

January 25, 2021: National Webinar

Virtual Family Justice Center Services: Adaptations for Creating Remote Accessibility

On this webinar, Eva Lessinger, Director of Programs at the New Orleans Family Justice Center, shares their journey of converting to virtual services during COVID-19, providing ideas and tips for other FJCs to consider. She highlights confidentiality considerations for providing virtual services, as well as discusses creative methods for meeting the needs of survivors through remote and hybrid remote-and-in-person service approaches. In addition, Eva provides ideas for how to continue supporting and engaging staff and partners while teams are working from home or on rotations.

About the Presenter

Eva Lessinger has dedicated over 12 years to work in the fields of domestic violence, reproductive health, women's empowerment, and trauma healing. Eva is a social worker by training and presently serves as the Director of Programs at the New Orleans Family Justice Center, a multidisciplinary agency dedicated to addressing interpersonal violence and trauma. Eva takes an intersectional, feminist, and human rights-based approach to examining issues of power and equity within direct social services and advocacy work. Eva is particularly passionate about issues of racial equity, immigrants' rights, reproductive justice, and learning to stay hopeful about our capacity for change.



VIRTUAL FJCS

LESSONS FROM THE NOFJC ON ADJUSTING SERVICES TO OUR NEW REALITY



IN CRISIS THERE IS CREATIVITY

- Our first steps in early March did not anticipate the gravity of the situation or how drastic the changes would need to be
- But as soon as the stay at home order came down, we moved really quickly and smoothly to shift all of our services



NOFJC'S STORY

Kept 2-3 staff at the center each day but 'closed' for walk-ins

Technology changes:

- Had to meet everyone's basic tech needs @ home – computers, phone, internet
- Doxy.com, Zoom, Resource Connect
- Tech safety/confidentiality resources – NNEDV
- Google spreadsheets – directory, schedules, new processes, etc.



EXISTING CLIENTS

- Huge focus on basic needs – rent, utilities, food
- Food delivery
- Emotional support needs drastically increased
- Client survey



NEW CLIENTS

- Your hotline becomes your lifeline
 - Office line and hotline rang simultaneously at 5 different locations
- Documentation more important than ever
- Intake went fully remote
- Eversign – for consent forms
- Hotel increase
- Civil restraining orders
 - The most intensive processing and coordinating of any service



WE WERE VERY FORTUNATE

- Don't rely on partners for intake
- Clinic
 - Health expertise, tests available
- PPP loan
- Donations for direct client assistance



STAFF SUPPORT

- Adjusted logistics (PTO, schedules, etc) to allow flexibility
- Dedicated part-time position to staff care
- Continue to highly encourage time off



PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

- Constant coordination & meetings
- Divvying up responsibility for meetings helped
- Continually offered support – especially PPE, direct assistance to clients



LESSONS LEARNED

- A lot can be done virtually – quick changes were inspiring
- Can't be afraid to experiment
- Go to the *source* for answers
- Working remotely is exhausting
- Fully re-creating our usual safe, welcoming space is impossible



TRANSITION

- Coming back to the office — June 1st
- Everyone got tested
- Daily screening
- Plexi screens, PPE, cleaning supplies, etc...
- Conversion of conference spaces



CURRENTLY

- 80-90% still 'remote' with clients
- Screen burn out
- Maintaining connection with clients is critical
- Opportunity to work on training and policies



REFLECTION

- A time of emotional, professional, spiritual reckoning and reflection for many of us
- A time to ask ourselves, ‘Who do we want to be? What is most important?’
- Exposed how we manage conflict, how we make decisions, how we support each other (or not) through hard times
- Cases are getting more and more severe – we have to be ready



CONTACT INFO

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Certificate of Participation

Webinar Training

Virtual Family Justice Center Services: Adaptations for Creating Remote Accessibility

Presenter: Eva Lessinger

1.5 Hours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Casey Gwinn".

Casey Gwinn, J.D.
Co-Founder and President
Alliance for HOPE, International

January 25, 2021

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gael Strack".

Gael Strack, J.D.
Co-Founder and CEO Alliance
for HOPE, International