Overview

The Commission’s Director is responsible for implementing the Commission’s Victim/Survivor Input Policy and these Victim/Survivor Operational Guidelines. The Director will consider and implement:

- Options for Commission members, survivors, and other stakeholders to participate in promoting, gathering, and analyzing survivor feedback into themes and recommendations.
- Processes for collating, distributing, and implementing survivor input, contextual research, and related recommendations.
- Processes for determining how the Commission will take the lead on implementation of recommendations, and where other systems (including members and member agencies) will be asked to take the lead.

The Commission will not investigate or make decisions on any individual complaints or cases. Furthermore, the Commission will not guarantee that all recommendations will be implemented. Recommendations are implemented whenever possible, considering resources, capacity, and ability to influence change.

Confidentiality and anonymity

The Commission is committed to protecting the privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of survivors. Survivors’ names and other identifying information will be kept confidential, including from other Commission staff, members, and stakeholders. Survivors may also choose to give input anonymously, or to have their name attached to the stories they share.
Compensation

Survivors will be compensated with a gift card for their time and effort in providing input about their experiences. For any in-person methods of providing input (e.g. focus groups, interviews, listening sessions), childcare and transportation costs can be covered.

Accessibility, interpretation, and translation

The Commission is committed to getting input from survivors with diverse experiences and identities. Therefore, the Commission will meet accessibility, interpretation, and translation needs of survivors whenever possible. Accommodations and accessibility needs can be discussed or requested through the Commission’s website (dvcommission.org/accessibility), by email (mailto:mail@dvcommission.org), or by calling 360.312.5700.

Methods for survivor input

The Commission will use a variety of methods to gather input from survivors, including:

- Focus groups
- Interviews (phone or in-person)
- Online submission forms
- Written feedback forms
- Listening sessions
- Victim/survivor impact panels

Timeline

Input can be submitted through the Commission’s online form on an ongoing basis. At least two other methods for survivor input will be conducted on an annual basis. Input will be analyzed and distributed each year, along with other data to provide context and recommendations for sustaining strengths and changing systems to address gaps.
**Promotion**

The Commission will promote opportunities for survivor feedback by considering the following strategies:

- Leveraging relationships with advocates and other local providers, organizations, and networks
- Existing support groups
- Social media
- Posters/flyers distributed at key locations, including at officers of responding agencies
- Publications, including publications that reach underserved and marginalized communities
- Bus ads
- Listservs

The Commission will partner with local individuals, organizations, and networks to ensure feedback is sought and received from survivors from marginalized communities. This includes survivors who are Native, immigrants, people of color, LGBTQ+, youth; survivors experiencing homelessness or housing instability; survivors with disabilities or mental illness; and survivors who are non-native English speakers.

**Types of information sought**

- Where the domestic or sexual violence incident(s) occurred (city, county, other location)
- Time frame for the incident(s)
- Time frame for interacting with systems or agencies
- Your reasons for reporting or not reporting
- Which agencies you interacted with
- Description of your experience with systems
- What barriers you faced in accessing systems or agencies
- What was most helpful or supportive
- What you think would make things better
Additional information may be sought to gather input on a specific process, agency, policy, system, or issue, depending on the focus of the Commission and community.

**Tracking of input**

The Commission may keep track of input in a variety of categories, including:

- Contact information (if shared), to be kept confidential
- If input is anonymous
- Type of incident
- Systems/agencies involved
- Timeline/time frame
- Location/community (e.g. county, city, college)
- Key quotes
- Key suggestions or recommendations
- Survivors’ definitions of justice and safety
- Self-identified healing needs of survivors
- Particularly helpful processes, agencies, or systems
- Particularly unhelpful processes, agencies, or systems
- Themes and recommendations specific to survivors who experience increased marginalization
- Intersecting issues (e.g. mental illness, addiction, homelessness)
- Type of follow-up requested or wanted (e.g. provided a copy of compiled input and recommendations, give feedback on compiled input and recommendations before finalized, participate in an advocacy day)

**Examples of previous trends and patterns identified through survivor focus groups**

- Victims/survivors not receiving communication, or not having phone calls or emails returned
- Victims/survivors not knowing when their cases are closed
- Victims/survivors being told that they are not believed or are at least partially to blame for their experience
• Victims/survivors experiencing long waits to get services or for a case to be resolved
• Lack of accountability for offenders, including repeat offenders
• Lack of trauma-informed responses
• Victims/survivors expected to take on the burdens of accessing services or moving their case forward
• Victims/survivors not being given time off from work for counseling, court, or other needs related to domestic or sexual violence
• Victims/survivors being told by faith communities that they should forgive their offender

Analyzing, distributing, and implementing survivor input

When survivors give input, they will be asked if and how they would like to be contacted for the following:

• Reviewing their input before it is part of a published or shared product
• Being provided with a copy of the data report that includes their input
• Reviewing themes and recommendations from survivor feedback before publication and distribution
• Identifying how and where to distribute findings
• Participating in presenting findings
• Participating in local or state advocacy efforts related to their input
• Receiving updates about implementation of recommendations

Sharing survivor input

The goal of sharing input from survivors is to promote reflection and learning that benefits people who experience domestic and sexual violence in our local communities.

In the past, survivor input, including themes and recommendations, has been shared with:

• Commission members, to provide information on their work and Commission projects
• Community partners from agencies including schools, law enforcement, prosecutors, health care providers, child protection, housing, youth programs
• State coalitions against domestic violence and sexual assault
• Elected officials
• Media

Survivor input has been used to:

• Develop and implement policy and protocol
• Identify training needs
• Create resource guides for service providers
• Inform decisions about policy, practice, and training
• Identify the impact of national policies or practices on survivors locally
• Create messaging campaigns, including for DV Awareness Month (October) and SA Awareness Month (April)
• Provide background information for reporting by the media
• Engage elected officials during presentations to councils in all Whatcom County jurisdictions

Survivor input may be edited for clarity or brevity when it is put together to be shared or published. Whenever possible, the Commission will try to use the exact language from survivor input, or to paraphrase as closely as possible, so that people who are survivors can represent themselves as they see fit.

Local resources

The Commission on Sexual & Domestic Violence is not an advocacy agency. If you or someone you know has experienced domestic or sexual violence and wants support, you can contact:

Lummi Victims of Crime 360.312.2015
Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services 360.715.1563

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