

Tip Sheet: Communication, Planning, and Strategies for Advocacy Program Engagement

Successful engagement of the advocacy community is key to effectively establishing your teleSAFE project. Advocates are a crucial component for the survivor during the medical forensic exam. They share project information and accessibility and they are a contact for survivors' care (and significant others) post-exam.

This tip sheet emphasizes the importance of collaboration with the advocacy community and provides a suggested pathway for communication and information sharing. The purpose is to help guide your successful engagement with local advocacy centers serving your spoke site locations.

Get Started:

Goal: *To inform the sexual assault coalition as a stakeholder group about the project, and to attune to the overall advocacy resources in your state.*

1. Establish communication with the [state sexual assault coalition](#)
2. Identify each of the advocacy programs that will serve the known spoke sites (the coalition is likely to have a map outlining catchment areas for each program).
3. Utilize [National Protocols](#) as a foundation for sexual assault forensic care including a coordinated response with a local advocacy program. Advocates are key stakeholders to engage in the implementation of the teleSAFE project and need to be a focus of teleSAFE project management.
4. Create the structures and processes for your collaboration to benefit survivors, [here are many examples.](#)
5. Consider inviting an influential/experienced coalition member or advocate as a representative on your project management team.
6. Determine if there are statewide meetings where an announcement of the project can be made with a short presentation that covers:
 - a. Purpose of the teleSAFE project- share any data or scope information that might help advocacy organizations understand the need and the strategy
 - b. Introduction of current teleSAFE partners and their roles and responsibilities (hub, spoke, coalition, others)
 - c. Project timeline
 - d. Describe envisioned role of local advocacy programs- take questions
 - e. Share next steps for planned communication with them
7. When engaging local advocacy programs be mindful of their limited resources and how this could impact their current responsibilities and priorities.

Gather Information:

Goal: Learn what the local current capacity and practice is between the advocacy and spoke site.

1. Create a “roll-out” timeline for when each spoke site will come on board (even if the timeline is not set in stone, it will be important for communication with advocacy programs).
2. Before contacting the advocacy organization, do some background research on their website and social media to: identify the person to contact, establish if they already provide 24/7 medical accompaniment, and begin to learn what the culture and current priorities are for the organization such as:
 - a. The current relationship the advocacy program has with the spoke site in their catchment area
 - b. Any questions or concerns about current practice, needs or desired changes to practice, availability of resources, organizational capacity, the impact of COVID, etc....
3. Engage advocates early and communicate often. To establish transparency, trust, and buy-in to the teleSAFE project listen to their needs, especially when utilizing remote video meetings.
4. Determine the feasibility of advocacy accompaniment and make adjustments to expectations and create a strategy for supporting survivors in alignment with the advocacy program’s current capacity.

Make the Connection:

Goal: Establish or reinforce a positive connection between the advocacy center and the spoke site to build successful collaboration.

- Create an initial introduction and plan a meeting to discuss project launch (this may need to be multiple meetings depending on the current status of the relationship and work happening between the spoke site and advocacy center)
- Support identified/needed technical assistance (TA) such as clarifying any change to current practice, the development of roles, responsibilities and developing MOUs
- Identify already existing communication channels such as meetings, conferences, education events, and social media
- Advocates who will be directly accompanying survivors will have questions and want to understand the technology, protocols, and what the survivor will experience. Offer training and engagement opportunities specifically for their role in the teleSAFE response.
- Consider capacity for the spoke site to join a local [Sexual Assault Response Team \(SART\)](#) or to partner with the local advocacy program to create one using this [SART tool kit](#). As the project develops, consider the benefits of coordinating with [additional collaborators](#).

Related Tip Sheets:

- [State Advocacy tip sheet](#)
- [Role of the Advocate FAQ](#)
- [When Advocacy Response is not available](#)