



# **Building Deaf Allied Services:**

## **Vera House and the Syracuse Deaf Community**

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## Who We Are....

- Jennifer
- Lindsay
- Vera House
- Project EMERGE



# What Does Vera House Provide?

- Emergency Sheltering Services
- Rape Crisis & Sexual Assault Response Services
- Outreach & Advocacy Services
- Domestic & Sexual Violence Awareness & Prevention Education
- Syracuse Area Domestic & Sexual Violence Coalition
- Youth Counseling Services
- Envisioning Change & Healthy Options for Families (ECHO)
- Alternatives Program
- Volunteer Program



# **GAPS IN SERVICES: LACK OF ACCESSIBLE SERVICE DELIVERY**

Programmatic:

- inability to access printed materials,
- lack of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters,
- lack of knowledge about interacting with ASL interpreters

Attitudinal:

- lack of understanding of Deaf Culture and the community by service providers



## **Project EMERGE Mission:**

- to build a community movement through increased collaboration, program policy review and education, which will work to improve access by building a comprehensive and inclusive coordinated community response for women with disabilities and Deaf women who have experienced domestic and sexual violence



## Vera House and the Syracuse Deaf Community: How We Grew...






## **2006 Grant from Office of Violence against Women (OVW)**

- Completed a Needs and Assets Assessment
  - Key Stakeholder Interviews
  - Deaf Listening Circle
  - Staff Listening Circle
  - Web-based survey for service providers



# Challenges regarding the Deaf Listening Circle

- Finding a Deaf woman to co-facilitate discussions
  - Finding ASL Intepreters
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# Needs and Assets: Key Findings Pertaining to the Deaf Community

- The Deaf community sees itself as isolated from hearing service providers that serve populations other than the Deaf. The long history of struggling to obtain services has led to difficulty trusting or reaching out to unfamiliar service providers
- Deaf women in the community are unaware of the services available when they experience domestic and/or sexual violence
- Trust is extremely important to establish with Deaf women, across all service providers
- Deaf women reported numerous issues surrounding ASL interpreters
- Additionally, Vera House did not identify as a Deaf Allied Agency



# Examples of Issues regarding ASL Interpreters

- Availability
- Quality of Interpretation for Deaf victims
- ASL Interpreters realizing their own victimization/trauma



# Project EMERGE Strategic Plan

- Build the capacity to respond to Deaf women and women with disabilities who disclose domestic and/or sexual violence
- Move towards increased access for all survivors with disabilities and Deaf survivors
- Develop policies, procedures, and practices that enable us to provide best practices services to survivors with disabilities and Deaf survivors
- **Begin to build trust in the Deaf community to enable Deaf women to feel comfortable reaching out for help and recommending Vera House services to one another**



## Accomplishments with the 2006 Funding

- Project EMERGE Advisory Group
- Staff exposed to basic ASL and Deaf Culture
- Established regular opportunities for Interaction with the Deaf Community
- Established policies about Interpreters
- Created ASL videos and Accessible web page



# **Project EMERGE Continuation Grant: Growing**





## Continuation Funding:

- Project EMERGE expanded to include additional agencies:
  - Disability Service Providers
  - Two law Enforcement Agencies
  - Local Women’s Homeless Shelter



## Goals with Continuation Funding:

- Trained Trauma Informed Qualified Interpreters
- Trained Deaf/Signing Advocates
- Trained Police on Deaf Culture and Communication
- Assisted with the development of policies for law enforcement on responding to Deaf individuals



**Thank you!**

