it.

Access to Services

- In this section, we'll review the following programs
 - Limited English Proficiency Services
 - Equal Access (formerly Necessary Supplemental Accommodation Services)

LEP: Limited English Proficiency Services

- **What:** Provides verbal interpreter services in person and/or over the phone and translation of department forms, letters and other printed materials
- **Where:** local CSO
- **Who:** For anyone who is limited in their ability to read, write and/or speak English.

Equal Access

- **What:** Provides services to accommodate those who have disabilities that prevent them from accessing benefits in the same way as an unimpaired person would.
- **Where:** local CSO
- **Who:** For anyone who has or says they have a mental, physical or cognitive impairment.

Advocacy Strategies

Phew, that is a lot of information...Here are some strategies to help you stay grounded and do the best you can with what you know.

The advocate's job

- Advocates can be a vital source of information
- Advocates can help battered women through the complex personal and financial factors impacting the well-being of herself and her children.
- Accompanying a survivor to the CSO or other appointment is not only empowering but well in line with your job as an advocate. Feel prepared to help by using the following strategies.

Do your Homework

- Learn the written rules of the welfare system and where you can reference them.
- Pay attention to the ways things get done in your local CSO.
- Inquire about who is in charge of making decisions (like good cause).
- Understand the chain of command in your local CSO. Both what it looks like on paper, and the office culture that affects it.

Build Relationships

- Introduce yourself to case workers and social workers at your local CSO.
- Take advantage of teachable moments to educate workers about DV.
- Post your agency's contact information at the CSO and hand out stacks of your business cards or safety plan cards to CSO workers.
- Get invited to meetings that matter: case staffings, task forces, staff meetings, etc...

Remember the core principles of advocacy

- Never forget that safety, empowerment, and self determination are the driving principles of your work.
- Offer to accompany survivors to their CSO appointments.
- Talk with survivors about the role they would like you to play when accompanying them.
- Model good advocacy practices when interacting with CSO staff and survivors together. For example, redirect conversations *about* a survivor to *include* her when she is present.

Be vocal

- Quote directly from policies to support your argument.
- Ask about potential consequences (good and bad) for decisions that a survivor is concerned about.
- Ask if there are any other options. (It's good to do your homework first so you know what to suggest).
- Talk to survivors about seeking an Exception to Rule.*
- Talk to survivors about asking for a Fair Hearing.*

*more on Exception to Rule and Fair Hearings near the end of this lesson.

Seek support

You can't change the world all by yourself!

- Talk to others at your agency about how building a relationship with your local CSO is important to survivors.
- Identify allies at your local CSO.
- For advocates contracted with CSOs, get back up from your supervisor.
- Get to know others in your community who are working to make welfare better.

Specific Advocacy Strategies

- In this section we will talk about specific advocacy tips and techniques involving:
 - The Family Violence Option (FVO)
 - Good Cause for not collecting Child Support
 - Fair Hearings
 - Exception to Rule

The Family Violence Option (FVO)

By adopting the FVO, states must:

- Screen and identify DV victims
 - This means that everyone accessing TANF must be asked a series of screening questions that identify those who may be experiencing DV.
 - Note, that screening practices vary from CSO to CSO. If you hear from survivors that they are not being screened at your local office, follow up with your allies there and feel free to contact us at the Coalition.

The Family Violence Option (FVO)

By adopting the FVO, states must:

- Refer to services
 - This means that once they ask the screening questions and identify someone who discloses abuse, they must offer that person resources and refer them to local services.
 - Ask survivors you work with if they are finding out about your services from you local CSO. If many survivors say they have never gotten DV services information from their CSO, take this opportunity to introduce yourself at the CSO and distribute your agency's brochures and other info to workers.

The Family Violence Option (FVO)

By adopting the FVO, states must:

- WAIVE any program requirement that puts DV victims at further risk or penalizes them for the abuse they have experienced
 - This means that CSOs can literally make an exception to ANY program requirement that increases the danger in their lives or penalizes them.
 - For example, the 5 year time limit can be waived for those survivors who need more time on TANF, cooperation with child support can be waived if doing so would anger her abuser or reveal her location, or job search at a particular location can be waived if it is in her abuser's neighborhood or on his bus route.

Fair Hearings

- Survivors can request a fair hearing when they are dissatisfied with DSHS's decision related to their case.
- They have the right to be represented or to represent themselves at their hearings. This is an administrative DSHS process that you do not need an attorney for. Either the survivor or her representative (meaning you!) may request a hearing.
- The request must be made within 90 days of the date of the decision.
- The request should include the decision being appealed and why the client is dissatisfied with the decision. Request can be mailed to the Office of Administrative Hearings, PO Box 2465, Olympia, WA 98504-2465.

Exception to Rule

- DSHS staff can request an exception to a rule for individual cases when:
 - the exception would not contradict a specific provision of federal law or state statute,
 - the client's situation differs from the majority,
 - it is in the interest of overall economy and the client's welfare,
 - it increases opportunities for the client to function effectively,
 - or a client has an impairment or limitation that significantly interferes with the usual procedures required to determine eligibility and payment.

Exception to Rule

- There are few circumstances where a survivor wouldn't meet the above guidelines according to the Family Violence Option.
- The biggest hurdle to getting an exception to rule is getting a worker to request one — this is where your excellent advocacy skills come in!

Advocacy Strategies: Things to remember

- The most important things an advocate can do to help a survivor navigate through the public benefits system are:
 - Know the basic rules about how the system works so you can explain it to any survivor
 - Inform survivors specifically about the most critical safety considerations
 - Have “friends” (allies) on the inside of the system who you can count on to assist a survivor in a helpful way
 - Facilitate a strong connection between the survivor and your allies so that as circumstances evolve, the survivor can continue to get accurate and useful information to make fully informed decisions

And, to help you remember...

- Phew – if you think you won't remember all these details, you're right!
- So, click [here](#) to download a handy public benefits chart that has even more detail than this presentation along with some helpful definitions and website links to further your knowledge.
- Or you can find it at www.getmoneygetsafe.org in the Get Money/Public Benefits section.

Congratulations!

- You've completed this portion of the course, now it's time to see how much you can remember.
- Click the link below to test yourself and to signal to us that you have completed this section so we can record your credit.
- No worries – we're not grading the quiz!
- [Take the quiz](#)