



Praxis International
"Integrating Theory and Practice"

Praxis International
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The Office on Violence Against Women in partnership with Praxis International

**AUDIOCONFERENCE
TRAINING**

**ALL CALLS ARE
FROM 2:00 - 3:30 P.M.
Central Time**

Audio Conference Training Binder

*Record Keeping Without Compromising Safety
with trainer Melissa Scaia,
Praxis Technical Assistance Partner*

Wednesday, July 18, 2007

Call at 2:00 p.m. Central Time

IMPORTANT: PLEASE NOTE NEW PHONE NUMBER

Dial 512-225-3170, then enter guest code 887766#

Things to Know:

Cost: Long distance telephone call. All expenses can be covered by your OVW training funds.

Participation: Remember to say your name and state every time you start speaking – we can't see you!

Muting: If you have any background noise during the call, please have your telephone on mute EXCEPT when you are speaking on the call. Press *6 on your keypad to mute your line. To un-mute, press *6 again.

To Leave: Hang up your telephone. This does not interrupt the session. If you need to step away temporarily, do not put the call on hold, as we may hear "on hold" music – simply rest the receiver on your desk.

Problems: Rarely, a caller may experience long-distance connection difficulties, such as a fast busy signal or message saying "All circuits are busy". You may simply re-dial the number to try to complete the call. If you have repeated problems, try using any standard long-distance calling card. Alternatively, you may use one of the following dial-around sequences: 1010636 + 1-405-244-5555 (Clear Choice – currently 5¢ / min), 1010220 + 1-405-244-5555 (MCI WorldCom – currently 99¢ for first 20 min, 7¢ / min additional), 1010834 + 1-405-244-5555 (Penny Plan – currently 9¢ / min). If you lose your connection when dialing the guest code, call in again, enter 9393 and do not press #, wait 15 seconds and you will be connected. For other problems, please call us at 218-525-0487, ext 100 and we'll do what we can to assist you.

Trainer Biography:

Melissa Scaia

Executive Director of Advocates for Family Peace
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Melissa Scaia is the executive director of Advocates for Family Peace, a six-program agency that provides services to families experiencing domestic violence and child abuse in Itasca County, Minnesota. She is also a co-facilitator of a group for women who have used force in battering relationships. She wrote her Master's Thesis on the effects of domestic violence on children. She is currently writing her Doctoral Degree Dissertation on the role of supervised visitation centers in the context of domestic violence.

Record Keeping Without Compromising Safety

Audio Conference Agenda

- 2:00* Welcome and introductions
- 2:05 Need for Records by Programs
 - Funding agencies
 - Battered women's needs
 - Evaluation of services, needs, and strategic planning
 - Liability
- 2:20 Question and comments
- 2:30 What should be written down?
Maintenance and destruction of records
- 2:45 Question and comments
- 3:00 Development of policies and procedures for record keeping
- 3:15 Question and comments
- 3:25 Wrap-up and adjourn

* Time markers are in posted in Central Daylight time

Record Keeping Without Compromising Victim Safety

Audio Conference Training supplement

Melissa Scaia, Praxis Technical Assistance Partner

July, 2007

What data do funders need for statistical purposes?

Aggregate data

Examples:

- Age range (not DOB)
- Geographic location
- Number of children
- Homeless status
- Income range
- Referral source
- Referrals made

What data should be included in a battered woman's file?

Have a discussion with your agency about this table. For your agency, what do you think should be included?

Yes	No	Maybe / Optional
First name (pseudonym optional possibly)	Last name (unless ok with battered woman)	Last/real name
Client number	Social security number	Medical information
Last known address	Driver's license number	Substance abuse information
Emergency contact information	Date of birth	Phone number
Referrals made	Detailed case notes	Anything that doesn't address immediate needs
Dates of service (info optional)	Nothing that a program wouldn't be comfortable showing a defense attorney	Data such as age and other demographic information could be kept separately from the file and in aggregate form
Abuser information (including name, criminal history, risk, etc)		
Income information		
Need for medical attention		

Questions to ask before creating a written record

- What is the purpose of writing down this information?
- Can this purpose be addressed some other way?
- Does this record keeping meet the battered woman's need for safety?
- Does this record keeping practice allow staff to do their job?
- Is this record keeping required by a funder or for a statistical purpose?

Contents of data and files

- Do not write subjective comments
- Do not include comments about: drug or alcohol consumption, battered woman's parenting skills, diagnoses or assessments, or opinions
- Share information with other staff orally rather than in writing – if shared by memo or e-mail it would be destroyed immediately after use
- No verbatim statement by a battered woman or written materials unless requested by a battered woman and with careful assessment
- Name of staff person working with a battered woman (use initials)
- Details of a safety plan
- Creating separate files is not a legal avoidance of disclosure of information

Steps to ensure safe recording keeping

- List all of the types of records kept by the program.
- Evaluate the necessity of the each record and form.
- Review every question on every form to determine the purpose of asking the question.
- Decide whether that purpose can be met by other means, and if so, revise the procedure.
- Separate program records from individual case records.
- Statistical information should be kept anonymous.
- Have adequate training for staff and volunteers about recordkeeping and confidentiality.

Maintaining records

- Keep records in secured cabinets
- Program records should be separate from individual records
- No access by board members – unless directed by agency attorney
- Funders and researcher should only have access to aggregate data – with confidentiality statements
- Have a clear written policy
- Work with an attorney, bank, or other third party to provide storage for documents when necessary

Retention and destruction

- Have a policy to address retention and destruction of files – length of time and how they are destroyed.
- Do not destroy or purge documents if there is ongoing litigation or if a subpoena has been served.
- Destruction should not include any exit forms or releases of information

Access to files

- Battered women are entitled to examine their own files in the presence of agency staff.
- Files should not be removed from the office or any documents
- Addressing requests for the correction or removal of inaccurate, irrelevant, outdated, addition, or incompleteness information.
- Allow battered women to make copies
- Electronic records are subject to discovery and need to be maintained with the same precautions.
- Password protect electronic data.

Case scenario #1

Karen is a battered woman who has utilized the legal advocacy, shelter, and support group services of your agency. Karen is still currently living in your emergency shelter. Karen's husband calls your crisis line and says that Karen just called him, sounded drunk, and told him that she is threatening suicide. You tell him that you cannot "confirm nor deny any agency information." You decide to check on her and her safety. When you talk to her she admits that she has been drinking and that she had called her husband and confronted him. She also said that she told him, "If you don't let me see the children I will kill myself." Karen left in the middle of the night but did not take the children with her when she came to the shelter. What do you document about this situation? Why?

Case scenario #2

Patricia has come to your agency for assistance to meet with a legal advocate. Patricia has told you that her husband Bruce has threatened the life of her and her two children. You live in a state that qualifies advocates as mandated reporters. Bruce punched Patricia in the face and the ribs. Bruce also kicked the new puppy across the room. The children were in their bedrooms sleeping at the time. Patricia tells you that the puppy is in the car and that she has been whining and limping since last night.

When meeting with her she asks if you will take pictures of her bruises and keep the pictures at your agency. She decides that she does not want to file an order for protection (OFP) but she does want your agency to keep on file the pictures of the bruises. She also went to the doctor this morning and has a medical report that states that she has a broken rib. What do you document about this situation? Why?
Resources and references:

NNEDV – Safety Net team – www.nnedv.org or www.nsvrc.org

Battered Women's Justice Project – www.bwjp.org