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Best Practices: Storytelling

Focus on Authenticity & Honesty

- Avoid inaccurate themes and sensationalism
- Recognize the variety of experiences of trafficking victims/survivors
- Emphasize need-to-know info like diagnoses and signs, but avoid graphic or unnecessary detail about the trauma

Lift up & Amplify Survivors

- Consult survivors and survivor-leaders
- Do not exploit survivors for increased viewership
- Create a safe space through policies to ensure that survivor experiences are respected

Be Intentional

- Think carefully about the words you use
- Consult trafficking experts and/or survivors prior to publishing or creating content
- Consider your motivation for sharing the information, recognizing your biases and your agenda

Source: Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force

Agencies thinking about having a survivor share their story should consider several questions

- Why am I asking this survivor to share their story?
- Is there another way to accomplish this same goal?
- Who benefits more from telling this story, the survivor or my agency?
- Where is this survivor at in their recovery process? Will re-telling their story cause emotional harm or be re-traumatizing?
- Are they developmentally, mentally, and emotionally, able to consider the consequences of their story?
- What affects might this have on the survivor both long and short term?
- Is the survivor aware of these long and short-term effects?
- Does the survivor have the proper emotional and social support to cope with possible side effects?
- Is the survivor being manipulated or do they feel pressured to share their story?
- How is the survivor being compensated for their time and for sharing their story? Are they being compensated in a manner that you would expect for sharing your expertise?

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Best Practices: Survivor Testimonials

Utilize trauma-informed, survivor-centered practices

- Avoid soliciting stories from survivors who aren't ready to share
- Consider providing a counselor or an advocate for the process
- Be flexible: encourage survivors to tell their stories, when, where and how they want to

Utilize a participant informed consent form

- Inform they may choose not to participate, can stop at any time
- Discuss the potential dangers and benefits of telling their story
- Ensure the consent form is written down and signed like a contract

For persons under 18, avoid identifiable information

- If children can't consent to other potentially harmful decisions, consider whether they can consent to sharing their story publicly

Respect and honor the survivor's expertise

- Give the survivor power in the process of telling their story
- Treat the survivor like you would treat other professionals
- Get consent every time you use the story
- Compensate the survivor for his/her/their expertise

Source: Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force

Tips for Reporting on Human Trafficking

- Consider the potential risk for the survivor in discussing their experience.
- Consider conducting a confidential interview and putting safeguards in place to protect the survivor's privacy (i.e. blurred picture, pseudo name).
- Prepare for the interview by researching causes and impacts of human trafficking.
- Recognize the survivor as the expert on his or her own experiences.
- Be cognizant of the language used during the interview and when reporting.
- Recognize the survivor's right to say no and to refuse to answer questions.
- Set good ground rules. Let the survivor know how long the interview will last and what questions will be asked.
- Have a conversation with the survivor regarding the parts of "their story" that they feel comfortable and/or uncomfortable sharing.
- Encourage the survivor to bring a trusted friend, family member or service provider to provide support during and after the interview.
- Let the survivor read or view the story before it is published to ensure that it is representative of their personal experience.

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