

## ~ ADVOCACY STRATEGIES ~

### Disrupting the Pipeline Between Domestic Violence and Criminalization

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#### ~ SUPPORTING SURVIVORS AFTER ARREST ~

##### ❖ Organizational Paradigm:

- *Adopt principle* that survivors already receiving services must continue to be prioritized after arrest and incarceration.
- *Train advocates* on the systemic criminalization of survivors, as well as specific pipelines between surviving domestic violence and becoming targeted for arrest and prosecution.

##### ❖ Individual Advocacy:

- *Develop protocol* for supporting survivors who are already receiving services after they are arrested.
- *Identify a plan* for how advocates can make themselves available to clients after arrest.
- *Research policies* of local jails and other ICE detention locations to learn how people who have been arrested are allowed to reach out for help, and incorporate this info into safety planning with survivors.

##### ❖ Outreach:

- *Facilitate support groups* in county jails (women's empowerment groups, etc.) to ensure a presence and support for criminalized survivors. This will help make your services more accessible to current clients who are in custody *and* survivors who did not connect with your organization before they were arrested.

##### ❖ Organizing:

- *Research local DA's* record on prosecuting survivors. Set up meetings to urge the DA to adopt the principle to not criminalize survival. Organize for the removal of DA's who prosecute survivors. See #ByeAnita campaign in Chicago as example.

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## ~ SUPPORTING SURVIVORS DURING PROSECUTION/PRE-TRIAL ~

### ❖ Organizational Paradigm:

- *Train advocates* on the processes of prosecution and how survivors' experience of prosecution mirrors, intersects with, and compounds their experience of domestic violence.

### ❖ Individual Advocacy:

- *Meet with prosecutor* to urge them to drop the charges. The choice to prosecute can be very discretionary, and this is a key point where advocates can intervene. If your organization already has a friendly relationship with the DA, use that relationship for good and do all you can to convince them to drop the charges.
- *Write organizational letters* of support to bail or bond out survivors. Offer concrete support such as housing, counseling, plans for safety, etc.
- *Work with defense attorney* to help build the survivor's legal defense. Seek well-qualified domestic violence expert witnesses. Ensure that the attorney is educated about domestic violence and does not incorporate unhelpful stereotypes or misinformation.
- *Advocate for the survivor's safety* during prosecution. Identify points of danger with the survivor, especially if they are being co-prosecuted with the person abusing them. Examples include threats made by the abuser during shared transit to the courtroom or while in the courtroom, abuse by police or jail guards, etc. Urge the defense attorney to advocate for the survivor's safety if they are being targeted.
- *Be present.* Learn how to stay in contact with the survivor, regularly check in with them and ask them what they need. Attend the survivor's hearings and trial. Consistent presence can be very impactful for people who are isolated and feel like the entire system is against them.

### ❖ Organizing:

- *Organize courtwatches.* Pack the court with supporters, including the survivor's family and friends, co-workers, members of ally organizations, etc. Consider also inviting members of support groups or other clients, organizational donors, etc. Train everyone on what to do so that they will not be disruptive. Assign some supporters to take detailed notes on court proceedings. Consider wearing organizational t-shirts, or the same color, to demonstrate community support to the judge and other court actors.

- *Organize letter-writing parties.* Invite people to write letters or postcards to send to the survivor to decrease their isolation and let them know they're not alone.
  - *Talk to the media* to advocate for the survivor's freedom. If it is a public case, do not be afraid to write op/eds and do interviews with consistent messaging that the charges should be dropped. If you need to avoid talking publicly about the case for safety reasons, focus on offering statistics about the criminalization of survivors, why it's important to stop the prosecution of survivors, etc.
  - *Fundraise.* Work with family and friends that are trusted by the survivor to set up an online fundraiser to help curb the devastating costs of being incarcerated and prosecuted.
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## ~ SUPPORTING SURVIVORS WHILE INCARCERATED ~

### ❖ Organizational Paradigm:

- *Adopt the principle* that the disappearance of survivors into jails and prisons, including immigration prisons, that are far away from people who love and care for them is part of the abusive experience of domestic violence.
- *Partner with experienced advocates of incarcerated people, including formerly incarcerated people,* to learn about conditions of incarceration, the kinds of vulnerabilities faced by incarcerated survivors, and how to communicate with and visit the survivor so that you may continue to advocate.

### ❖ Individual Advocacy:

- *Continue to communicate* with the survivor through jpay emails, letters, phone calls, or a visiting schedule to stay connected with the survivor. Recognize how important it is to be consistent in communication. Send books or other allowable items.
- *Strategize for pathways to freedom.* Connect survivor with post-conviction legal resources. Work with the survivor to explore strategies such as appeals, commutations, etc. Contribute to these efforts through writing letters of support. See the S&P/CPEDV letter writing toolkit for more info.
- *Advocate for the survivor's safety* during incarceration. Identify points of danger, document all information, and learn how to advocate for the survivor's safety with prison officials from those with experience.
- *Support family connection* between survivors and their children and other trusted members of their family.

❖ **Outreach:**

- *Offer to facilitate free workshops, support groups, and DV peer advocacy trainings* to incarcerated survivors. California women's prison populations are overwhelmingly survivors of domestic and sexual violence, and workshops, on-going trainings, and support groups are urgently needed.

❖ **Organizing:**

- *Organize.* Similar to organizing for the survivor's freedom during the trial, this step may include a number of strategies including courtwatches, group letter-writing, media advocacy, fundraising, petitions, etc. Check out the Survived and Punished defense campaign toolkit for more info.

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## ~ SUPPORTING SURVIVORS POST-INCARCERATION ~

❖ **Organizational Paradigm:**

- *Freedom from incarceration is a crucial anti-violence goal.* Though the survivor may still need to plan to stay safe from an abuser, their freedom from the abuse of incarceration is a big accomplishment.
- *Train advocates* about common short-term and long-term needs for survivors post-release.

❖ **Individual Advocacy:**

- *Welcome formerly incarcerated survivors* into your organizations with open arms! Ensure that they have a ride and a place to go when released. Celebrate their release with them.
- *Hire formerly incarcerated survivors* as advisors, peer advocates, admin staff, workshop facilitators, or other positions.
- *Provide reentry resources* for survivors, such as:
  - transitional living homes for formerly incarcerated survivors (especially those returning home after serving life sentences),
  - family reunification if they have children,
  - free counseling,
  - develop support groups specifically for criminalized survivors that attend to survival of domestic abuse and incarceration
- *Offer legal resources* to support survivors with legal issues post-incarceration, including immigration issues for immigrant and undocumented survivors, family custody issues, etc.