

# Authentic Community Engagement in Safe Harbor

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**Authentic  
Community  
Engagement  
in Safe Harbor**

# Agenda:

- ▶ Purpose
- ▶ Results
- ▶ Limitations
- ▶ Recommendations
- ▶ Q&A



# Purpose:

- ▶ Identify ways in which stakeholders within Safe Harbor could increase their capacity to center marginalized voices and survivors within their work

**1**

**to interview and engage culturally-specific Safe Harbor service programs**

**2**

**to implement the voices and wisdom of youth with lived experiences of trafficking and/or sexual exploitation.**

# Results:

- ▶ **Project Timeline:**  
February – May 2021
- ▶ **11** youth interviews
- ▶ **6** culturally-specific organizational interviews
  - ▶ **13** participating staff members



# Youth Interviews: Questions

**1**

**How have you observed different agencies interacting with each other when they come into contact with someone who has been trafficked?**

**2**

**How did agencies take your unique background and experience into consideration when working with you?**

**3**

**How would you like your voice to be heard to improve response by agencies?**

# Youth Interviews: Results

## 1) Discipline Collaboration

## 2) Background & Experiences

- Youth shared most positive and most negative experiences

## 3) Implementing Youth Survivor Voice

- Engagement methods = **youth advisory boards**, Team position for a youth representative, stakeholder interviews, and surveys
- Create “*opportunities to have raw conversations*” between youth and disciplines

\*Desire for youth autonomy

# Youth Interviews: Quotes

"I had to explain to a caseworker that I'm literally living in a car and my whole situation is extremely stressful so my brain isn't necessarily focused on, 'oh, let me email my caseworker and let me keep in contact with her,' because I'm in survival mode. I have to make sure I'm okay, you know, and I'm constantly in this state of survival."<sup>5</sup>

"Every voice is important. Every story is important. And no matter what, everybody deserves compassion. And that you can, truthfully, learn so much from every situation. Take every situation as, I can learn something new from this."<sup>21</sup>



# C-S Interviews: Questions

**1**

**What are the unique needs of the communities that you serve?**

**2**

**What discrepancies/Inconsistencies have you noticed in systems response to trafficked/exploited youth?**

**3**

**When teams are developing protocol, what needs to be included or reflected upon in the development process to support the particular needs of the community that you serve?**

**4**

**Should organizations such as yourself be involved within Protocol Development Teams? If so, how should this collaborative process be achieved?**

# C-S Interviews: Results

- **Discrepancies**
  - Transactional relationships and weighted exchanges
  - Feeling like an afterthought
  - Disregard for their work
  - Misunderstanding of services
- **Culturally-Specific Protocol Development**
  - Emphasizing authentic community engagement – *“You can’t save us without us.”*
  - Avoiding tokenism

# C-S Interviews: Additional Themes

- **Equitable funding for culturally-specific organizations**
  - *“In my experience, what I have seen is that culturally-specific programs are the ones with the least amount of funding, resources, and access. These things make our work incredibly unsustainable. But, more importantly, it really limits what we are able to do.”*
- **White supremacy and systemic oppression**

*“Unless you are an organization or system that is specifically set up to treat and to address and to partner and to sojourn with [the community] in terms of healing from sexual violence, most systems have a built in prejudice and [have a] disrespect and disregard for victims of sexual violence.”<sup>43</sup>*

*“We deal with multiple pandemics. Not only the shootings from the police, but also the intrinsic violence that is happening because of the unaddressed trauma in our communities.”<sup>46</sup>*

# Limitations:

- Small pool of participants
- Lack of diversity
- Narrow scope of experience with systems



# Recommendations:

- 1** Authentic community engagement begins with having critical conversations.
- 2** Develop meaningful partnerships with the community.
- 3** A clear line of communication extending from the Team to all facets of the community.
- 4** Propose for greater allocation of funding for culturally-specific organizations.
- 5** Boldly work to eradicate white supremacy and systemic forms of oppression.

# Thank You!

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