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## WHAT IS A VOICES COMMITTEE AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

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### A GROUP OF SURVIVORS WHO...

- Volunteer their time to celebrate their strength and survival.
- Use their voices to help others through advocacy, education, and empowerment.
- Support each other as well as incoming Family Justice Center (“FJC”) clients.
- Can offer a unique perspective in regards to your Center’s established programming, and/or identify gaps in services.
- Continually advocate on behalf of the local Family Justice Center, not just in the early stages but for long-term sustainability.

### A VOICES COMMITTEE IS NOT:

- A support group.
- A mascot for the movement.

### VOICES HISTORY

The first VOICES committee was launched in San Diego in 2002. At that time, members of VOICES served as an advisory committee for the San Diego Family Justice Center, assisted with training, and spoke at various public events to bring awareness to the services provided at the Family Justice Center.

### VOICES NATIONALLY

VOICES is developing an outreach effort to create a nationwide group of survivors to educate the public about family violence, as well as support new and existing Family Justice Centers. It is the vision of active chapters to connect and engage with other VOICES chapters nationally to share news and successes as well as collaborate on new ideas. It is the role of the Alliance for Hope International, to support chapters, help them network, and provide technical assistance to centers wishing to establish a VOICES committee.

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## MEMBERSHIP PARTICIPATION QUALIFICATIONS

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We are looking for VOICES committee members who have either been victims of crime (or close family members in the case where the primary victim is deceased) in Jefferson County, or currently live or work in our community. With the goal of minimizing re-victimization / re-traumatization we have established a few guidelines to ensure a survivor is in a good place to offer constructive feedback to the collaborative and is “ready” to participate on this committee. As “readiness” is extremely subjective; we have mimicked best practices across the country to help identify the best fit. As a general rule, it is recommended that a potential VOICES member be out of their abusive relationship or removed from their victimization and finished with all subsequent criminal cases and most civil proceedings for at least one year.

### REFERRAL PROCESS

- Potential members can be referred by Family Justice Center partner agencies.
- Potential members can self-refer.
- A referral can be made by a current VOICES committee member.

Whichever way you are referred to the committee, each potential member must complete a process which includes a short application form (this information will only be used for committee member intake and not shared). This form is reviewed by the current committee members, and two separate meet and greet sessions will be conducted.

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## *APPLICATION PROCESS*

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Once an application is completed and reviewed by the current committee, we will request that you sign a release to run a background check. (A criminal history does not automatically exclude you from participating.) You will then be invited to participate in the initial meet and greet to determine readiness level. The first meeting will be with an individual, and the second meet and greet will be with the current committee members. Some things to expect in these meetings are as follows:

- A discussion about criminal history (If any exists).
- You will be asked to share why you would like to be part of the committee.
  - What information you share about your experience is entirely up to you. This by no means requires you to disclose more information than you are comfortable disclosing.
- Assessment of safety concerns.

### EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIRED COMMITMENT

- ✓ Agree to regularly attend committee meeting (Current meetings are one time a month for 2 hours). Attendance in more than 7 meetings within the year is expected.
- ✓ Promise to stay connected to the work being completed.
- ✓ Provide timely responses on requests for feedback from the committee.

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## *WHO SHOULD BE A MEMBER?*

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Potential members of the VOICES committee must have been a crime victim.

Safety is a primary consideration regarding eligibility for the committee. Ensuring safety for individual member and the group as a whole is critical. The following criteria and protocols are required to protect the safety of the VOICES committee. The prospective member:

- Must be willing to participate in ongoing dialogue and transparency.
- Has been separated from the abuse/violence for a minimum of one year.
- Is not currently involved in trial or court proceedings related to the abuse/violence and victimization from the abuser. (including all criminal, and some civil proceedings, to include cases related to separation)
- Is not currently in a [new] relationship with an abuser (convicted or not).

- Participation in an agreed upon method of communication between the VOICES committee and the FJC to help ensure the safety of the members.
- Commitment of two years is expected. Tenure not to exceed 6 total years.
- In an effort to ensure that our membership is a diverse representation of our community, we have endeavored to be inclusive of special or marginalized populations to include:
  - Bilingual or monolingual speakers
  - Incarcerated women
  - Sexual assault survivors
  - Elder abuse survivors/ Family members of elder abuse survivors
  - Domestic Violence survivors
  - Parents of child abuse survivors
  - Survivors with/without children
  - Male survivors
  - LGBTQQIA survivors
  - Other culturally-specific populations
  - Tribal populations
  - Trafficking survivors (labor and or sex)

In an effort to be all-encompassing, we encourage the above attributes because we know that a more diverse group can lead us to various connections and insights within our community that may not be possible by just focusing on domestic violence in the English speaking community alone.

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## *RECRUITMENT*

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### RECRUITMENT

Starting August 2018 the VOICES committee will have open enrollment until the desired committee matrix is accomplished. At that time we will transition to quarterly recruitment (August, November, February, and May). This schedule will adjust as needed based on interest, need and current committee size.

You will meet with a current committee member. Prior to that first meeting you will be given access to an online Dropbox that holds all of the documents the committee has created, minutes to meetings and miscellaneous resources. Prior to your first committee meeting please plan to:

- ✓ Read all of the previous month's meeting notes
- ✓ Familiarize yourself with other committee opportunities