



INDIVIDUALLY WE POWER CHANGE.
TOGETHER WE POWER A MOVEMENT.

ReCentering Toolkit Forward

We are excited to launch a toolkit focused on the Texas Council on Family Violence's ReCentered work. This project was built on one simple theory: that staff and survivors, together, could apply grace and flexibility to policies and service provision and create environments that build upon survivors' strengths. We wrote the toolkit prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the emergence of renewed momentum to confront our national history rooted in racism and oppression and the disparities in outcomes connected to these injustices. We hope the principles outlined in these documents, which include assessments of racial equity and survivor voices, will assist programs as they move with TCFV in our continued commitment to better support survivors.

Before the COVID-19 Pandemic, intimate partner violence (IPV) was already a public health crisis with survivors facing seemingly insurmountable barriers and reporting staggering numbers of physical, emotional, sexual, and financial abuse. Advocates who support survivors face capacity and resource issues as well as consistent lack of systemic wellness support in the face of vicarious trauma. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we know that survivors and programs are now tasked with navigating two public health crises' with increased lethality concerns, housing instability amidst a need for social distancing, complex trauma, and an unsafe world outside the home. We also hold true that our country needs to make great strides to address and confront racism and oppression and that these truths of racial oppression and violence intersect domestic violence work deeply. Advocates, like other essential workers, are on the front lines of these complex challenges.

Additionally, advocates working diligently with survivors during a period of increased needs may experience their own personal trauma and stressors as a result of the pandemic or racial violence in our society. During these times, we understand there are extreme stressors and challenges in balancing your work, supporting survivors, and with your own needs and well-being. This toolkit is meant to be of assistance and serve as a framework for navigating difficult questions around advocacy as you do tremendous work on the front lines of our movement. Within the principles of this document, we hope you find adaptable solutions. When the recommendations don't fit your situation exactly, a theory of change that might support both this new frontier we did not choose to be on and the one of striving for racial equity that we must be on.

In these unprecedented times, though, our mission and values remain the same. We will create programs rooted in the principles of empowerment-based, survivor-centered, trauma-informed advocacy if we build our efforts on the voices of survivor experts. As a movement, we have built the core of who we are around the belief that a survivor's strength and agency will best support their safety. We believe that survivors know what they need best, and when we create environments that beget dignity, healing can occur. We understand that survivor needs, and this strength, are even harder to support as there is a lack of safe housing, financial resources, systemic racism, and a lack of access to healthcare. A core sense of a world unsafe at home and unsafe everywhere means no choice may seem like a good one. No choice a "safe one." We know that this pandemic further marginalized underserved communities and that those who are consistently pushed to the margins are being placed in life-or-death situations at unconscionable rates. We also know that there are increased concerns around service provision, such as safety in shelters, lack of resources available, and lack of information on what we face as a movement, and a nation, considering COVID-19.

It is a lot to even cover in a forward, and we know YOU hold that with you every day. The foundational principles of the ReCentering Toolkit can be helpful when making choices within this new environment. When you step above and beyond to provide services virtually or create the connection you are known for through a telephone, this guide has principles to consider and adapt.

In noting all of this, we want to strongly emphasize that these values apply to you as an advocate and as a person. You have every right to prioritize your needs and to have those needs heard. We so often describe the services we provide in terms like counseling, shelter, hotline, etc. The real service we provide is a connection, hope, and a belief in someone else when they do not see or know how to access their own strengths. Simply put, the service we offer that matters most is you and your advocacy. Please take time to be well and know we see you and the courageous work you do for survivors, and have been doing for so long.

We thank you for ReCentering your work and stand ready to do it with you.

The ReCentered Team,

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