



Alternative Service Delivery Options For Survivors

In some communities, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic can be far more difficult to handle, due to limited internet and phone access. Many marginalized communities were experiencing these hardships long before the existence of the pandemic. As we move to more virtual spaces for service delivery, we are shining a light on the problem of limited access for many. Working together to find ways to best provide service for survivors with limited or no access to phone and internet service, is one of the best ways we can show survivors our commitment to their wellbeing. This list is not exhaustive, and NCCASA will be working diligently to find more information to add to this document. Although, some of the resources listed below entail some use of technology, consideration is being given to the unpredictability of the lines of communication in more isolated areas.

Similarly, just letting your community know that your agency is still open and functioning during these times albeit in a remote way, can provide some much-welcomed stability for survivors. There are also a couple resources listed below on providing community outreach to marginalized communities in the face of this pandemic, to support existing clients and let others know your agency is still servicing new clients. NCCASA has developed a guide on providing outreach to all communities. You can view that document [here](#).

A message about continuing to center the needs of marginalized survivors during this time.

As we continue to work with survivors in our communities, it is imperative to our work that we are centering the experiences of our most vulnerable survivors. Consider this when you are doing outreach by providing visibility of services for these communities. If you have a Latinx outreach coordinator

or an LGBTQ+ outreach coordinator, ask if they would like to share a message for those communities. Further, your agency could do something in the media to talk specifically about the impacts of sexual violence on folx with marginalized identities in your community. You may provide statistics, barriers to accessing services, information about generational and/or institutional trauma that people from specific cultural or racial backgrounds face, as well as the intersections of sexual violence and oppression. You could talk about the impact of sexual violence on men and non- binary folx. Use this as a platform to educate the community while also increasing your visibility. Being intentional about reaching out to marginalized survivors improves your outreach to all communities. As you are reading through this document, we encourage you to find the ways we have spoken into this and how it can be specifically applied in your community and remembering that centering marginalized voices and experiences at all times, not just during the pandemic is paramount to work in ending sexual violence.

Call Regularly

During this time of social distancing, survivors may feel isolated or lonely. Scheduling with and contacting them as often as you can, can make a huge difference, especially for those survivors without internet access or limited access to a phone. When in doubt, over-communicate, but also maintain boundaries to avoid burnout.

BEST PRACTICE TIP: It could also be helpful to schedule a regular day and time that a survivor indicates they have access to a phone and/or signal. You can check in with the survivor's overall safety with the [NCCASA Safety Plan for Survivors located here](#)

Suggest free internet offers, but be mindful of limitations

Major internet providers like spectrum and comcast are giving free wifi for students for the next couple months. If the survivor has children, this could be a useful tool to gain access to the internet and

help the children complete school related tasks. Many providers are also waiving late fees for existing customers and increasing data caps for mobile hotspots ([Comcast/ Xfinity](#), [Sprint](#), [Verizon](#), [Spectrum](#), [T-Mobile](#)). But to gain access, restrictions may apply. For example, to qualify for comcast internet essentials program, which provides affordable internet (\$9.95/ month) families must meet the following criteria:

- Eligibility for public assistance programs such as the National School Lunch Program, DSS assistance (food stamps, TANF)
- No outstanding debt to comcast that is less than a year old
- Live in an area where comcast internet service is available
- Be a new customer

[Lifeline](#) is a federal program which provides low- cost phone and internet service to low income individuals and families. It is available to eligible low-income consumers in every state, territory, commonwealth, and on Tribal lands.

Seek out hotspots

Although local libraries and other places may be closed, their routers are likely still on. When this is the case, people can access the internet from outside or in their cars.

WhatsApp

Whatsapp does not require as many gigs as facebook or google. It may be helpful to communicate and share info with this app instead of sending PDF documents or using email or messaging systems.

Whatsapp uses end- to- end encryption to ensure only you and the person you're communicating with can read what is sent, and nobody in between; not even whatsapp. The messages are secured with locks, and only the recipient and sender have the special keys needed to unlock and read the messages. For added

protection, every message has a unique lock and key, and all of this happens automatically within the app; no need to turn on settings or set up special secret chats to secure the messages. End-to-end encryption is always activated and there is no way to turn it off.

Be advised! Safety is a major concern with any app chosen to communicate. For instance, if the advocate and survivor have chosen this method of communication, it is imperative that the advocate notify the survivor that whatsapp typically backs up any photos or documents to the camera roll or document folders. This could be an issue if the survivor wants to keep this information private from any perpetrator or loved one who may have access to the survivor's phone. Similarly, any messaging or calling app that advocates and survivors choose to use, it is important to notify survivors of the possibility of stored or backed up information within the phone and to be aware of the safety risks with them all. NNEDV Tech Safety project has a list of some other technology means of communications [here](#). Please be reminded: Agencies receiving VAWA funding must still adhere to the requirements of the VAWA Confidentiality Provision; that is, they may not disclose, reveal, or release personally identifying information or individual information collected in connection with services requested, utilized, or denied through grantees' and subgrantees' programs, regardless of whether the information has been encoded, encrypted, hashed, or otherwise protected. NCCASA has developed a guidance document for programs regarding VAWA compliance. You can view that document [here](#).

Snail Mail

Before high- speed internet, there were workbooks and handouts that helped survivors to cope with difficult times. Sharing information

with clients via snail mail and good old fashioned letters can be useful in communicating. Keep in mind you will need the client's consent before sending sensitive information about sexual assault to their homes.

At the end of this document are some great handouts for working with survivors. Although some of the handouts are not sexual assault specific, they can still be a great way to educate clients about how to cope in this pandemic. What is important to note is the benefit of them being non- specific to sexual assault allows the client to have more flexibility in terms of where they keep their items in the home, if they do in fact, reside with an perpetrator.

Similarly, if the client has access to a computer but no internet, you can send USB drives with helpful information, reading materials or workbooks on them. Some suggested readings could be:

1. [Emergent Strategies by Adrienne Maree Brown](#)
2. The Nap Ministry- an account to follow on social media if the survivor has access to instagram. Similarly, printing out and sending this [related essay](#) can provide some wonderful reading.

NOTE: When speaking with survivors about self- care it is important to remember that self-care does not work without community care and that sometimes self-care is being able to pay for groceries or a bill. Assisting the client to find these resources can also fill some of the time required to advocate for the client.

Community/Partner Outreach

Advocates and agency staff can reach out to apartment complexes, HUD offices, and homeless shelters to negotiate for survivors to be able to have access to internet or phone time at their locations. For example, Many apartment complexes have an office/ business center.

They may be willing to provide an individual, whether resident or not, a time period to have access to their phones or computers. Similarly, checking to see if homeless shelters are able or willing to provide laptops or phones for use for individual advocacy is another great effort to mitigate these circumstances.

As previously mentioned,, NCCASA has developed a more detailed guide for outreach that can be found [here](#).

Marginalized community outreach

Many survivors are also dealing with cultural stressors in conjunction with the stress of the current climate. This may include financial or employment uncertainty, housing or food insecurity, concerns about deportation, concerns about harassment or violence, loss of access to public benefits or healthcare, distrust of public authorities, and general uncertainty about the future. Similarly, some of the most marginalized communities engage in the front line and essential work of this pandemic so they face even greater risks about their futures and health.

Reach out to representatives of those communities and ask what they are seeing as needs of survivors at this time and how your agency can help.

Speak with those community leaders, LGBT and LatinX organizations, tribal councils and others to identify what their community needs are. Advocacy for them may not look like what we feel the “traditional” needs are for sexual assault survivors. In these uncertain times you will likely have to go beyond your menu of services to provide for this population. Once you are able to identify truly what the needs of the people are, you can talk with your agency leaders regarding the capacity you have to fulfill these needs.

RELAX YOUR STRESS AWAY:

10 Great Ways to De-Stress



YOU CAN HELP RELIEVE BOTH THE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL TENSION THAT OFTEN ACCOMPANIES STRESSFUL SITUATIONS!

Relax your body

The next time you feel the effects of stress too much, when you are overwhelmed, try some of the following ways to help you relax.

- 1. Deep breathing** is your number one defense against unmanageable stress. You can sit, lie down, or stand to do this. Close your eyes and breathe in slowly for a count of 5-10 seconds. By closing your eyes you will give them a rest too. Take ten of these super-relaxers any time you feel tense.
- 2. Stretch.** Practice simple stretches. Gently roll your head in a half circle from side to side with your head pressing towards your chest. Stretch your arms into the air and stretch your fingers too. Point your toes away from your body, and then flex them towards you. Stretching will allow the blood circulation to those parts of the body that have been "crunched" by poor posture or sitting at a desk.
- 3. Exercise.** Any kind of exercise is wonderful to help reduce stress. Make it fun. A walk, hiking, bowling, running, or playing a game of badminton or golf are good examples of fun exercise.
- 4. Take a bath.** Spend at least 30 minutes soaking in a hot bath. Experience the benefits of aromatherapy by adding bergamot essential oil to the water.
- 5. Eat well.** Reduce caffeine (e.g. coffee, black tea, chocolate) and alcohol intake. Try to eat a well-balanced diet, as it will help your body to perform, and keep your mind functioning optimally.

Relax your Emotions

Relaxing your emotions can be just as important as relaxing your body in relieving stress.

- 1. Talk.** Take time to talk with a friend, relative, or counselor. Try to express feelings that you may have been holding inside. Listen to your partner. Try to have this conversation in a quiet space with minimal distractions.
- 2. Laugh!** Laughter is healing and a great way to relax. Go to a comedy club, rent a funny movie, or give that funny friend of yours a call. It's impossible to really laugh and be tense.
- 3. Cry.** Crying can be as good a release as laughing. If you haven't cried in a long time, try listening to music that moves you, or watch a movie that speaks to your emotions.
- 4. Read.** A good book can take you on a great escape. Read a comedy or a tearjerker and it will help release pent-up emotions
- 5. Do something you love.** When you enjoy yourself, whether it's biking, hiking, exploring the city, seeing friends, cooking, or playing with a puppy, you relax your emotions.

Create Stress Reducers

Keep in mind these are just a few of the many stress reducers you can try. You can create your own healthy stress reducers without resorting to alcohol and drugs as a "temporary" fix. **Do yourself a favor and begin now.**

A Few Relaxation Exercises

BREATH COUNTING: If possible, close your eyes. Begin to count your breaths* in and out. Try to feel your whole torso moving in 3 dimensions as you breathe. Example: Breathe in for 2 counts, then out for 4. When that feels comfortable, increase the counts: in for 3, out for 5. When that feels comfortable, increase the counts: in for 4, out for 6, etc. Do this for about 5-10 minutes; see how slowly you can go.

CONSTRUCTIVE REST: Lie on your back on the floor, knees bent and together, arms crossed over chest, head supported (about 1" thick cushion). In this position you can relax every major muscle in your body. Begin to slow down and deepen your breathing*. Imagine a comforting, warm shower massage flowing systematically over your muscles; Feel each group of muscles relax—this should take about 10 minutes.

BEAUTIFUL PLACE: Close your eyes. Imagine being in a beautiful place, perhaps real or perhaps fantasy. In this place you feel happy and secure. Spend about 1 minute to really experience the 5 senses in this place:

What do you see?

What do you hear?

What are the smells?

What are the touch sensations?

Are there any flavors?

After about 5 minutes, you'll probably find yourself smiling.

PROGRESSIVE RELAXATION: Close your eyes and place hands over lower abdomen. Begin by slowing down your breathing*. Feel your abdomen expand like a balloon when you inhale, get small and soft on exhaling. Each time you exhale, say to yourself, "Let it go..." Imagine that each time you exhale, your stress is draining away into the earth. Systematically focus your attention on each part of your body: feet, legs, hips, torso, arms, neck, head, and face. Notice any tension in the muscles and "Let it go..." Do this for about 10 minutes twice a day. Eventually, if you practice this, you will just think about "letting go" and you will relax.

LIGHT BREATHING: Close your eyes. Every time you inhale, imagine breathing pure white light into your nose. When you breathe out, the dark cloud of your stress comes out of your mouth. Do this until you feel like you are exhaling pure white light as well.

**Make sure you spend more time exhaling than inhaling or you will get dizzy.*

Self Care Assessment Worksheet

Rate the following areas in frequency

- 5 = Frequently
- 4 = Occasionally
- 3 = Rarely
- 2 = Never
- 1 = It never occurred to me

Physical Self-Care

- _____ Eat regularly (e.g. breakfast, lunch, and dinner)
- _____ Eat healthily
- _____ Exercise
- _____ Get regular medical care for prevention
- _____ Get medical care when needed
- _____ Take time off when sick
- _____ Dance, swim, walk, run, play sports, sing, or do some other physical activity that is fun
- _____ Get enough sleep
- _____ Take vacations
- _____ Take day trips or mini-vacations
- _____ Make time away from technology (e.g. internet, cell phones)
- _____ Other:

Psychological Self-Care

- _____ Make time for self-reflection
- _____ Have your own personal psychotherapy
- _____ Write in a journal
- _____ Read literature that is unrelated to work
- _____ Do something at which you are not expert or in charge
- _____ Decrease stress in your life

Notice your inner experience -- listen to your thoughts, judgments, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings

- _____ Let others know different aspects of you
- _____ Engage your intelligence in a new area (e.g. go to an art museum, history exhibit, sports event, auction, theater performance)
- _____ Practice receiving from others
- _____ Be curious
- _____ Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes
- _____ Other:

Emotional Self-Care

- _____ Spend time with others whose company you enjoy
- _____ Stay in contact with important people in your life
- _____ Give yourself affirmations, praise yourself
- _____ Love yourself
- _____ Reread favorite books, re-view favorite movies
- _____ Identify comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places and seek them out
- _____ Allow yourself to cry
- _____ Find things that make you laugh
- _____ Express your outrage in social action, letters, donations, marches, protests
- _____ Other:

