

SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE CHAIR

Judy Castelee
*Project Horizon,
Lexington*

COMMITTEE VICE-CHAIR

Elvira De la Cruz
*LIVE,
Richmond*

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Timika Cousins
*The Faces Behind a
Purpose for You,
Richmond*

Cori Davis
*DSS,
Bedford County*

Shel Douglas
*DSS,
Fauquier County*

Leonard Hall, Jr
*Millstone International
Logistics,
Floyd County*

Leah Kipley
*National Safe Haven
Alliance*

Tamy Mann
*Victim Witness,
Giles County*

Teresa McKensie
*Victim Witness,
Radford City & Floyd
County*

Heather Sellers
*Victim Witness,
Bedford County*

Shelley Strain
*ESCADV,
Eastern Shore*

Nonvoting Members

Angela Blount, VSDVAA
Markella Maschas, VDSS
Kristina Vadas, DCJS

DCJS Professional Standards Team

Amber Stanwix
Andrea Sutton

**Sexual and Domestic Violence Program
Professional Standards Committee Meeting
May 8, 2024 • 10:00a.m. – 1:00p.m.
Tuckahoe Branch – Henrico Public Library**

- **Welcome & Introductions** (10 minutes)
 - *Committee Chairperson*
- **Election of Committee Chair and Vice-Chair** (5 minutes)
- **Approval of February 14, 2024 Minutes** (5 minutes)
- **Review of Agencies for Accreditation** (45 minutes)
 - *Amber Stanwix and Andrea Sutton*
- **Break** (10 minutes)
- **Review of Legislative Changes to Virtual Meetings** (10 minutes)
 - *Amber Stanwix*
- **Review of Revocation Language** (15 minutes)
 - *Amber Stanwix and Andrea Sutton*
- **Final Approval of Professional Standards Manual** (10 minutes)
 - *Amber Stanwix and Andrea Sutton*
- **Review of Guidelines for Processes and Procedures** (30 minutes)
 - *Amber Stanwix and Andrea Sutton*
- **Selection of Next Meeting Date** (5 minutes)
- **Public Comment** (5 minutes)
- **Closing Remarks** (5 minutes)
 - *Committee Chairperson*

Professional Standards Manual for Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Programs

May 2024



DCJS

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

Authors

Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Committee

Judy Castelee, *Executive Director, Project Horizon, Inc.*

Cori Davis, *Program Director, Bedford Domestic Violence Services*

Elvira G. De la Cruz, *Chief Executive Officer, Latinos in Virginia Empowerment Center*

Shel Douglas, LCSW, *Director, Fauquier County Social Services*

Leonard Hall, Jr., *Director, Millstone International Logistics*

Tamy Mann, *Director, Giles County Victim/Witness Assistance Program*

Teresa D. McKensie, *Assistant Director, Radford City/Floyd County Victim/Witness Assistance Program*

Jennifer Quitiquit, *Director, Chesterfield County Victim/Witness Assistance Program*

Heather Sellers, *Director, Bedford County Victim/Witness Assistance Program*

Shelley Strain, *Executive Director, Eastern Shore Coalition Against Domestic Violence*

Ellen Wheeler, *Assistant Director, Project Horizon, Inc.*

Non-Voting Committee Members

Angela Blount, *Associate Director, Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance*

Nancy Fowler, *Program Manager, Office of Family Violence, Virginia Department of Social Services*

Kristina Vadas, *Manager, Victims Services, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services*

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services Staff

Amber Stanwix, *Professional Standards Operations Coordinator*

Andrea Sutton, *Professional Standards Compliance Coordinator*

Table of Contents

OVERVIEW	5
Introduction	6
Professional Standards Committee History	6
Value Statement	7
Accreditation Statuses	7
Revocation of Accreditation Status	8
Resources	8
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS	10
Administration	11
Crisis Intervention	16
Advocacy	17
Engagement	19
Training Matrix	20
Glossary	23

OVERVIEW

Introduction

Welcome to the Professional Standards for Virginia’s sexual and domestic violence agencies. This publication provides standards to help agencies improve the quality and consistency of their response to survivors of sexual and domestic violence.

In addition to the minimum requirements outlined in this Manual, agencies must comply with any other state and federal regulations applying to their programs and services. Furthermore, the Professional Standards accreditation process is not equivalent to, nor in place of, the grant monitoring process.

This Manual includes the Professional Standards and multiple resources. You are encouraged to access these resources as you develop, deliver, and evolve best practices and trauma-informed care for the survivors and the communities you serve. The Manual also includes a Glossary. Please note that there is an asterisk beside words included in the Glossary when such words are first used in the Professional Standards. Finally, please be aware that the definitions in the Glossary are only for the purposes of the Professional Standards.

Professional Standards Committee History

In 2015, legislation was enacted creating the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Committee (the “Committee”). The purpose of the Committee is to establish voluntary accreditation standards and measures by which local sexual and domestic violence programs can be systematically evaluated with a peer-reviewed process. In addition, the Committee is responsible for reviewing and voting on accreditation status recommendations for applicant programs, establishing a subcommittee as needed to address appeals from applicant programs, and periodically evaluating and revising the accreditation standards and measures.

Under *Code of Virginia* § [9.1-116.3](#), the Committee is required to consist of:

- One nonvoting member from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (“DCJS”)
- One nonvoting member from the Virginia Department of Social Services
- One nonvoting member from the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance
- Twelve non-legislative citizen members appointed by the Governor, who must be leadership staff of local sexual and domestic violence programs

The appointment of members must also take into consideration racial and ethnic diversity and must be representative of regional and geographic locations of the Commonwealth.

The Committee receives assistance from the DCJS Professional Standards Team (the “Team”), which is made up of the Professional Standards Operations Coordinator (the “Operations Coordinator”) and the Professional Standards Compliance Coordinator (the “Compliance Coordinator”). Under *Code of Virginia* § 9.1-116.3, the Team is responsible for establishing

accreditation procedures by which local sexual and domestic violence programs can be systematically evaluated with a peer-reviewed process, assisting local programs in obtaining or retaining accreditation, reviewing and evaluating applications for accreditation, and determining accreditation status recommendations for applicant programs and presenting such recommendations to the Committee.

The Team has the authority to determine the eligibility of agencies applying for accreditation and to interpret the Professional Standards.

Value Statement

The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Committee commits to a respectful, thoughtful, and transparent process to establish best practice standards for sexual and domestic violence programs. The Committee is mindful that these standards are survivor-centered, inclusive, and empowering for both agencies and those impacted by sexual and domestic violence.

Accreditation Statuses

There are three possible status determinations for Professional Standards accreditation applicants:

Fully Accredited

The Committee will determine a status of Fully Accredited for an agency having demonstrated through the review process that the agency meets 100% of the Professional Standards.

Provisionally Accredited

Agencies that do not meet 100% of the Professional Standards may be Provisionally Accredited. To be considered provisionally accredited, applicant agencies must, at a minimum, demonstrate that they provide 24-hour crisis intervention services to all victims of sexual and/or domestic violence in their communities, and that these services are confidential and free of charge. These services must include a hotline, provisions for emergency housing, and emergency accompaniment for victims of sexual and/or domestic violence.

Provisionally accredited agencies will have up to 30 days to submit a Plan of Action and then up to 90 days to document that the Plan of Action has been followed and that the Professional Standards are being met. The Committee may then decide to grant full accreditation status or will deny the application.

Denied

The Committee will deny accreditation status to any agency that does not, at a minimum, demonstrate that it provides 24-hour crisis intervention services to all victims of sexual and/or domestic violence in their communities, and that these services are confidential and free of charge. Crisis intervention services must include a hotline, provisions for emergency housing, and emergency accompaniment for victims of sexual and/or domestic violence.

Additionally, the Committee will deny accreditation to any provisionally accredited agency that does not submit a Plan of Action within 30 days of receiving the provisional accreditation status or does not meet the requirements of the Professional Standards within 90 days from the submission of the Plan of Action.

Revocation of Accreditation Status

The Committee shall have the authority to revoke an agency's full accreditation status for disregarding applicable standards or committing serious violations of rules and regulations. This action will only be taken in extreme cases and as a last resort.

If the Team is notified of any potential violations, the agency as well as the agency's board of directors, if applicable, will be contacted to discuss the violation and how the agency has addressed it or will address it. If such response is deemed inadequate, the Team will formally notify the agency that a recommendation for revocation will be offered to the Committee. The Team will then present the alleged violations to the Committee at the next meeting. Agency representatives shall be given an opportunity to appear before the Committee to dispute the allegations. The Committee will then vote on whether the full accreditation status will be revoked.

If an agency's full accreditation status is revoked by the Committee, the agency must wait at least two years before reapplying for accreditation.

For further information on the revocation process, please see the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Guidelines for Processes and Procedures on the Professional Standards [website](#).

Resources

Resources to assist your agency in meeting the Professional Standards are located on the [Professional Standards webpage](#). The [Resources](#) tab has a wealth of information categorized by:

- [Agency & Advocate Wellness](#)
- [Boards](#)
- [Community Engagement](#)

- [Direct Services](#)
- [Evaluation](#)
- [Financial Information](#)
- [Human Resources](#)
- [Policies and Procedures](#)
- [Prevention Education](#)
- [Training for Board, Staff, and/or Volunteers](#)
- [Underserved Populations](#)

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

ADMINISTRATION

The following section relates to the administration or management of a sexual and domestic violence* agency*. The role of the governing body, fiscal and data management, personnel management, and training are addressed. These standards provide for general administration practices that establish a common framework for service delivery.*

STANDARD #1: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies will ensure that crisis intervention*, advocacy*, and engagement services are available and accessible to all people within the agency service area regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, religion, limited English proficiency, immigration status, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.

- Non-discrimination policy* for staff and client services includes race, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, religion, limited English proficiency, immigration status, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.
- Regardless of income, no fees are charged for crisis intervention, advocacy, and engagement services as outlined in these standards.
- Agency has inclusions noticeable throughout the facility (e.g., diverse and inclusive signage, pictures, materials, social media, and marketing) and inclusive client paperwork. The facility includes staff offices, meeting rooms, and the shelter, if applicable.
- Agency has a website that clearly describes the services provided, is accessible, is inclusive, and provides relevant, up to date, and accurate information.
- Agency ensures staff receives training on civil rights, diversity* issues, and multicultural competency. Topics for training could include implicit bias, microaggressions, reducing disparities in services, and building a culture of inclusion. In addition, the agency could invite culturally specific agencies to provide cross-training or facilitate a training on a topic related to cultural humility*.
- Agency has a written policy, which affirms that staff, board of directors (or similar advisory group), and volunteers should reflect the diversity of the community served. This written policy must include action steps, be reviewed at least annually, and be updated every three years.
- If the agency defines its service population within a specific client group, there must be a clear written rationale for selectivity.

STANDARD #2: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies will have trained staff and/or volunteers to provide Crisis Intervention, Advocacy, and Engagement Services.

- Agency must have a written training plan* that meets the requirements of the Training Matrix.
- Staff members, volunteers, or interns must complete training within three months of joining the agency as outlined in the Training Matrix.
 - Training modalities can include in-person instruction at the agency, shadowing a trained advocate (up to eight hours), self-directed training programs (e.g., online courses and webinars), local or county trainings, Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance trainings, and/or state agency trainings.

- No more than half of the onboarding training can be completed through self-directed training programs.
- Full-time Level II staff will receive at least 20 hours of continuing education each year, while Part-time Level II staff will receive at least 10 hours. Level II volunteers will receive at least 10 hours of training annually.
 - Training modalities for completing the continuing education include in-person instruction at the agency, shadowing a trained advocate (up to four hours), self-directed training programs, local or county trainings, state and national conferences, Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance trainings, and/or state agency trainings.
 - No more than half of the continuing education can be completed through self-directed training programs.
 - Training must include a review of the confidentiality*, cultural humility, and vicarious trauma* topics.
- Supervisors* must receive ongoing training to support their management, supervision, and trauma stewardship responsibilities.
 - Anyone in a supervisory position must also, at a minimum, meet the training requirements of Level II staff.
- Agencies are allowed discretion in determining training content requirements for new staff and/or volunteers who possess content expertise via prior education, training, or experience. However, all new staff and volunteers must complete the required agency and confidentiality training content.
 - Rationale for all exceptions to training requirements must be fully documented.

STANDARD #3: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies will adhere to sound management practices that demonstrate operational stability, including organizational principles and practices that reflect accountability and transparency.

- Supervisors must meet regularly with staff, either individually or as a group.
- Agency shall demonstrate fiscal responsibility (auditing, internal controls, and procurement services).
- Agency shall maintain a plan that protects against the physical and financial interruption of core services*.
- Agency shall maintain a sustainability plan with projected revenues and expenditures for the 36 months of operation following the submission of an application for accreditation.
- Agency shall maintain a written succession plan for the Executive Director (or other agency leadership) position.
- Agency must have written personnel policies.
- Agency must have written job descriptions for all staff, intern, and volunteer positions.
- Agency shall maintain a written staff grievance policy that includes:
 - matters for which grievances can be filed
 - the levels in the agency to which the grievance may be filed and/or appealed
 - the type of information to be submitted when filing a grievance
 - the procedural steps and time limitations for each level in responding to grievances and appeals
 - any criteria for staff representation

- the staff member responsible for coordinating grievance procedures*
 - the process for how grievances are handled, analyzed, and affirmed or denied
- Staff must be provided with contact information for the Chairperson of the board of directors, if applicable, and be given the option to grieve to the board should they not be satisfied with the response from agency leadership.
- Agency shall have written procedures for staff that include instructions for responding to potential emergencies including a medical emergency, a mental health emergency, and an emergency that threatens the safety of staff and/or the individuals being served by the staff. The emergency procedures must include:
 - assignments of tasks and responsibilities
 - instructions for the use of alarm systems, emergency equipment and notification of authorities
 - specification of escape routes in case of fire or natural disaster
 - coordination with law enforcement agencies for emergency plans regarding intruders and with fire departments for emergency plans for fire or natural disasters
- Fire, tornado, bomb threat and intruder drills shall be conducted annually. The date, time, and type of the drill shall be documented.

STANDARD #4: Private Nonprofit Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies must have a board of directors to develop policies and procedures for the operation of the organization, to monitor finances of the organization, to provide overall direction to the organization and its programs, and to monitor the quality and effectiveness of programs.

- Agency must have written job descriptions for board members.
- Agency must have written by-laws, which provide the governance structure for the organization and its elected board. The by-laws must include:
 - the mission and purpose of the organization
 - the number of times per year that the board is required to meet
 - what constitutes a quorum
 - the length of terms
 - the limits for consecutive terms
 - attendance requirements
 - the number of members required to approve amendments of the by-laws
 - how to address holding meetings or votes that are not conducted in person, such as by conference call or electronic methods
 - a conflict-of-interest policy that clearly explains what a conflict of interest is, reporting procedures, and how to address such conflicts should they occur
- Agency must have a written process for the selection of board members, including those who reflect the diversity of the communities served.
- Board members must complete a board orientation and training which includes information about sexual and domestic violence, the agency's mission, and board members' roles and responsibilities.
- A minimum of one training session for the board of directors' ongoing development must be offered each year.
- Agency must have a written plan for board training.

- All agency policies must be reviewed by the board of directors every three years. The document should then be signed by the Chairperson of the board of directors and dated with the date of review.

STANDARD #5: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies will adhere to policies and practices that ensure a high standard of professional conduct.

- Agency must ensure compliance with employer/employee state and federal regulations and contracts.
- Agency must maintain a written policy/plan of a criminal background check for all staff, interns, and volunteers and a Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Central Registry check for all staff, interns, Level 2 volunteers, and those Level 1 volunteers who may engage with children.
- Agency must maintain a written policy/plan of a driving record from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles for those staff, volunteers, or interns who will be transporting clients.
- Background and driving record checks must be updated every five years.
- **Agency must have a written ethical behavior policy.**

STANDARD #6: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies will document Crisis Intervention, Advocacy, and Engagement services only in databases that comply with current VAWA confidentiality standards and protect personally identifying information.

- Data about services provided must be entered into the system and reviewed regularly for accuracy, trends, and program planning.
- Agency must maintain a record retention policy specifying the client records/files* that will be destroyed, the time frame and method of destruction, and the way personally identifying information is protected.

STANDARD #7: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies preserve privacy and confidentiality, including the identity of and information provided by the person served or acquired from other sources before, during, and after the course of the professional relationship.

- Agency has written operational procedures on client record/file security, maintenance, and access by individuals other than the client. A description of the safeguards for client records/files against unauthorized access, fire, loss, or other hazards is available.
- Agency has written policies/procedures regarding how the agency assures compliance with applicable legal requirements regarding confidentiality.
- Agency has an informed, written, and reasonably time-limited client release of information form. The release of information form must include:
 - the name of no more than one person or organization to which the information is being released
 - the specific information to be released
 - the beginning and ending dates the release is effective, not to exceed the program participant's active length of services
 - the date and the signatures of the program participant and the employee or volunteer

- the right to revoke a release of information at any time
- Agency has a written policy to respond to subpoenas, court orders, and other legal processes which, at a minimum, addresses how the client will be notified about the request and how the request will be processed and responded to by the agency.
- Agency has a written policy addressing the security of home computers, laptops, smart phones, virtual private networks, cloud computing, hotline routing, etc. for any staff who telecommute, including how access is terminated for staff who leave the agency.

STANDARD #8: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies respect and protect the civil and human rights of all those impacted by sexual and domestic violence.

- Agency demonstrates cultural humility in its sexual and/or domestic violence service delivery.
- Persons with limited English proficiency* must have meaningful access to services with equivalent services to those who are native English speakers.
- Agency has a written language access plan*, which includes the provision of relay services for the Deaf or hard of hearing.

STANDARD #9: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies support the voluntary services model and respect the survivor's* right to self-determination*.

- Agency must have written documentation that informs all clients of their rights, including the right to self-determination. Such documentation must be made available to the client by the next business day after initial contact with the agency.
- Agency must have a written client grievance policy that is available to each agency participant and should include multiple options for filing a complaint. At a minimum the policy should include:
 - the assurance of the survivor's right to continue to receive services from the agency during and after the grievance process
 - who the survivor should contact regarding the complaint or issue
 - how the complaint be documented, steps that will be taken to find resolution, and whether the decision is final
 - information regarding the survivors right to file a discrimination complaint with the Office of Justice Programs Office for Civil Rights

CRISIS INTERVENTION

Crisis intervention consists of the interactions and activities conducted by qualified, trained staff members or volunteers with an individual in crisis to stabilize emotions, clarify issues, and provide support and assistance. These standards provide that sexual and domestic violence agencies must establish quality crisis intervention services including 24/7 access, emergency accompaniment, and emergency safe shelter.*

STANDARD #10: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies will be accessible 24/7 to the public and to first responders to provide crisis intervention services by trained advocates.

- Agency must ensure 24/7 access and response to all survivors seeking assistance from advocates providing crisis intervention services, risk assessment, safety planning, information, and referrals. Such requirement may be met through the provision of a 24/7 hotline, including the use of a statewide hotline as necessary.
- Agency maintains documentation of number of requests for crisis intervention services that the agency provided.

STANDARD #11: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies will ensure that survivors in their community have 24/7 access to accompaniment services when they access emergency medical or justice systems.

- Agency must establish and maintain policies and procedures for medical and criminal/civil justice system accompaniment response.
- Agency maintains documentation of requests for accompaniment services and accompaniment services that the agency provided.

Standard #12: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies will provide, or assist to secure, emergency safe shelter to survivors of sexual and domestic violence who are in imminent danger*.

- Agency must provide or coordinate emergency shelter* for survivors and their families who are in imminent danger. If the survivor is within the agency's service area, the agency must safely maintain contact with the client until safe lodging has been established. If the survivor is outside the agency's service area, the agency must ensure that the survivor is connected to the agency within the applicable service area prior to terminating contact.
- If an agency maintains an emergency shelter and such shelter does not meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the agency must secure accommodations appropriate to meet the needs of a client with disabilities if such client qualifies for shelter services.
- Agency must possess a first aid supply kit.
- Agency maintains documentation of requests for emergency shelter services and emergency shelter services that the agency provided.

ADVOCACY

Through advocacy services, agencies attempt to ensure that survivors, their children, and those at risk of sexual and domestic violence are protected and treated compassionately. These standards value an individual response, collaboration, thoughtful evaluation, careful stewardship, and unconditional positive regard through a victim-centered approach.*

STANDARD #13: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies provide a range of individualized advocacy services that foster survivor healing from the trauma of violence.

- Agency shall provide a range of individualized advocacy services that foster healing from the trauma of violence, which must, at a minimum, include justice system advocacy, case management*, supportive counseling*, and referral resources.
- Agency maintains documentation of requests for advocacy services and advocacy services that the agency provided.

STANDARD #14: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies will coordinate services within the agency and the community to promote high quality integrated services and support to survivors.

- Agency must develop and maintain signed agreements (e.g., memoranda of understanding, cooperative agreements, or partnership agreements) as needed to provide and coordinate services to survivors. Examples include cross-training and/or co-location with agencies such as:
 - Victim Witness
 - Social Services to include Adult and Child Protective Services
 - Colleges and universities
 - Mental health
 - Law enforcement
 - Hospitals
 - Schools
 - Immigration services
 - Legal aid
- Agency must maintain, or collaborate with an agency that maintains, a physical or digital resource list with financial, healthcare, mental health, culturally specific, social service, and other resources. The list should include contact information and the services provided. Such list must be updated annually.

STANDARD #15: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies will address the diverse needs of the community served, providing specialized advocacy programs and population-specific interventions.

- Agency will identify the diverse needs of the community through at least two methods, such as a community needs assessment, client surveys, or feedback from other community agencies.

- Agency will demonstrate efforts to provide a range of specialized advocacy services to identified populations within the agency's service area.

ENGAGEMENT

Through engagement services, the agency attempts to create an effective response system to sexual and domestic violence and to change cultural attitudes and institutional practices that perpetuate such violence. These standards cover community and systemic engagement.

STANDARD #16: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies will participate in community engagement efforts that promote agency services and effective community responses throughout the agency's service area.

- Agency distributes information about agency services and accessibility through multiple channels. Examples include:
 - tabling at community events
 - flyers/brochures
 - speaking engagements at various events
 - responding to requests for information
 - social media or conventional print/radio/TV media
 - prevention* activities/initiatives
- Agency engages in initiatives and activities that raise awareness, advocate for survivor access to resources, promote systemic change, and support the development of healthy relationships and healthy sexuality (e.g., National Night Out with local police, awareness month activities).
- Agency must collaboratively engage with others doing similar work in the community.
- Agency maintains documentation of number of community engagement and outreach activities that the agency provided.

STANDARD #17: Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies will participate in systemic engagement efforts to improve the experiences of survivors.

- Agency demonstrates participation in and/or leadership in sexual and/or domestic violence focused community groups (Domestic Violence Council, Sexual Assault Response Teams, Inter-Agency Councils, or others).
- Agency provides training and education to allied professionals.
- Agency maintains training materials as they apply to community outreach.

TRAINING MATRIX

In the initial three months of training, the goal is for staff, volunteers, and interns to have a basic understanding and awareness of these concepts. This Matrix is also intended to serve as a guide for ongoing training and professional development, with the expectation that over time specific roles will develop greater understanding in these areas.

Please note that, for the purposes of these training requirements, “staff, volunteers, and interns” includes all staff from the point of entry (such as a receptionist) through to the sexual and/or domestic violence program. These terms do not include staff, volunteers, and interns working in different units of an overall agency.

LEVEL I: 8 Hours of Training for All Staff & Volunteers/Interns

Who is Level I	Training Topics
Limited Client Contact Staff, Volunteers, and Interns <i>Staff, Volunteers, or Interns who may have incidental contact with persons accessing services. Examples may include:</i> ▪ Administrative support ▪ Receptionists ▪ Grant writer ▪ Thrift Store Manager <i>Agency can determine if this includes persons providing donated services such as computer maintenance, painting, lawn care, etc.</i>	Administration • Mission, history, philosophy, and structure of the agency • Agency policies and procedures • Agency Code of Ethics/Rules of Conduct • Confidentiality • Personal safety and security of staff, volunteers/interns, clients, and visitors Crisis Intervention & Advocacy • Definitions and dynamics of sexual violence and domestic violence • Definitions and dynamics of stalking within the context of sexual and domestic violence • Emergency/Crisis Response to address immediate safety needs • Secondary trauma* • Vicarious trauma • Role of the advocate/volunteer • Making appropriate community referrals, including specialized resources for underserved populations • Voluntary services Engagement • Cultural humility

LEVEL II: 40 Hours of Training for All Staff & Volunteers/Interns

Who is Level II	Training Topics
All Staff, Volunteers, and Interns except Level I staff. <i>Direct Service Staff, Volunteers, and Interns who are likely to have on-going contact with persons accessing services</i> <i>Examples may include:</i> ▪ Hotline Volunteers ▪ Court Advocacy ▪ Child Services ▪ Shelter Support ▪ Support Group Facilitators ▪ Companion Services ▪ Community Educators or Presenters ▪ Transportation Providers ▪ Childcare Providers	Level II training includes all topics outlined in Level I with expansions as necessary and the following: Administration • History of the sexual and domestic violence movements • Record keeping and data collection (all staff and relevant volunteers) • How to access/use an interpreter Crisis Intervention & Advocacy • Intersection of oppressions* and the societal impact of violence • Theories/Modes of Service Provision • Individual and Systems Advocacy • Survivor-directed services • Adverse Childhood Experiences, CDC model • Trauma-informed, based on SAMSHA model • Crisis Intervention/Supportive Counseling Skills • Trauma of Victimization – Post Traumatic Stress • Boundaries • Safety Planning • The use/abuse of technology • Public assistance benefits • Immigration visas that may be available to survivors • Civil and Criminal Justice systems • Victims' Rights • Protective Orders • Sexual violence laws, as related to adults and minors • Domestic violence laws • Child abuse and neglect laws • Incapacitated and vulnerable adult abuse laws • Unauthorized practice of law • Sexual Violence as it pertains to: • Child sexual abuse • Adult survivors of childhood sexual violence • Intimate partner sexual violence • Sexual harassment • Alcohol and other drug-facilitated sexual violence • Domestic Violence as it pertains to: • Fair housing & domestic violence • Lethality/danger assessment • The impact of domestic violence on children

Who is Level II	Training Topics
	• Medical Considerations • Physical Evidence Recovery Kit (PERK) • Blind reporting • Sexual Transmitted Infections (Post-exposure Prophylaxis) and pregnancy-related concerns • Reproductive coercion • The Role of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner/Forensic Nurse Examiner • Strangulation • Suicide intervention • Human trafficking • Addiction & recovery Engagement • Agency expectation of engagement: outreach and facilitation skills • Coordinated Community Response/Sexual Assault Response Teams

Board of Directors Training

(Professional Standard/Administration Standard #4)

Training for the board of directors is content specific. The length of the training is at the discretion of the agency. Agencies will develop and implement training on the following topics for all board members in their first year of service:

- Definitions and dynamics of Sexual and Domestic Violence
- Intersection of oppressions
- Agency mission, history, philosophy, and structure
- Agency policies and procedures (to include Code of Ethics and/or Rules of Conduct)
- Channeling requests for agency services
- Confidentiality
- General information about agency's key partners
- Responsibilities of Independent Nonprofit Board of Directors:
 - Personnel Policy Management
 - Fiduciary Responsibility
 - Strategic Planning
 - Conflict of Interest
 - Contingency Planning
 - Succession Planning
 - Fund Development (to include fundraising)
 - Executive Director (or CEO) evaluation

GLOSSARY

Accompaniment: A group of services that involves providing in-person support and advocacy to victims of sexual and/or domestic violence in the aftermath of violence, most often at hospitals as medical treatment is provided or forensic exams are conducted, or within the justice system when criminal charges are being considered or protective orders are pursued.

Advocacy: Speaking and acting for change or justice on behalf of oneself, another person, or a cause. Advocacy can generally be categorized as: self-advocacy, individual advocacy, and systems advocacy. An **Advocate** is the person who takes up the cause and provides assistance in advocacy efforts.

- **Individual Advocacy:** Speaking or acting on behalf of an individual to achieve changes in the practice of another individual or institution, which is necessary to protect legal or social rights or affect justice on behalf of the individual seeking help in affecting change or justice.

The purpose of individual advocacy is to identify what individuals perceive as necessary protective actions for their rights so they can be assisted in asserting them. The persons who experience the sexual and/or domestic violence make this determination. It is imperative that advocates safeguard these persons' rights to make these decisions. Some examples of individual advocacy are the following:

- Helping individuals explore options for increasing their safety
 - Brainstorming ideas with a tenant on how to approach an unreasonable landlord
 - Listening to individuals prioritize their needs and assisting them in identifying avenues to meet those needs
 - Discussing with individuals the benefits and limitations of legal remedies, exploring whether these remedies are appropriate for them, and identifying how to access these remedies
- **Systems Advocacy:** Influencing societal and political systems to bring about change for groups of people. A coalition or less frequently, an individual, will seek alterations in laws, the establishment of new shelter locations, or arrangements for barrier removal to needed services and legal protection.

Systems advocacy is critical to ending sexual and domestic violence. It means changing the policies and practices of institutions and influencing beliefs of the individuals who compose those institutions. These changes can be accomplished through many different strategies. Planning and critical thinking are essential components of systems advocacy. The focus of systems advocacy is on the practices and policies of societal institutions rather than on the individual seeking assistance from the system.

Systems change is accomplished through a combination of advocacy efforts. These efforts may include suggesting policy change, training people on the dynamics and impact of violence, building coalitions, organizing communities, improving media and public awareness, and pursuing strategic education efforts. Examples of systems advocacy include:

- The changes that have been made in police response and arrest policies related to domestic violence
- The development of sexual harassment policies in the workplace
- The creation of legislation criminalizing stalking

- The development of community task forces to address sexual and domestic violence

Case Management: A process whereby advocates help their clients navigate various systems, such as the social service system, the healthcare system, or the justice system. This may involve providing information and resources, connecting clients with community services, and teaching clients how to advocate for themselves. It involves the assessment of a client's needs and the linking of that client to available services and resources.

Client Record/File: Any record or file that includes confidential client information and is created, requested, or held by the agency.

Confidentiality: Protecting information that could compromise the health, safety, or self-determination of any survivor of violence being served by an organization. Agencies must at least comply with the current federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) requirements for confidentiality of policy and practices (safeguarding personally identifying information). In addition, agencies should make every effort to protect the privacy of survivors, ensuring that individuals who experience violence retain control of when, where, and how their story is shared with others.

Core Services: Free and confidential 24-hour crisis intervention services for all victims of sexual and/or domestic violence in the agency's community. Such services must include a 24-hour hotline (operated by your agency or through other means), provisions for emergency housing, and emergency medical and judicial accompaniment for victims of sexual and/or domestic violence.

Crisis Intervention: Providing support, information, resources, and/or advocacy in the wake of an experience of sexual and/or domestic violence or related traumatic event.

Cultural Humility: A life-long process of **self-reflection** to understand personal and systemic biases and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust. Cultural humility involves humbly acknowledging oneself as a learner when it comes to understanding another's experience, particularly the experiences of those who are marginalized or historically oppressed in society.

Diversity: The inclusion of individuals who are of different identities across all aspects of an organization. These identities include race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other characteristics.

Domestic Violence: A pattern of abusive behaviors used by one individual to control or exert power over another individual in an intimate relationship.

- **Pattern:** is the consistent use of a wide variety of abusive behaviors that often increase in frequency and intensity over time.
- **Abusive behaviors:** include, but are not limited to, verbal assaults and threats, emotional abuse tactics such as intimidation and isolation, physical and sexual assaults, weapon use, property destruction, and violence directed toward others significant to the victim.

- **Controlling or exerting power over another:** ongoing behavior of abusers in relationships designed to maintain power over the partner(s).
- **Intimate relationship:** a relationship between two individuals that currently (previously) provides (provided) emotional and/or physical intimacy.

Emergency shelter: Emergency housing (e.g., a Domestic Violence Program residential shelter, safe home, hotel, or other shelter) for sexual and/or domestic violence victims and their minor children (regardless of gender).

Healthy Relationship: A respectful connection between people that increases well-being, is mutually enjoyable, and enhances or maintains each individual's positive self-concept.

Healthy Sexuality: The capacity to understand, enjoy, and control one's own sexual and reproductive behavior in a voluntary consensual and responsible manner that enriches individuals and their social lives.

Imminent Danger: A real physical danger that could occur within an immediate timeframe and result in death or serious bodily harm. Some considerations include:

- A recent incident including serious bodily harm, threat of severe bodily harm, or threat to life
- The imprisonment of an abuser who is due to be released
- A Protective Order has been filed and police cannot find the abuser

Intersection of Oppressions: To promote substantive social change and effective service delivery, advocates must recognize and address the intersections of other forms of oppression with sexual and domestic violence. These other forms of oppression include, but are not limited to, racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, and ageism.

There are many ways to understand how the link between sexual and domestic violence and other oppressions operates. These perspectives are not mutually exclusive:

- Layers of oppression make some people more vulnerable to sexual and domestic violence.
- Sexual and domestic violence are sometimes used as tools of other oppressions (e.g., homophobic man raping a woman because she is lesbian).
- Some forms of oppression contribute directly to perpetuating sexual and domestic violence (e.g., lack of economic justice and a living wage keeping a woman in an abusive relationship because she cannot support her children without the abuser's income).
- Sexual and domestic violence are forms of oppression. People who have experienced sexual and domestic violence are disempowered, judged, and marginalized because of the violence they have experienced.
- People who have experienced sexual and domestic violence are also oppressed in other ways because of their race, class, sexuality, gender, etc. They may also face multiple intersecting barriers to equality and safety (e.g., if an African American woman is raped by a white man, did sexism or racism or both contribute to her experience? What additional oppression might she face as she tries to recover or seek justice?).
- All forms of oppression, including sexual and domestic violence, are perpetuated by the belief that power must be power over, not power shared.

Language Access Plan: An approved organizational policy that sets out, in detail, how the organization provides communication assistance services to individuals who are non-English speaking, have limited English proficiency (LEP), have a hearing or visual issue that impacts their communication, or otherwise would benefit from additional resources to help them communicate effectively.

Language assistance services include both oral and written services. These services are designed to facilitate effective communication with staff and to provide LEP individuals with meaningful access to and an equal opportunity to participate fully in the services, activities, or other programs administered by the organization.

Persons with Limited English Proficiency: Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

Plan: A document that includes specific objectives and the tasks necessary to accomplish those objectives, names the individuals or groups responsible for each task, provides dates by which tasks will be completed, and specifies how success will be measured or gauged, if appropriate.

Policy: A rule or guideline governing the actions in particular situations that has been officially agreed to by an agency. Policies should be approved by the board of directors (if applicable), include the date of approval on each policy, conform with all applicable laws, and contain the elements specified in the applicable Professional Standard.

Prevention: Shifting the attitudes, behaviors, and norms that support and perpetuate the root causes of sexual and/or domestic violence. Promoting healthy behaviors and communities where sexual and/or domestic violence are likely to occur through evidence-based or evidence-informed strategies.

- **Primary prevention** refers to strategies used to prevent trauma before it occurs and reduce overall likelihood that a person will be victimized.
- **Secondary prevention** involves intervening and responding to violence that has already occurred with the goal of stopping violence from occurring again.

Procedure: The operational processes required to implement a policy. Procedures are the guidelines needed to carry out an activity.

Secondary Trauma: The emotional duress that results when an individual hears about or witnesses the firsthand trauma experiences of another.

Self-Determination: Those seeking services from an agency retain the right and responsibility to make decisions in their own best interests and in the best interests of any dependent family members without the interference or undue influence of advocates, except in cases where there is an immediate risk of harm to self or others.

Sexual and Domestic Violence Agency: An agency with an organizational or program mission to support survivors of sexual and/or domestic violence. For the purposes of accreditation, such agency or program must have been in operation and providing services to survivors for at least three years.

Sexual Violence: Sexual violence is non-consensual sexual conduct accomplished through threat, coercion, exploitation, deceit, force, physical or mental incapacitation, and/or power of authority.

- **Non-consensual:** without permission, agreement, or approval
- **Threat:** a behavior, statement, or expression that communicates the intention of someone to cause physical, emotional, or psychological harm to another
- **Coercion:** compelling another to act through manipulation and/or taking advantage of circumstance, personality, and/or emotions (e.g., guilt, fear, pity, anger)
- **Exploitation:** the unjust treatment of a human being as a commodity or an object without consideration for their well-being and for another's benefit
- **Deceit:** communicating a lie, an untrue statement, or creating a false circumstance
- **Force:** to use one's physical strength to make another person act against their will
- **Physical or Mental Incapacitation:** when one is not able to comprehend, process, communicate, and/or act on their own behalf due to a physical disability, a mental health disability, a cognitive disability, an injury, and/or the influence of a controlled substance such as alcohol, prescription medication, or illegal drugs
- **Power of authority:** manipulating and/or taking advantage of one's perceived higher social and/or professional standing over another to influence their thought, opinion, or behavior

Supportive Counseling: A one-to-one interaction between an advocate and a survivor for the purpose of benefiting the survivor. Examples of supportive counseling include emotional support, education on dynamics of sexual and/or domestic violence, problem solving, and discussing options.

- Supportive counseling differs from **therapeutic counseling**, which is a one-to-one interaction between a licensed or board-certified mental health professional and a survivor for the purpose of addressing trauma. Therapeutic counseling may also be provided by a master's level counselor under supervision pending their licensure.

Survivor/Victim: A person who has experienced the trauma of sexual and/or domestic violence. Survivors of violence may also be individuals who have committed acts of harm at some point in their lives. When agencies make determinations about providing services developed specifically for survivors or perpetrators, they must consider the context of the experience that led the person to reach out for services.

Supervisor: Leadership position within the agency whose title may include words like director, manager, supervisor, lead, coordinator, or other words that imply management or supervisory responsibilities.

Trauma: Trauma results from an event, a series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening. Trauma has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. In the context of this work, trauma most often is sexual and/or domestic violence or the exposure to that violence, although we recognize the intersectionality of traumatic experiences.

Trauma-Informed: An agency or advocate that is trauma-informed realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery; recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system; and responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.

Underserved Populations: A population for which there is a disparity between the presence of that population in the agency's service area and the presence of that population among the persons receiving the agency's services. Populations that may be underserved include foreign born persons; persons with limited English proficiency; persons with disabilities; persons who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender; persons of certain racial or ethnic backgrounds; older persons; men; and others.

Vicarious Trauma: A shift in world view that occurs in helping professionals when they work with individuals who have experienced trauma. Advocates may notice that their fundamental beliefs about the world are altered and possibly damaged by being repeatedly exposed to traumatic material.

**VIRGINIA SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE PROGRAM
PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS**

**GUIDELINES FOR
PROCESSES & PROCEDURES**

May 2024

INTRODUCTION

The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Committee

In 2015, legislation was enacted creating the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Program Professional Standards Committee (the “Committee”). The purpose of the Committee is to establish voluntary accreditation standards and measures by which local sexual and domestic violence programs can be systematically evaluated with a peer-reviewed process. In addition, the Committee is responsible for reviewing and voting on accreditation status recommendations for applicant programs, establishing a subcommittee as needed to address appeals from applicant programs, and periodically evaluating and revising the accreditation standards and measures.

Under *Code of Virginia* § [9.1-116.3](#), the Committee is required to consist of:

- One nonvoting member from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (“DCJS”)
- One nonvoting member from of the Virginia Department of Social Services
- One nonvoting member from the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance
- Twelve non-legislative citizen members appointed by the Governor, who must be leadership staff of local sexual and domestic violence programs

The appointment of members must also take into consideration racial and ethnic diversity and must be representative of regional and geographic locations of the Commonwealth.

The Department of Criminal Justice Services Professional Standards Team

The Committee receives assistance from the DCJS Professional Standards Team (the “Team”), which is made up of the Professional Standards Operations Coordinator (the “Operations Coordinator”) and the Professional Standards Compliance Coordinator (the “Compliance Coordinator”). Under *Code of Virginia* § 9.1-116.3, the Team is responsible for establishing accreditation procedures by which local sexual and domestic violence programs can be systematically evaluated with a peer-reviewed process, assisting local programs in obtaining or retaining accreditation, reviewing and evaluating applications for accreditation, and determining accreditation status recommendations for applicant programs and presenting such recommendations to the Committee.

The Team has the authority to determine the eligibility of agencies applying for accreditation and to interpret the Professional Standards.

EXPLANATION OF ROLES

Professional Standards Operations Coordinator: Employee of DCJS who coordinates and facilitates meetings of the Committee, serves as the Committee liaison, and maintains the Professional Standards [website](#). The Operations Coordinator also reviews and processes applications for accreditation, provides technical assistance to applicants, develops and delivers

training, develops and implements accreditation policies and procedures, and assists the Compliance Coordinator as necessary.

Professional Standards Compliance Coordinator: Employee of DCJS who schedules and completes site visit reviews for all applicants for accreditation. The Compliance Coordinator also reviews and processes applications for accreditation, provides technical assistance to applicants, develops and delivers training, develops and implements accreditation policies and procedures, and assists the Operations Coordinator as necessary.

The Professional Standards Team may be contacted via email at sdvstandards@dcjs.virginia.gov.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The accreditation process is divided into cycles. Each cycle contains three rounds in which applications for accreditation will be accepted. Rounds will be opened approximately once per year, generally in the early fall. When a round is opened, agencies may begin the application process by submitting an Organizational Self-Assessment Summary, as discussed below.

Once three rounds of applications have been submitted, the cycle is complete. At that point, the Committee, with assistance from the Team, will begin the process of revising the Professional Standards. The purpose of this revision process is to update the Standards to correspond with emerging best practices and to address any issues that were identified during the previous cycle. When the revision process is completed, the Team will begin a new accreditation application cycle of three rounds.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

Organizational Self-Assessment Summary

An Organizational Self-Assessment should be completed internally by agencies interested in seeking accreditation. Upon completion, if an agency believes it substantially meets the requirements of the Professional Standards, an Organizational Self-Assessment Summary should be completed and submitted to the Team at sdvstandards@dcjs.virginia.gov. Both the Self-Assessment and the Summary can be found on the Professional Standards [website](#).

Organizational Self-Assessment Summaries are only accepted during the time periods that are announced by DCJS. Agencies that submit Summaries outside of these time periods will not be considered for the accreditation application process. Once the period for submission is closed, the Team will inform the Committee of the number of Summaries received but will not provide the names of the agencies.

Out of the agencies that submit Organizational Self-Assessment Summaries, up to 20 will be randomly selected to apply for accreditation during a particular round. Application information, instructions, and due dates will be sent to those agencies. Agencies that are not selected to apply will be notified.

If there are many agencies applying to renew their accreditation during a specific application round, the Team may opt to select more than 20 agencies at its discretion to avoid any lapses in accreditation.

Professional Standards Application

The Professional Standards application is completed online and is password-protected. Eligible applicants will be provided with a link to the application and the password once they are selected to apply. An example of the current Professional Standards application may be found on the DCJS Professional Standards [Application page](#).

Agencies must submit applications by the deadline established by DCJS. The Team may accept late applications at its discretion, provided that the applicable agency has requested a reasonable extension and an acceptable reason for the extension is provided.

Once the period for the submission of applications is closed, the Team will inform the Committee of the number of applications received but will not provide the names of the agencies.

Plans of Action

If, while completing its application, an agency determines that it does not meet a particular Standard, the agency is encouraged to submit a Plan of Action along with the application. The Plan of Action must describe how the agency intends to meet such Standard and the timeline for doing so. Plans of Action may also be requested at any time by the Committee or the Team if they believe a Standard is not being met.

Application Fee

The fee for an agency to apply for accreditation is \$150.00. This fee is to be paid at the time the application for accreditation is submitted to DCJS. Information about the online payment of the fee will be emailed to the agency once the application is submitted. Should an agency be unable to make an online payment, the Operations Coordinator must be contacted immediately so that alternate arrangements can be made. The application fee must be received within 24 hours of the submission of the application.

The fee will be paid one time for every three-year accreditation period; and it is non-refundable. There is no annual fee to be an accredited agency.

If an agency that has paid the fee withdraws an application for accreditation during a particular round and then reapplies during a later round in the same cycle, the agency will not be required to pay the application fee again. However, if such agency chooses to apply during a different cycle, the application fee will have to be paid at that time.

Fees will be used to support administrative costs of DCJS to manage the application process, as

outlined in *Code of Virginia* § 9.1-116.3.

Application Withdrawal

Agencies may choose to withdraw their applications for accreditation for any reason at any point during the application review process. Once the Team presents an accreditation status recommendation to the Committee, however, applications may no longer be withdrawn.

The Team will inform the Committee that an agency has withdrawn its application; but will not provide the name of the agency.

An agency that withdraws its application for accreditation will be eligible to apply in a future round. If an agency chooses to reapply, the agency must complete all steps of the application process as though it were applying for the first time. Therefore, a new Organizational Self-Assessment Summary must be submitted, the agency must be selected to apply, and a new application must be submitted. As stated above, the application fee will need to be paid again only if the agency is applying during a different accreditation application cycle.

ACCREDITATION APPLICATION REVIEW PROCEDURE

Initial Application Review

Once a complete application for accreditation is submitted to DCJS, the Team will confirm receipt of application. The Team will then create a schedule for reviewing applications and begin the evaluation process. As applications are reviewed, the Operations Coordinator may send out requests for additional information. These initial requests should be answered within 60 days.

During the initial application review, the Team may determine that an agency does not have certain policies that are required by the Professional Standards. In that case, the agency may create the required policy upon a request by the Team. Any policy that is so new that the event or system the policy governs has not yet occurred shall be considered a “wet ink” policy. The number of policies, if any, defined as “wet ink” will be recorded by the Team and this information will be provided to the Committee during its consideration of accreditation level.

Site Visit

Once the initial application review is complete, the agency’s site visit will be scheduled. Site visits will be scheduled and conducted by the Compliance Coordinator. During the site visit, the Compliance Coordinator will ask questions and complete the Site Visit Checklist to assess compliance with the Professional Standards. A sample of the current Site Visit Checklist is available on the DCJS Professional Standards [Application page](#).

Site visits will typically be scheduled for two days. On the first day, the Compliance Coordinator will meet with the director of the agency or the applicable sexual and/or domestic violence program to conduct a preliminary interview and tour the agency’s office and shelter facilities, if applicable.

In addition, the Compliance Coordinator will review all paperwork that is required by the Site Visit Checklist.

On the second day of the site visit, the Compliance Coordinator will conduct interviews with selected staff members, volunteers, and board members. Finally, the Compliance Coordinator will conduct an exit interview with the director to request information as needed and to provide any necessary technical assistance.

The director should be available throughout the entire two-day review.

Follow Up Procedure

Once the site visit has been completed, the Operations Coordinator and the Compliance Coordinator will meet to discuss their findings. If additional information is needed from the applicant agency, it will be requested at this time. Agencies will have 90 days from the date of the request to respond with the required information. This 90-day period will include any questions from the agency and subsequent responses by the Team. Once this period has been completed, the Team will not accept any further submissions of information.

Recommendation to Committee

After all information has been received or the 90-day period has ended, the Team will draft a presentation of their findings and the status recommendation to be presented at the next meeting of the Committee. Recommendations to the Committee will be based on responses to the application questions, documentation submitted with the application, site visit questions and observations, Site Visit Checklist criteria, and responses to requests for information. Neither the Committee nor the applicable agency will be informed of the status recommendation prior to the Committee meeting.

The Committee will discuss the recommendation and vote on the applicant's status determination. Decisions regarding status determinations shall be made by the majority of those present and voting. Members of the Committee affiliated with an applicant agency will withdraw their participation during discussion and decision-making regarding that agency's application.

Notification of Accreditation Decision

The Operations Coordinator will notify the applicant of the accreditation status determination within ten days following the date of the meeting of the Committee. Each agency will receive a letter detailing the status determination and the dates of status validity. In addition, the letter will include any opportunities for enhancements that have been identified by the Team. These items are suggested improvements and are not mandatory. Finally, every agency that is granted full accreditation status will receive a certificate acknowledging this achievement and will be listed on the [Accredited Agencies page](#).

ACCREDITATION STATUS

Status Determinations

There are three possible accreditation status determinations for Professional Standards applicants:

Fully Accredited

The Committee will determine a status of *Fully Accredited* for an agency having demonstrated through the review process that the agency meets 100% of the Professional Standards.

Provisionally Accredited

Agencies that do not meet 100% of the Professional Standards may be *Provisionally Accredited*.

To be considered provisionally accredited, applicant agencies must, at a minimum, demonstrate that they provide 24-hour crisis intervention services to all victims of sexual and/or domestic violence in their communities, and that these services are confidential and free of charge. These services must include a hotline, provisions for emergency housing, and emergency accompaniment for victims of sexual and/or domestic violence.

Provisionally accredited agencies have up to 30 days from the time of receiving provisional accreditation status to submit a Plan of Action that will be used to comply with all unmet criteria. Once the Plan of Action is submitted, agencies will have up to 90 days to document that the Plan of Action has been followed and that the Professional Standards are being met. Plans of Action and associated timelines are the responsibility of the applicant agencies.

The Team may extend the 30-day or 90-day deadlines at its discretion, provided that the applicable agency has requested a reasonable extension and an acceptable reason for the extension is provided.

As available, the Team will provide support, assistance, and resources to provisionally accredited agencies as they endeavor to become fully accredited. The Committee may request a site visit prior to granting a change in status, which will be completed by the Compliance Coordinator.

At any time during the 90-day period, documentation in response to Plans of Action may be submitted by the agency to the Team. At the end of this period, the Team will review all submitted information and draft a presentation of their findings and the status recommendation to be presented at the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee will discuss the recommendation and vote on the applicant's status determination. Decisions regarding status determinations shall be made by the majority of those present and voting. Members of the Committee affiliated with an applicant agency will withdraw their participation during discussion and decision-making regarding that agency's application.

Denied

The Committee will deny accreditation status to any agency that does not, at a minimum, demonstrate that it provides 24-hour crisis intervention services to all victims of sexual and/or domestic violence in their communities, and that these services are confidential and free of charge. Crisis intervention services must include a hotline, provisions for emergency housing, and emergency accompaniment for victims of sexual and/or domestic violence.

Additionally, the Committee will deny accreditation to any provisionally accredited agency that does not submit a Plan of Action within 30 days of receiving the provisional accreditation status or does not meet the requirements of the Professional Standards within 90 days from the submission of the Plan of Action.

Denied applicants may be given preference to apply during the next application round. As available, support, assistance, and resources will be provided to agencies in preparing for future applications.

Status Validity

Full accreditation status will be valid for three years beginning the July 1st of the year that the agency's accreditation status was first considered by the Committee. The dates of status validity will be clearly listed in accreditation materials provided to the agency, documented for the Committee by the Team, and listed on the [Accredited Agencies page](#).

Agencies that are fully accredited will be notified 12 months prior to the expiration of such accreditation. Accredited agencies wishing to retain their accreditation status must apply for renewal at the beginning of their third accreditation year to avoid a gap or lapse in their accreditation status. For example, if an agency was accredited beginning on July 1, 2023, such agency would need to apply in the beginning of its third accreditation year, or the Fall of 2025, to avoid a lapse in accreditation status.

STATUS DETERMINATION APPEALS

The Committee will accept requests for appeal from Professional Standards accreditation applicants that dispute a **denied accreditation status**. Agencies may initiate an appeal by submitting a letter of appeal via email to the Team within 30 days of notification of the denied accreditation status. The letter must include the reasons why the denied status is disputed and provide specific supporting documentation.

Once a letter of appeal has been received, the Operations Coordinator will notify members of the Committee. The Committee Chairperson will appoint an Appeals Subcommittee of three current and/or former Committee members. Current or former members of the Committee who are affiliated with the appealing agency will not be appointed. The Appeals Subcommittee will also include the Operations Coordinator and the Compliance Coordinator as nonvoting members.

The Appeals Subcommittee will review the appeal and any related documentation and make a determination within 90 days of receipt. Decisions regarding status determinations shall be made by the majority of those present and voting. The decision of the Appeals Subcommittee is final and will be provided to the Committee and to the appealing agency within ten days of the decision.

REVOCATION OF FULL ACCREDITATION STATUS

The Committee shall have the authority to revoke an agency's full accreditation status for disregarding applicable standards or committing serious violations of program rules and regulations. This action will only be taken in extreme cases and as a last resort. For example, a situation involving an agency presenting misinformation or falsified documentation to the Committee or the Team would be considered an extreme case. In addition, extreme cases would include violations of client rights or client confidentiality, endangerment of the safety, health, and/or the physical or mental well-being of a client served by the program, inappropriate conduct by program staff or its governing authority, or any other just cause.

The Team may be notified of any potential violations by a survivor, other sexual and/or domestic violence agencies, community partners, or funding agencies, including DCJS. Upon receiving any such information, the Team will contact the agency as well as the agency's board of directors, if applicable, to discuss the violation and how the agency has addressed it or will address it. If such response is deemed inadequate, the Team will formally notify the agency that a recommendation for revocation will be offered to the Committee. The Team will then present the alleged violations to the Committee at the next meeting. Agency representatives shall be given an opportunity to appear before the Committee to dispute the allegations.

The Committee will then vote on whether the full accreditation status will be revoked. Decisions regarding revocation shall be made by the majority of those present and voting. Members of the Committee affiliated with the agency under consideration will withdraw their participation during discussion and decision-making.

If an agency's full accreditation status is revoked by the Committee, the agency must wait at least two years before reapplying for accreditation.

ANNUAL VERIFICATION OF COMPLIANCE

Accredited agencies shall be required to file an annual report by the July 1st that begins their second and third years of full accreditation status. For example, an agency accredited on July 1, 2025, would be required to file an annual report by July 1, 2026, and July 1, 2027. The due dates for these reports will be listed on the accreditation letter provided to the agency. The verification form is available on the Professional Standards [website](#).

As necessary, the Team may also conduct site visits to ensure compliance. Such visits will be conducted after notification to the agency.

Annual Verification of Compliance

Due by July 1st

Agency Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Year of Accreditation (Second or Third): Choose an item.

Please describe any major developments that may affect the accreditation of your agency:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Please detail any changes in any of the leadership positions in your agency. This could include the agency or program directors.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Was continuing education provided for confidentiality, cultural humility, and vicarious trauma topics?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Has your agency conducted fire, tornado, bomb threat and intruder drills?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Has a training session been offered for the board of directors' ongoing development?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Have any agency policies been reviewed by the board of directors? If so, please provide the name of those policies as well as changes that were made, if any.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Have any grievances been filed by either staff or clients? If so, please describe.

Click or tap here to enter text.

If the Professional Standards Team provided any optional recommendations to your agency, please explain the actions your agency has taken, if any, to comply with them.

Click or tap here to enter text.

Does your agency have any current technical assistance needs?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Total Number of New Hires During the Previous Year: Choose an item.

Total number of Promotions During the Previous Year: Choose an item.