

Protocol for Legal Services



- **Gatekeepers** (e.g. bldg parking attendants, bldg security, front desk receptionist): All persons that clients may come in contact with in order to seek services must have some basic training on working with immigrants and refugees. At the minimum, they must have a way of assisting limited English speakers, know where to send them for services, and respect their confidentiality. Ideally, they will also have dv training.
- **Safe physical space:** At a legal services office, or multiservice organization, the lobby and office area should be designed in a way where a dv victim will feel safe. Specifically, there should be a system to control who comes in and out of the physical space and ways to prevent those who are not welcome from entering. Again, the space should allow for the protection of confidentiality.
- **Front desk:** Check-in or sign-in systems should be designed in a way to protect the clients' confidentiality (e.g. by not requiring clients to sign in with complete names). Calling a client from the lobby should also be done in with privacy concerns in mind.
- **Intake:** An intake process should include questions that can lead the client to discuss concerns about safety, violence and control issues. If the organization is multiservice, intake forms of other departments should also include questions about these dv issues. These questions should be informed by the advice from dv agencies.
- **Risk Assessment:** Once it is determined that the client may be a victim of dv, a risk assessment should be conducted. Based on the result of this assessment, a safety plan can be prepared. Legal service providers should work with dv service agencies to be trained on risk assessment.
- **Legal Analysis and Advice:** Each legal service provider works in a different area of law. The provider should be well acquainted with remedies available for victims of dv. The client should be made aware of such remedies. Clients should also be informed of the possibility of other legal remedies or services that may be provided by attorneys in other areas of practice.
- **Safety Plan:** Legal service providers need training on safety plans. Every office should have a list of where to immediately refer clients for assistance in developing a complete safety plan. Legal service offices should at least be able to provide direct referrals to shelters, police, medical, and counseling services that will be easily and immediately available to work with the client.
- **Referrals:** Referrals should be made to organizations or agencies that the legal service provider knows well. The provider should know that the staff of the referred agency is able to provide service to immigrants and refugees. They should work with these organizations to make sure that their gatekeepers are prepared for the various issues that may arise with immigrants and refugees.
- **Follow-up:** Each provider should incorporate follow-up procedures into their case management software and protocols. Attention should be paid to whether clients received timely and appropriate services from the agencies they were referred to. A system for getting feedback from the client should be incorporated into case management in order to continually improve services. Statistics on results of dv related cases should be kept in order to improve public policy advocacy.