

Just Ask How Advocates, Law Enforcement, And Attorneys Can Better Meet The Needs Of Crime Victims With Disabilities By Asking About And Providing Accommodations

JACKI CHERNICOFF: Hey. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for joining our virtual session today, Just Ask How Advocates, Law Enforcement, and Attorneys Can Better Meet the Needs of Crime Victims with Disabilities by Asking About and Providing Accommodations. My name is Jacki Chernicoff with the Center on Victimization and Safety at the Vera institute of Justice and the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims.

We have just a few quick logistical items to go over before we begin today. Participants are in listen and view only mode, which means we should not be able to hear you. But you should be able to hear us. And you should also be able to see the American sign language interpreter.

If you would like to turn the captioning on, please go to the closed captioning symbol at the bottom of your screen and select the arrow to the right of that icon. You can either select Show Subtitle or View Full Transcript. Once you do so, you will see the words I am speaking appearing below my video or to the right of your Zoom window.

If you cannot hear the presenter speaking, if you are having any difficulties with seeing the captioning or the American sign language interpreter or any other technical difficulties during the presentation, please enter a message in the chat pod at the bottom of your screen. This is the best way to communicate with me or my colleagues who are providing technical support throughout the virtual session today.

Please note that we value complete access during our virtual sessions. This means that we will ensure the complete functionality of our captioning and interpreters before moving forward. Due to the nature of technology, we may experience technical difficulties.

If we do experience a technical challenge, we will pause the presentation while we work to resolve it as quickly as possible. If the issue cannot be resolved, we may have to cancel the session. If this happens we will send a follow-up email providing additional information to all attendees.

We will not be using the Q&A pod today. So you have a Q&A pod and a chat pod. We're not going to use the Q&A pod. We will be chatting with one another via the chat pod.

We plan to have time after the presentation for questions and comments. If you don't want to lose a question or comment during the presentation, please feel free to go ahead, enter it in

the chat pod, and we'll hold onto your questions until the end. Again, please don't put questions in the Q&A pod.

When using the chat pod to communicate with others today, please select the option to respond to all panelists and attendees. This is the only way that everyone can view what you are sharing. So I want to go ahead and test that, all panelists and attendees.

So in your chat pod, there is a dropdown that allows you to select all panelists and attendees. Please go ahead and do that. Type, hello. Let us know where you're joining us from today.

Fantastic. All panelists and attendees. Excellent. That's wonderful to see everybody from all over.

There are a few of you that are still just sending your note to panelists, which means that I can view it and the presenters can view it. But everybody else can't. So please remember all panelists and attendees.

A couple of things about that chat pod. You are not going to be able to save the chat. Nor will you be able to copy and paste any messages that are shared from it. This is a security measure.

As hosts, we're able to save the chat. So should any resources be shared during today's session, we'll pull them from the chat

following this session and post them on the reachingvictims.org website.

We will be recording today's session. A link to the recording along with any resources shared during the session, the PowerPoint presentation, and the transcript will be made available on the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims website, reachingvictims.org. You can also find links to previous sessions there.

One quick note about your view and functionality in Zoom. If you have joined the session via a web browser, you may have more limited options than if you've joined via the Zoom app.

And finally, we are creating a multilingual space today. As you can see, we have American sign language interpreting happening as well as spoken language interpreting happening behind the scenes. We will break for just a few moments every 15 minutes in the session to switch interpreters.

So quick review. Turn your captioning on. If you need to get a hold of Vera's staff, please do so using the chat pod only, not the Q&A pod. Only the chat pod today.

You cannot save the chat or copy links or resources from it. So all the resources, the PowerPoint from today's session, will be on

reachingvictims.org org. And if you're using the chat pod to communicate, please select All Panelists and Attendees.

With that, I want to turn things over to Anneliese Brown and Katie Allen. We are excited for them to join us today. Liese is the training and technical assistance lead on the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims work to enhance victim services to better reach and meet the needs of crime victims with disability and death crime victims.

She is also a project director with the Center on Victimization and Safety at the Barrett institute of Justice. Anneliese has been working closely to address domestic and sexual violence for over 15 years and, in 2014, began working closely with community collaborations, striving to improve services to victims of domestic and/or sexual violence with disabilities or who are deaf.

Liese is joined by Katie Allen who serves as the disability access liaison for the National Resource Center and is a program associate with the Center of Victimization and Safety at the Vera Institute of Justice. Katie works to implement the NRC's language access, accommodations, and inclusion plan. She works with NRC partners and staff to ensure that trainings, events, resources, and materials promote access and inclusion for people with disabilities, deaf people, people who have limited English proficiency, and people from other marginalized communities. Liese and Katie, the floor is yours.

ANNELIESE BROWN: Great! Thank you, Jacki. And hi, everyone. I love seeing where everyone is joining us from, including I saw a few folks from Oregon.

And I'm actually joining you from my home in Bend, Oregon. But just great to see people over and people in different roles. And we're just really excited to have you all here today.

So I am going to share my PowerPoint with you. Sorry, it's taking just a moment. Here we go.

And I'm also really excited for you all to be here and to be able to tell you about this tool kit that we have been working on for, gosh, I don't know how long, Katie, like a year and a half. We've been working with a team of people for quite some time. And we're launching the tool kit today. And I'm just so excited for you to be able to join us for that.

Let's see. So before we get started, I just wanted to go over the objectives just so you know kind of what you're in for today. So after participating in this webinar, my hope is that you will have an understanding of the need to ask every victim if they need accommodations. That you'll feel more comfortable asking people that question or finding out if people do need accommodations.

That you'll be able to discuss with victims accommodations that they may need for remote advocacy. We're going to spend a little

time talking about that just knowing that many service providers are now providing remote services in the time of COVID. So we want to just spend a little time there honing in on some accommodations that can be helpful.

And then also, we'd like for you to walk away with information knowing what your organization needs to do to prepare to provide accommodation. So be ready to implement this tool kit. And then, we'll talk about how the tool kit can help you with all of these above pieces, or the pieces I've mentioned.

So I'm going to start by providing some framing in terms of people with disabilities and deaf people as victims of crime since that's why we're all here knowing that you all work with victims of crime in some capacity. So what we know is that people with disabilities and deaf people are at increased risk to experience crime, particularly violent crime. So as you can see on this slide, adults with disabilities are three times more likely to experience violent victimization. And that includes rape, sexual assaults, aggravated assaults, and robbery.

And then, another study demonstrates that deaf women are about 1.5 times more likely to be a victim of sexual harassment, sexual assault, psychological abuse, and physical abuse. And so even though this isn't kind of the goal of this webinar. But whenever I share these statistics, people will ask-- this begs the

question, why? Why are people with disabilities and deaf people at greater risk of crime?

And while we don't have time to dive deeply into that, I do want to say that the reasons for this largely have to do with the way in which we devalue and oppress people with disabilities and deaf people in our country. And it has very little to do-- a lot of people will make an assumption that it's something inherent to people with disabilities that creates a situation in which they're at greater risk for crime. And that's not the case.

And I share these statistics because-- so one in four people in our country have a disability. So given that, paired with this statistic that people with disabilities experience violent crime at three times the rate of people without disabilities, this means that a high percentage of the people who need your help are people with disabilities. However, many victim service providers and law enforcement officers and people who work in the courts will report that they work with very few people with disabilities and deaf people.

And this bears out in their research which shows that about 13% of victims with disabilities receive assistance from non-police victim service organization. So again, about 13% of people with disabilities who have experienced crime are reaching out for assistance from victims service providers.

KATIE ALLEN: Liese, this is Katie. I think we're just pausing for an interpreter.

ANNELIESE BROWN: Sure. Thank you. OK. Great. Looks like we're all set.

So again, this statistic just lets us know that supports are out of reach for many people with disabilities and deaf people. And so this also begs the question of why. And again, there's a variety of reasons why people don't reach out for services.

But we know that one of the reasons is that people with disabilities and deaf people experience barriers when they do. And people with disabilities and deaf people experience physical barriers, programmatic, communication, and attitudinal barriers when trying to access a variety of community services, health services, businesses. And so we know that they also experience barriers when accessing services in the wake of a crime or when they'd like to support around a crime that they've experienced.

And so that includes victim service providers, law enforcement, and courts. And I'm lifting up these three audiences because these are the audiences that the tool kit is geared towards and designed for. So that's why I'm talking specifically about them.

And then, I also just want to note that people with disabilities and deaf people have multiple identities such as race, gender

expression, sexual orientation. And so some folks with disabilities may experience additional barriers when attempting to access these services. So I just wanted to acknowledge that.

So there are many ways that organizations and systems can eliminate barriers. And providing accommodations is one of them. And that's what we're here to talk about today as you know.

So also, as you likely know, federal law requires government agencies and places of public accommodation, which includes private nonprofit organizations, to ensure that their responses and services are accessible to victims with disabilities and deaf victims. And there's a few different ways to achieve that. One is by providing physical access to the building where you're located. Also, providing aids and services for effective communication. And then also, making reasonable modifications to policies and procedures and practices.

And just a quick note-- you'll notice I use that word, "reasonable modifications." And when I say that, I always like to say that the bar for what is considered unreasonable is actually quite high. And it generally requires that the requested modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of services. So just wanted to let you know that piece.

And so what are accommodations? This is something-- at our organization, at Vera, we have been providing accommodations

for events that we host including virtual events, for any technical assistance we provide. So it is a word that we use all the time and have been using for a long time.

And part of our process in developing this tool kit and working with the team that we worked with was trying to find kind of an easier way to explain what an accommodation is. So accommodations are changes professionals make to the way that they do things so that a person with a disability or a deaf person can participate in services or the legal process.

So that includes things like getting a sign language interpreter, providing a person with equipment like a portable ramp, or doing something to support a person like reading forums out loud if that's something that they could benefit from. And so I wanted to hear from people in the chat to get a sense of how do you find out if someone that you're working with needs an accommodation.

OK, seeing a lot of people saying that they ask and that folks have a standard question for all clients. That's great. Someone is saying that they request it, meaning that the person, the victim, requests when they need an accommodation.

Yeah, lots of people saying that it's coming up during the intake process. And let's see. Pam is saying it's an automatic ask. That's fantastic.

So this is a question. So when we were creating this tool kit at the very beginning of this process, we did a needs assessment. And as part of that needs assessment, we talked both to people with disabilities and to professionals around the country who come in contact with victims in some way.

And when I asked this question, what I was hearing mostly from people is, I wait for them to tell me if they need an accommodation. I ask if I think they need an accommodation. So you can imagine that that means if that person's disability is visible or obvious. And then, other people were saying, I don't ask. I'm very new to this, and this is not a question that I've been asking.

And so it sounds like from what I'm looking in the chat that a lot of you are just asking automatically, which is awesome. And what we are hoping and what we're encouraging people to do-- and so we refer to it as universal screening for accommodations in just saying that the best practice is to ask everyone if they need accommodations.

And then, when I share that with people, they'll laugh. They just ask the question, well, why? Why do I need to ask everyone if they need accommodations?

And just to review, a couple of reasons. One that I mentioned that when people say, oh, I ask if I think they need an

accommodation. That relies on the person's disability being visible or obvious. And that is often not the case. So for many folks, you can't tell by looking at them that they might need an accommodation.

We also know-- some people will say, oh, I just wait for them to tell me if they need an accommodation. They know that it's their right. And what we've heard from a lot of people with disability is they'll share that-- so to ask for an accommodation is, in a way, disclosing that you have a disability.

You don't necessarily need to disclose your diagnosis. But it's still identifying you as a person with a disability, which some people may not want to do because they've experienced past discrimination from other organizations that they've worked with, other just places that they've gone. And/or this is, of course, related to discrimination that they've been denied their requests.

And so some folks will say, I'm just not going to bother. I'm not going to bother bringing this up because I don't know if this is a place that is open and willing to provide accommodations to me even though it's my rights and they're legally required to. We have a colleague who is a deaf woman. And she talks a lot about how exhausting it is to go to a new service provider, to go to the doctor a new doctor and have to advocate for why she needs an interpreter.

And so I think this is an experience that a lot of people with disabilities have as well, that if they do make a request, the person they're talking to may not know anything about providing accommodations. And then, they have to spend a lot of time and energy educating the service provider. And that's just exhausting. So some people don't bother asking.

And then, some people don't know that they have a right to receive accommodations. And I think this can especially be the case if someone's disability was recently acquired or they were recently diagnosed. And this can include disabilities that are acquired as the result of a crime. So traumatic brain injury, PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder. So for all of these reasons, the best approach is just to ask everyone if they need an accommodation.

And I have two quotes that I wanted to share from people with disabilities that shared these during our needs assessment. So one person said, "pretty much most of my disabilities are hidden. It's harder to recognize I have something. But I have gaps of information that you won't know if you didn't ask."

And then another person shared, "I get stuck trying to do it myself when they want me to do multiple tasks at once. I usually don't ask for help." So just a few quotes to just kind of give you this sense and to hear from people with disabilities in their words

about why it's so important to ask everyone if they need an accommodation.

So I want to move into talking about the tool kits. So how did this tool kit get started? So as I mentioned, we did this large needs assessment at the beginning of this process.

And when I was talking to people, again, and asking how they found out if someone had an accommodation, and many people were giving a bunch of different ways that they find out. And then when I would say, OK, we encourage this idea of asking everyone if they need an accommodation.

A lot of people would be like, yep, that totally makes sense to me. I'm happy for our organization to start doing that. But how do I ask? And this is the question that we just heard over and over and over again. What's the best way to ask if someone needs an accommodation? And people seemed really uncomfortable-- some people seemed uncomfortable asking if someone needed an accommodation.

And so what we decided to do was pull a group of national experts, so people who work and address crimes against people with disabilities. And that group includes people themselves with disabilities. And the conversation started with, how do I ask the question?

And then through all those conversations, we realized that asking-- the words that you used to ask the question is just one piece. And so from there, we created this tool kit. And so again, it's called, Just Ask-- a Tool Kit to Help Advocates, Attorneys, and Law Enforcement Meet the Needs of Crime Victims with Disabilities.

And I wanted to share a few foundational principles that came up when we were working with the expert work group. And one is that, when we think about providing accommodations, we think about wanting to create a comparable experience. And here's a quote from another person with a disability that we spoke to who shared, "many with people with disabilities want to have the same or similar experience as someone without a disability."

And when we talk about creating a comparable experience, I like to acknowledge that it is possible to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act or the Rehab Act but not provide an experience that is comparable. And I'll give you just a quick example of that. In my role, we work with communities who are trying to improve their response to victims with disabilities. And I went to meet with a domestic violence program. So I was going to that program.

And I'm kind of walking down the Street And I get to the building. And there's a series of stairs to get into the building.

And so I walk up those stairs. And then there's a lot of lighting. There is a button you can press. So the door's locked, but there's a button you can press that has a video. So it's a little video intercom system that lets people know that you're there.

And so all of these safety features. And so we go inside. We're meeting.

And just I say, OK, so if I was a person who used a wheelchair, would I be able to access your building? And they're like, oh, yeah, yeah. Yeah, we have a ramp in the back. I'm like, OK, let's go check it out.

And so we walk down an alleyway that brings us to the back of a building to a place that has a door that does have a ramp up to it. But it has one light. It's locked. There's no way to indicate that you were there, that you're at the door.

And so this is just an example of how that organization, they were meeting the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act in terms of actually getting in the door. But that a victim who had to go around back and use that door was having a very different and a very unsafe experience, so an experience that was not comparable.

OK, do we need to take a pause to change interpreters? OK, looks like we're all set.

So in addition to creating a comparable experience, we also want to make sure that, when we're providing accommodations and working with people with disabilities, we're creating a welcoming and inclusive experience. And then also, when we're talking about accommodations, we talk about the need to normalize needs and experiences.

And so I've spoken with many people with disabilities who will talk about-- when they're working with a service provider, they'll request an accommodation. And the person becomes visibly very uncomfortable. Their face might fall. Or there's just a long, awkward pause.

And it becomes apparent to the person with a disability that this person that I'm talking to either doesn't know what I'm talking about or doesn't know how to provide an accommodation to me. And it can send this message to a person who's asking for an accommodation that they are a burden. And again, you can imagine the impact that that could have on someone.

We know how hard it is when you've been a victim of crime to reach out for assistance. And then to do that and be met with this message that you might receive that the requests that you're making is creating a burden for the other person. So we want to avoid that as much as possible by, again, normalizing people's needs and experiences.

KATIE ALLEN: Liese, this is Katie. I noticed there is a comment in the chat from Andrea mentioning that it's important to remember that we all have access needs. It's just that a lot of people have those needs easily met. So thinking about that too when we're talking about normalizing experiences as well.

ANNELIESE BROWN: Yeah, thanks so much, Katie, for lifting that up and then for making that comment as well. And yes, that's absolutely true, Andrea. Thank you.

And so a few more foundational principles that the expert work group lifted up as being critical. And one is a phrase that many of you are probably very familiar with-- "nothing about us without us." And this is a phrase that comes from the disability rights movement.

And during the work group, we talked a lot about the importance of working in partnership with the person who needs an accommodation, that it's a conversation that you're having to make sure their needs aren't being met. It's not that you think they have a particular need and make your best guess at what might accommodate that need, but very much that you are working in partnership with that person.

And then, we also talked a lot about full participation, that people when they receive or need an accommodation-- or just that

generally everyone wants to be able to participate in your services fully.

KATIE ALLEN: Liese, I'm sorry. This is Katie. I noticed our captions have stopped.

ANNELIESE BROWN: OK, thank you. We'll pause just a moment to get those back up if we can.

KATIE ALLEN: They're there.

ANNELIESE BROWN: Great. OK. Thanks, Katie. So again, this idea of full participation. And we know many people have an experience where an adjustment might be made so that they can kind of participate in an activity.

So I just give an example of a support group I was participating in one time. And we were doing this activity where you had to kind of move around the room. It was a question about, if something happened to you, who would you go to for support with that? And so around the room were these signs that said things like my family, a domestic violence agency, my church-- so all these signs. And you had to physically move to the signs.

And there was someone in the group who used a wheelchair. And there just wasn't the space for that person to move around. And so what the facilitator did is they created signs so the person could stay in their place and hold a sign up. So that person was

technically able to participate in the activity. But their participation looked very different. And they weren't really able to fully participate us-- excuse me. They weren't able to fully participate.

And you can see how that activity could have been done differently where just everyone was asked to hold up a sign instead of some people move and other people hold up a sign. And then also, another thing the folks that we were working with in the work group talked a lot about is just the importance of acknowledging that disability is just one aspect of a person's identity.

And many people with disabilities have shared, including people of color with disabilities, may share, sometimes, if they go to an organization for assistance, they feel like all of that organization sees is their disability. And they don't see or factor in other aspects of the person's life that may impact the resources available to them.

So just as an example, someone's immigration status in addition to their disability can impact what resources are available to them. And then, the kind of grounding-- so those are all the things we were thinking about for the content that we kept in our mind when we were creating the tool kit.

And then also, we just wanted to make sure that the tool kit, it was a series of short, easy-to-use tools. I'll say a little bit more about that. I am the type of person that, if I had had my way, I would have written a 150-page think piece about why it's important to provide accommodations. And no one would have read it understandably. So we really just said about thinking that it's just important, and more people will be able to use this easily if we're creating some shorter, easy-to-use tools.

So the foundational idea of the tool kit is this idea of ask everyone and ask often. So this language appears in several of the pieces of the tool kit, which I'll show more of at the end of our conversation today. And so ask everyone and ask often.

So this is just this idea. And this is what we had a lot of conversations about. Asking about accommodations is not a one-time thing. It's not like, OK, we did it. In our first meeting, they didn't say they needed anything, so we're done. And I'm sure you can imagine all the reasons why that might not work.

And so we encourage people to ask in your first interaction with someone. It doesn't need to be the first thing that you say to a person. You can have some opening, welcoming conversation.

But it's important to ask in that first interaction because someone may need an accommodation in that moment for them to have this conversation with you. And then also, it's important to ask

that every new step in the process or new activity that someone's doing.

So it may be that someone they meet one on one with an advocate. And then, they want to attend support group. And they may not have needed any accommodations to meet one on one with an advocate. But they might need an accommodation to participate in the support group because it's a different activity that they're going to be doing.

So that's why it's important to ask, again, that first interaction. But then, be cognizant whenever there's been a change, like a change in activity. And it's also important this question of why ask often.

As I shared on an earlier slide, some people may not feel safe disclosing that they need an accommodation because they've had a negative experience in the past when they have or they feel like they have been discriminated-- or they have been discriminated against when they have asked. So it can take people some time to build trust.

Some people are just going to come right out and tell you in the first interaction. And other people might not. And by asking more than once on different occasions, it just sends the message to that person like, we really want you to be able to fully participate in everything.

And so I'm just going to ask a couple of times. And when/if you do need anything and you feel safe, please share that with us. And then, it's also important to ask often because needs can change over time as I'm sure some of you know.

I've been working with someone for probably about three years now. It's someone that I meet with on video. And within the last year, he asked for us to start providing captioning for him. And he's hard of hearing.

And that's something that has increased over time. And he's asked for some accommodations around that within the last year. So again, just knowing that people's needs can change really quickly and definitely since you last saw that person.

And so with the tool kit, we created four steps. When we had this conversation, it acknowledged like, OK, it's more than just how do you ask the perfect question. That it's a process to open the door to have this conversation with someone.

And so the first steps-- and we'll dive more into each of these. So step 1 is setting the stage, which is explain why you're asking about accommodations. And then, explain the process or the activities the person will need to do. Ask and listen being the second step. Step 3-- actually providing the accommodations. And then step 4, checking in and making changes.

So we just know and recognize that sometimes it can take a little while to find an accommodation that works really well for someone. In some instances, it may happen just immediately. And then in other instances, it may take some time and some kind of figuring a couple of different things out.

So the first step is around setting the stage. And here, this is the information to provide when you're starting a conversation about the need for accommodations. And so just an example of language that you could use.

We want to make sure every survivor in our community gets the help they need including people with disabilities and deaf people. We know that some disabilities may not be visible and some people may not feel comfortable asking for accommodations on their own. So we ask everyone if they need accommodations.

So that's just an example to let people know, we ask everyone this question, so that they don't think they're being targeted or kind of singled out for any reason. And then, it's also really important to describe the process or the services that the person will be engaging in. And this is something that someone on the work group shared.

They were like, well, if I'm going somewhere for the first time, I have an idea of what I might be doing. But I don't really know

what I'm going to be doing. So I don't enter that door knowing what accommodations I might need.

Some people might. And other people might not. It may be very dependent on the activity.

So an example, if someone's making a police report. Letting them know like, OK, I'm going to need you to tell me what happened. I'm going to need some details about the events. And that includes if you can let me know what time it happened.

These are some details that might be difficult for someone to recall. And they may need some accommodations to be able to do so. Same thing with participating in a support group, just letting someone know this is what our support groups look like.

This is what is typically happens during the support group. This is where they're located. Just, again, really talking through with people what activities are part of something that they might be engaging in.

Filling out paperwork, letting someone know, OK, if you're coming in for an intake, we're going to need you to fill out some paperwork, just some very basic demographic information that we need. Do you need accommodations to do that?

KATIE ALLEN: Liese, we're just going to pause for spoken language interpreters.

ANNELIESE BROWN: Great. OK. Looks like we're all set. Great.

And so the second step is asking and listening. So again, asking every victim if they need accommodations. And give examples of accommodations that you can provide that someone has requested in the past.

Again, some people may know exactly what they need for an accommodation. And other people may not have a sense of that. And it helps to provide some examples. And I loved-- I saw that in the chat a couple of times when I asked, how do you find out if someone needs an accommodation. And they said, we ask and we give examples.

And as part of the tool kit, we've created a tip sheet that breaks down some of the common activities that you do when you're working with someone-- so scheduling in appointments, finding a time for the appointments, then actually during the meeting filling out paperwork, et cetera-- where we offer a lot of different examples based on what functional limitations they might experience. So I'll say a little bit more about that at the end.

And then, this third bullet point here-- listen to the person. Don't assume you know what works best for someone. And some people have had their reactions. So did you really have to say ask and listen? Because they think, of course, if I'm asking, I'm going to listen to what they share.

But what we have heard from a lot of people and we know often happens is people do make an assumption about what works for that person. So I've heard many stories of a deaf person reaches out for services or someone knows that a deaf person is coming to an event perhaps. And so they, automatically without reaching out to that person, just provide an American sign language interpreter.

But not all deaf people or people who are deaf use American sign language. And so that's just an example of, when you make assumptions, you might just end up providing an accommodation that's not actually helpful for someone. And people know best what they need for accommodations and for assistance.

And so again, just a reminder that you are working with the person, not for the person. So again, it's this conversation and this idea of nothing about us without us. And so one really exciting thing that we created as part of the tool kit or something that we're excited about are some instructional videos.

And again, we created one for each audience. And we're going to go ahead and show just two short clips from the video. Each video is kind of between four and five minutes. And we didn't want to spend all of our time sharing that.

But we're going to show clips that are-- it's an advocate. And this is set to take place at a sexual assaults organization. And so it's one room.

And there's an advocate sitting across from a victim. And the victim is a person who uses a wheelchair. Katie is going to go ahead and show that for us.

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- Thank you for sharing your experience with me. I know it's taken you a lot of courage to come in today. It sounds like you're interested in one of our support groups. Our support groups are held once a week in our office where you come in and listen and share what you feel comfortable. There are usually 5 to 10 people in the group each week. Are there any supports you need to be able to attend group?

- Will the room be wheelchair accessible?

- Yes! Our group is held on an accessible room on the first floor. I'll make sure to tell the facilitator to set up the room so that there's space for you and others to get around. If you'd like to come a few minutes before the session, we can make sure the room is set up in a way that works for you.

- OK. I'd like to do that because sometimes they say the room is wheelchair accessible and it's not.

- So--

[END PLAYBACK]

ANNELIESE BROWN: Great. Thanks, Katie. OK. So there we go. Sorry. Just taking a moment for the screen to catch up.

So that's just a really brief snippet of part of a conversation that the advocate and the survivor are having in the moment around accommodations. I'd love to hear from people in the chat. Is there anything you noticed in that short clip that worked well in terms of asking about an accommodation or anything that stood out to you?

Great. Andrea is saying the advocate didn't assume the client's needs. Anna is sharing, yep, that allowing the client to have input.

Someone else is saying, I liked that he said he could come early to make sure it's comfortable for him. There was no expression of burden. Yeah, that's one thing that always stands out for me about this video is that there's not even a pause. Keith, who plays the victim in this scene, it says, can he come early to check it out? And the advocate responded just right away.

There was no pause like, yes, absolutely. I'll let the person who's running that group know that you're going to need to come earlier than they should come early. Instead of, which you could

easily see someone just being like, yeah, I'll have to check to see if that's OK. But we wanted to design this in a way that it just really flows.

Someone shared, I appreciate that the advocate said support rather than accommodations. Because support can have a variety of responses. And yes, absolutely. And we'll talk a little bit more about the actual language of asking. OK. Katie, can you go ahead and show the next clip?

[VIDEO PLAYBACK]

- Before you go, I'll need you to fill out a little paperwork. Just two sheets of paper with questions about basic demographic information that we need for our grant funding. I can email them to you, and you can fill them on your phone. Or I can give you the forms, and you can bring them back later if that feels safe to you. Do you need any support filling out the forms?

- If you could go over with me and give me a hand filling it out, it would be great.

- Sounds good.

[END PLAYBACK]

ANNELIESE BROWN: OK. Great. Thanks, Katie. So just I wanted to provide another opportunity if anyone wants to say in the chat

box if there's anything in that clip that stood out for you or anything that you wanted to point out that is maybe just a little different than how you've had conversations.

Maria is saying, a real investment in giving options. So yeah, the advocate gave two options. Yep, I'm seeing a lot of people say that.

Appreciating the language of if you feel safe. He didn't automatically assume that the client would need help. Letting the victim know that he can take his time with the paperwork and that he seemed to empower the survivor to make a choice.

And that's one thing you'll notice. The advocate offered two examples of ways that he could help with the paperwork. And Keith came up with his own idea and was like, well, no. Actually, this is what I need.

And again, there was no pause, no visible-- I don't know how to say it other than the advocate just seemed really comfortable and was like, yeah. We can do that. We can provide exactly what you need.

So thanks for-- yeah, and I'm looking. Someone else is saying, I think the client was comfortable asking for help with the paperwork because the advocate had previously started the conversation. And yeah, it was one conversation.

And during that conversation, the advocate asked both about what Keith might need for accommodations in the future meaning when he attends the support group and then also what does he need for accommodations with the things that we're going to be doing today or they were going to be doing that day together, which was having a conversation and also filling out a little paperwork.

OK. So what we really wanted to demonstrate with these videos is that asking about accommodations can just become, if it's not already for you, a normal part of your conversation with survivors and what you talk to survivors about. So I'm going to pull the PowerPoint back up.

So this is the ask-and-listen step. And so with this step in the materials, we provide some examples of how to ask the question. So again, this is the piece that we kept hearing from people.

I want to ask, but I don't know what to say. I don't feel comfortable. And so I'm going to give just a couple of examples after we do a switch for interpreters. OK, looks like we're all set.

So here, you'll see some different examples of how you can ask-- some suggestions. Is there anything I can do to make it easier for you to participate in services? Are there any changes or modifications we can make to the way we do things so you can fully participate?

And so just a couple of things about these two questions and one thing that someone had said in the chat when they were reflecting on the video is they said, I like that they asked if he needed supports, not that he specifically didn't use the word accommodations.

And this was something also that we really went back and forth with the group about recognizing that some people are going to hear the word accommodations. And they're going to know exactly what you mean. And they're going to be able to tell you, yes, I will need assistance filling out paperwork, something along those lines.

And other people may not be as familiar with that language. And you'll see on the next slide there is a question that uses that specific language because, really, there's no kind of one magical way to ask this question. And so that's why we offer a couple different examples.

So here on the next slide, you can see, do you need any accommodations to fully participate in services. And then, if it's possible, given the situation, it's always helpful to be more specific. So for example, do you need any additional supports to read and understand the paperwork? So really kind of honing in on, this is the thing we're going to be doing next or we're going to be doing at some point in our work together. Do you need any additional supports with x?

And so when we were talking, when we were interviewing as part of the needs assessment people with disabilities and asking this question, how do you like to be asked or what makes you feel comfortable? And like, you can actually request an accommodation. People had different ideas about the language to use, which is reflected in the tool kit.

But every person that I talked to said, what matters most is not actually the words that someone is using but how they're asking the question and the tone that they're using. And tone always feels like a really subjective thing to talk about. But again, it's something we heard from everyone.

They said, when someone asks me and they're asking me in a way and the-- their voice, just everything about their manner, makes it clear that they are really curious about what I need. And they seem really willing to help me with that.

Versus people also talked a lot about sometimes people using a patronizing tone about this like, what do I, the service provider, what do you need me to do for you, in this way that just felt really kind of othering and made that person not want to ask or not feel confident if they did ask that they're actually going to receive an accommodation.

And I'm seeing Hershel is saying, facial expressions and body language also have an impact along with tone. Yes, absolutely. All

of those different ways that we kind of give indications of how we're feeling about something. So again it's this idea of, when someone seems to be curious about what you might need what they can do to help you fully participate in services, that that is just so different and really kind of opens up a different door than when people have a very different experience.

So I'm going to turn it over to Katie to spend a little bit of time-- we created this tool kit before COVID-19. But we're hosting this webinar in the middle of COVID-- during COVID-19, when people services, the way people are working with victims has changed. So we wanted to spend just a little bit of time talking about, in this new environment, which is largely on the phone or online, some accommodations that people might need. So Katie, I'm going to turn it over to you.

KATIE ALLEN: Thanks, Liese. This is Katie. Can everyone hear me OK?

ANNELIESE BROWN: I can, Katie. Yeah.

KATIE ALLEN: So because of the pandemic, as Liese mentioned, many of us are working from home and sheltering in place. And so many of the same considerations apply when you're meeting with people remotely, with survivors remotely, as when you're meeting in person. So when you're thinking about scheduling,

considering things like the time of the day when you're meeting with people.

So for example, somebody with low vision might prefer to meet earlier in the day because, as the day goes on, eye strain can happen throughout the day. So thinking about asking people about times that they prefer to meet.

Length of meetings. So some people with disabilities that impact processing or attention might want to meet for shorter times throughout the day or shorter periods of time or take breaks during meetings. And even locations. So with many of us at home. Many people have small children at home or some other distractions or other things keeping their attention. So they may need to meet in less conventional spaces in the home like bedrooms, on the porch.

And also, just acknowledging that some people with disabilities that impact mobility might be reclining or lying down. And so keeping in mind some flexibility when you're thinking about scheduling meetings.

Does this sound a little bit clearer? Or am I still quiet?

ANNELIESE BROWN: Still a little quiet, Katie.

KATIE ALLEN: OK. I'll try to speak louder. Thanks. So when we think about the mode of communication with survivors, we want to first acknowledge that we've been hearing a lot about video.

And right now, we're on video. Not all agencies have access to video conferencing platforms. And not all survivors have access to that as well.

So we can meet people where they are. So some people might already feel comfortable using different types of communication modes like texting and might prefer those types of communications. So if you do have video capability, some survivors might already be using those, things like Skype or FaceTime or Zoom. And they might already know how to use those platforms, which is also fine.

I think someone asked a question earlier in the chat about whether a text or hotline chat works best for people in the deaf and hard of hearing community. And one answer to that is that it might work for some people and it might not work for everyone.

But it is great to just provide as many communication options as possible to work with all survivors. So when you think about meeting or using texting, many survivors with a lot of disabilities can text whether it's using typing or voice texting. So that's a great option for a lot of people.

If you are meeting by phone and if you're a hearing provider meeting with the deaf survivor or if your deaf provider meeting with a hearing survivor, one accommodation consideration is using video relay service for sign language interpretation.

And also, if you have video meetings, you might consider accommodations like captioning, whether the platform is accessible to blind survivors who may use screen readers or screen magnifiers, whether the platform is accessible for people who are using their keyboard, and also scheduling sign language interpretation for meetings on video but kind of giving the same permissions to interpreters as everyone else joining in the video so that you can all have the conversation much like we are now.

And also, considering how complex the process of connecting to certain platforms can be. So it can help to meet with people in advance to practice or also just provide some written instruction. So again, when it does come to choosing a video platform, you want to use what already works for people. So if something is already working, then just maybe meet people where they are.

But if not, you can present some information about options and consider access and safety when you're thinking about those options. And we can share some resources with you about some features that make some platforms more accessible or safer than others.

But for access considerations, kind of as I said before, some platforms offer integrated live captioning. And some are easier to navigate using screen readers and other assistive technologies than others. And for safety considerations, we talked to some of our colleagues from the National Network to End Domestic Violence.

And they shared some different safety considerations with us for different platforms. And we can share those resources as well. I think Jacki was sharing that in the chat.

And then also, considering technology access in general. So some survivors and providers will have better internet access than others and more stable internet. So it's important sometimes to test the audio, test the video with people.

Recommend using headphones and microphones when you're having conversations. And checking with people's web cameras to make sure that they have that capability as well. So those are just some technology features to consider.

And I notice Karen mentioned needing to find a way to make sure that a person is in a safe place to speak. So that's definitely one of the safety considerations that may have less to do with technology but just privacy within someone's own space in their home.

ANNELIESE BROWN: Great. Thanks, Katie. So there, I was seeing a lot of chat happening where people were asking, what about safety considerations with some of the different platforms? And as Katie mentioned, there are many different safety considerations for these platforms.

And you could certainly do an entire webinar specifically on kind of those safety considerations. And we wanted to just kind of make mention of them and say that there are a couple-- you want to think about what works best for that person. Is there something they're already using, a certain technology that they're already using?

And then also just being able to talk to them about the safety implications of a particular platform. And our partners or our colleagues at the National Network to End Domestic Violence within their safety project, if you haven't visited their websites, in the last few weeks, they have been creating an immense amount of materials that relate to thinking about providing remote services and all of the safety implications. So we recommend checking those resources out.

KATIE ALLEN: And Liese, I noticed Diane mentioned too, in the chat, texting can be helpful when a survivor is trying to access a hotline while the perpetrator is close by, whether or not they have a disability or a deaf.

ANNELIESE BROWN: Absolutely, yeah. Thanks, Diane. So we've gone over step 1, which is setting the stage; step 2, ask and listen; step 3, pretty obvious, but providing accommodations.

And there's two things that I wanted to talk about or just mention. It always begs the question. So someone makes an accommodation request. How quickly are we able to provide that accommodation?

And some accommodation requests are going to be more urgent than others. And so what we say is to provide them as soon as you're able to, keeping in mind that some people may not be able to stay safe without the accommodation, so an accommodation that has to do with the support group. Say it's Monday and the support group is happening on Wednesday. You have a couple of days to fill that accommodation request.

But I give the example-- I do some work with campuses. And this report came out two years ago, I think, from the National Council on Disability that was looking at how campuses are responding to student survivors with disabilities and deaf student survivors.

And they gave this example that, on one campus, a deaf person was assaulted late hours or maybe early Sunday morning. And they wanted to report to campus law enforcement. And they went to campus law enforcement. And they weren't able to provide an interpreter for them.

So they weren't able to essentially make the report that they needed to make to be able to take steps to become safe. So they weren't able to do it in the moment. And this is particularly egregious. But in that case, it took the campus two weeks to provide that person with an interpreter.

And you can just imagine, in two weeks, all of the safety risks that could happen. And that the person like, why bother? Why bother pursuing this if someone's demonstrated that they can't really help you and meet you where you are?

Again, that is a very extreme example, two weeks. That just really stood out to me. And I can't not think about it when I talk about this.

But again, someone needing to make a report in the middle of the night. And they need an accommodation to do that. Or needing to make a report just in the moment, they may need an accommodation to do that so that they can have a conversation with you, do some immediate safety planning.

And so it's really trying to figure out what is the need for the accommodation, what's the sense of urgency around it, and then how can I provide it. And then, the other thing we always have to say is that your organization is responsible for covering the costs of providing accommodations. It is not the survivors' responsibility.

Again, many of you I can tell who are on this webinar, just everything I'm seeing in the chat, are working with people with disabilities are already really knowledgeable about your responsibilities. So I'm sure this seems just like a given and not something that needs to be said. But unfortunately, we know that it does. So I just wanted to throw that out there.

And then the fourth step is, so after you've provided the accommodation, checking in with that person to see how is it going. Is it working? Are they able to fully participate in services? If they're not, is there something that could work better? Or is there another accommodation you could provide to supplement the first accommodation or another accommodation that was already provided?

So again, this conversation about accommodations can become an ongoing conversation. You check in with people several times to see if they need an accommodation. And then once one is provided, you're checking in to make sure it's working for them so that if it's not, you can work with them to find something that does.

Let's pause just a moment so we can switch interpreters. OK, great. We're all set.

So one of the pieces of the tool kit-- or the things that organizations can do, so it's the things for people in the moment,

whether it's an advocate or an attorney, a law enforcement officer, someone in the moment who is working with a victim. We've provided some information about how you can ask this question. But you need to make sure that your agency is prepared to provide accommodations.

And this is something that we cover in a piece of the tool kit. So I'm not going to spend a lot of time on it now. But it also relates to something that someone said earlier in the chat where they said, it's really important that your staff has training about working with people with disabilities. It was when we were talking about kind of tone and body language.

And so that is one of the examples that we give of something to do to prepare, to make sure your organization is prepared to provide accommodations. Trained staff. Trained staff on working with people with disabilities and deaf people. The needs of crime victims with disabilities and deaf victims.

Making sure you have an accommodations policy. And in the tool kit, we talk about some things to make sure that you have in your accommodations policy. One of the things is some language about how quickly you can and will provide accommodations.

Making sure you have a budget for accommodations. This is something we know a lot of organizations struggle with. They

may get a request. And they don't have money. And that is their initial reaction. We don't have money for an ASL interpreter.

Make sure that you have accessible technology. So that's, again, what we've been talking about today. If your organization is using a particular virtual platform, make sure it's accessible. If there is some access issues with it, can you have a second platform that you can also offer?

Developing partnerships with disability and deaf service organizations. And then also, making sure you have a plan in place to monitor and reassess your accommodations policy. So checking in with people who have received accommodations to see, how did that process go for you? Was it smooth? And then also, checking in with people who are providing accommodations to ask the same questions.

So I want to leave a little time for questions. And the next few slides, they're screenshots of different tools that are within the tool kit. And I realized they're too small right now for you to read the language on them. I mostly just wanted to be able to show you what's available, give you a little summary of what's available.

So the first thing I should say is that there are essentially kind of three tool kits within this tool kit. So we created materials specifically for advocates, materials specifically for law

enforcement personnel, and then a separate set of materials for attorneys and prosecutors. And for each of those audiences, there are four different materials.

So the first is a desk card. And so on the front of this desk card are the four steps. And then on the back are just a few examples of how you can ask someone if they need an accommodation. And it's really designed to be carried with you or displayed on your desk for use when you're working with someone and you're going to be having this conversation.

So this is just an example. This is a Palm card that is specifically for-- or desk card specifically for law enforcement. Then, there's a slightly longer four to six pages guide to providing accommodations. And so this really just gives them more information about the four steps. It provides some language from the federal law, how the federal laws define accommodation, some more easy to understand language that you can use when working with survivors.

It talks about, again, why it's important to ask everyone and why it's important to ask often. So this is an example of what we call a quick reference guide. And this one in particular is for victim advocates.

And then there's a third guide, an organization readiness guide which has recommendations, again, things for your organization

and agency to have in place to make sure that you're prepared to provide accommodations when people request them. And so people are asking if they can get a copy of these cards. So they are all available on our website.

So we have not been able to print these yet. We were hoping to have them printed. But because of just some limitations with the pandemic, we have not been able to print them yet. But you can reach out to-- it's reachingvictims-- actually, what's the-- yes. Can somebody put in the chat with the best email is for people to reach out to?

And you can make a request there. And once we have the actual physical printed materials, we can send those to you. But in the meantime, you can print them off the website. They're available in PDF and then text files as well.

OK. And then finally, I mentioned there is a tip sheet. So here, if you can see, it says at the top one-on-one meetings. So here are some activities that you might need to engage in with one-on-one activities-- so scheduling, paperwork, and some different types of accommodations based on different types of functional limitations that someone may be experiencing.

And there's videos. So we created four different videos. And you're able to see part of the one for advocates.

So you can see my email address on here. You can certainly reach out to me with any questions, comments that you have from today, from the webinar. And Jacki just put the email address reachingvictims@vera.org in the chat. You can also email that address with questions and to request materials.

We have just a few moments, a few minutes for questions. So if folks have any questions that you want to ask at this time, please go ahead and put them in the chat. And we'll try to answer as many as we can. And then also know that, if we're not able to answer your question today, please reach out to us again either at my email address, which is abrown@vera.org or the reachingvictims@vera.org.

And thanks, Jacki. Jacki just put my email address in the chat as well.

JACKI CHERNICOFF: This is Jacki. Liese, we have a question that came in a little while back about how do we best serve survivors who need ASL interpreters while living in a residential domestic violence shelter. Do you have some ideas around that?

ANNELIESE BROWN: Yeah. Well, Katie, do you have any thoughts. If not, I can share mine. But I wanted to start with you.

KATIE ALLEN: Yeah. This is Katie. So I guess one thing to consider-- I mean, there's a couple of different things to consider in that type of environment.

So one would be making sure that the provider, the interpreter has experience working in the field of domestic violence ideally and knowing some of the terminology, being familiar with working with victims, and then also the ethics that they're bound by. So they're bound by a code of ethics. So for privacy and confidentiality, interpreters would be.

And then I suppose if you're thinking about having a physical presence in the space, ideally because of that code of ethics and doing a screening process to be sure that the interpreters have experience, being in person could work but also video relay services would be another option.

And we can also check in with our deaf access liaison, Raylene, to get some more tailored guidance on this as well and to get some other answers for you. But that was what I was going to share at least.

ANNELIESE BROWN: Thanks, Katie. I also just wanted to say providing essentially as much interpretation as you're able to provide is great. So in addition to that person just being able to meet with an advocate, are you able to provide interpreters so

that individual can engage with other people who are staying in the shelter?

We a big part of staying in shelter is around building community. And so how can you make sure that a deaf person in shelter has access and is able to build community in that same way?

Obviously, if there are different shelter meetings, support groups, things along those lines, making sure that those are also accessible.

Well, it looks like those are-- I know some people who are asking questions along the way. Katie was able to pop in and answer some. But again, if any of your questions went unanswered, please reach out to us.

And thank you so much for your interest today and for your participation and listening. We really appreciate it. So Jacki, I'll turn it back over to you.

JACKI CHERNICOFF: This is Jacki. Thank you so much, Liese and Katie. And just thank you everyone for participating in this virtual session.

As we close, we're just going to ask that you complete a brief evaluation. This evaluation will open automatically after you leave the virtual session today. So it should pop up and open automatically. If you could just take a few minutes to share your

thoughts with us so we can continue to work to best meet your needs.

And again, if you want to download the PowerPoint or material shared today or link to the tool kit, you can do so by going to reachingvictims.org to the Resources page to Just Ask. And again, if we didn't get to all of your questions, please feel free to send your questions via email to reachingvictims@vera.org. I'll be sure to get them to Liese or Katie.

And again, if you're interested in learning more about the National Resource Center and the technical assistance and training we provide, please also contact us via email at reachingvictims@vera.org or by visiting our website reachingvictims.org and going to the How We Can Help tab.

Thanks again. I hope everyone continues to stay well. And have a wonderful afternoon.