



FCADV
Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Administrative Standards

For

Certified Domestic Violence Centers

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INTRODUCTION

These standards provide a blueprint for centers in planning, developing, implementing and improving empowerment-based domestic violence services for battered women and their children. The *FCADV Administrative Standards for Certified Domestic Violence Centers* document is inclusive of all center services, both residential and outreach programs, unless otherwise specified. Each center is responsible for developing policies and procedures based on its regional, demographic, architectural, cultural and programmatic diversity. It is intended that the centers' policies will be localized and expanded in order to address the unique characteristics of the domestic violence center. As such, the FCADV Standards serve as a foundation for policy and procedure development and are to be utilized by the centers in developing their own **written** policies and procedures.

It is noted that the terms “shall” means “must”, and “should” means “it is recommended”.

Safety, Legal and Regulatory Policies

Emergency Planning and Preparedness

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety of staff and program participants in the event of an environmental hazard, natural disaster, or other type of disaster.

- A. Procedures shall be specific to the site with designated safety areas and at a minimum, cover disasters such as: fire, tornado, hurricane and flood; contamination of the air, ground, or water; public health hazards such as outbreak of communicable, reportable diseases, significant events such as participant death or injury; and other crisis situations such as bomb threats, intruders or other security incidents, hostage situations, injury or health-related emergencies.
- B. Procedures shall designate staff position(s) responsible for overseeing the planning, preparation, training, and implementation of disaster procedures and services while in disaster mode, and the transition from disaster mode to restoration of full services. Procedures shall also address specific conditions under which such procedures should be invoked and conditions under which threats of danger has ended.

Risk Management

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have policies and procedures regarding the maintenance of a safe workplace.

- A. Procedures shall be specific to the site and at a minimum address building security, maintenance of the property (including furnishings and appliances), vehicle safety, disease control, workplace violence, and regular inspections by health and fire inspectors.
- B. Procedures shall include guidelines regarding prevention of accidents, universal precautions, training regarding safety principles and techniques. A staff position shall be designated to be responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented and corrective actions are taken.

Records Retention

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy on maintaining center financial, personnel and program participants' records in compliance with the guidelines of the FCADV, and all applicable state and federal laws. Confidentiality of center program participants' files must be maintained.

- A. Certified domestic violence centers must have a policy to maintain records in such a way as to prevent inappropriate destruction of, or unauthorized access to, documents including financial, personnel, and program participants' records. This policy shall address both paper and computer-generated records.

- B. Procedures shall be specific to the site and at a minimum address location of records, security and confidentiality of records, how long they should be retained, under what conditions and how they can be destroyed.
- C. Procedures shall include provisions for participants to review or receive copies of their records.

Quality Assurance Evaluation

Policy: **Certified domestic violence centers must have a policy establishing a quality assurance evaluation process.**

Policy must include the ongoing process to evaluate the quality of center services, including who participates, how input from staff and program participants is obtained, how action plans are developed and implemented, how follow-up is done and who is responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented.

Confidentiality of Records- Information Technology

Policy: **Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy regarding data security and information technology.**

In the event of the use of computer-generated service notes or survivor records, it is the responsibility of each domestic violence center to ensure confidentiality of information. Each center shall maintain a written policy and accompanying procedures that reflect security measures. These must contain, but not necessarily be limited to:

- A. A generalized policy stating the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to ensure victim confidentiality.
- B. A protocol for creating victim data by computer shall:
 - 1) State which data entries are allowable and those that are not
 - 2) Outline the use and storage of any data storage device
 - 3) Outline the use and protection of hard-drive storage (including protocols for use of passwords)
 - 4) Outline the use and methods of network systems backup and storage, including who is responsible
 - 5) Require the use of passwords when computer network systems are used
 - 6) Outline protocols for the creation, routing and storage of any materials generated from computer-based records
 - 7) Ensure that access to computerized confidential records will be protected by the use of appropriate software and passwords
 - 8) Ensure the establishment of protocols for timely download or amendment/deletion of client-related information

- C. A protocol for the security of stored information shall address:
 - 1) The disposal of hard drives and other memory devices
 - 2) Use of other memory devices (disks, USB/flash/jump drives, external hard drives)
 - 3) How data leaves the office (funders/reports)
 - 4) Retention of records in an electronic format

- D. In the event a protocol includes use of a computer's recycle bin, staff will be required to delete the information from the recycle bin (or other appropriate mechanism) as a final step in the process of deleting confidential files.

- E. A protocol for ensuring all participants' personally identifying information or information identifying the location of the shelter is redacted from fiscal or other administrative records prior to release. The protocol shall address who is responsible, when and how records are redacted of any personally identifying information prior to release, including when released in response to an open records request or when submitted with invoices to funders.

Human Resources

Personnel Policies

Purpose: Certified domestic violence centers shall develop personnel policies in accordance with their own method of operation, whether they are autonomous or fall under an umbrella organization. However, it is the responsibility of each domestic violence center to ensure that they adhere to all applicable labor laws and federal regulations. Centers that fall under umbrella agencies that currently do not have these policies shall develop them.

Statement of Policy:

Center policies shall address the centers' philosophy on personnel issues and non-discrimination. Certified domestic violence centers shall follow a policy of non-discrimination to include all required federal, state, and local protections. At a minimum, policies shall address race, creed, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, veteran status, national origin, age, or any other classes protected by law.

Code of Conduct

- A. Centers shall have a policy requiring non-fraternization between program participants and staff, and between participants and volunteers. It is good ethical practice for centers to establish a non-fraternization policy with regard to program participants which includes a definition of program participant.
- B. Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy regarding acceptance of gifts and gratuities. Policy shall address under what circumstances it is/is not appropriate to accept gifts or gratuities. The policy shall include addressing token gifts of appreciation from program participants to center staff, as well as gifts and gratuities from donors, volunteers, community members, and Board members.

Background Screening

Centers must have a policy on when or if to conduct background screening. The policy shall be in compliance with federal, state and local laws, and contract obligations. The policy shall not prohibit the hiring of individuals with arrest or conviction records and shall take into consideration that battered women may commit crimes to survive.

Confidentiality

Certified domestic violence centers shall establish confidentiality standards that adhere to Florida Statute 39.908.

- 1) Centers shall adhere to Florida Statute 39.908 regarding program participant

confidentiality. Program participant information should only be disclosed within an agency on a need to know basis. Center staff shall not disclose confidential information pertaining to employees, program participants, volunteers or private funding sources.

2) Maintaining confidentiality of the shelter is as important for the safety of its employees as it is for program participants. Centers shall have a policy stating that all employees are to maintain complete confidentiality, pursuant to Florida Statute 39.908.

Disciplinary Guidelines

Certified domestic violence centers shall have constructive corrective and progressive disciplinary guidelines. Procedures shall establish the protocol for enforcement of the guidelines.

Domestic Violence

Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy to provide a workplace where domestic violence issues are addressed with survivor safety as the priority. Policy shall address services and safety of employee survivors as well as consequences to employee perpetrators. The policy shall apply regardless of whether the incident occurred during or away from work, or on or off center property.

Drug-free Workplace

Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy to provide a drug-free workplace and establish a policy to address such use. Center policies shall address use of illegal drugs, as well as abuse of legal drugs, and disciplinary action taken for violation.

Employee Status

Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that defines employee status, i.e. exempt, non-exempt, temporary, permanent, independent contractor, contract labor. Definition shall be consistent with labor law.

Nepotism

Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that prohibits nepotism (hiring of relatives) between Board and staff, between staff that directly answer to family members or are in the line of authority of a family member and any nepotism with the potential to create fiscal, internal control issues. The policy shall also address the action to be taken when a relationship as defined above develops between existing staff or between staff and Board. It is recommended that the policy use the definition of family and household members as identified in F.S. 741.28 of the Florida Statutes.

Sexual Harassment

Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy prohibiting sexual harassment and a wholly compliant complaint procedure of/or by both staff and program participants in accordance with state and federal regulations.

Recruiting and Hiring

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a written policy on recruitment and hiring. It is understood that centers that are a part of umbrella organizations will follow the written policies of the umbrella organization.

It is recommended that policies include:

- 1) Persons with authority to hire
- 2) Advertising policies
- 3) Orientation information including information about the center, personnel policies, pay and benefits, job description, security and safety procedures, and drug-free workplace requirements

Performance Evaluation and Salary Review

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have written policies or procedures that require annual performance evaluations for employees.

The policy shall include guidelines for performance evaluation and salary review.

Termination and Attendance

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy on termination and attendance that is in accordance with Florida law and rules.

- A. **Termination:** In Florida, an employee may be discharged at any time, with or without cause, and is therefore said to be an employee-at-will. It is important to remember, however, that employment-at-will can be superseded by laws and regulations, enforceable employment agreements or by union contract provisions.
- B. **Attendance:** Policy shall address attendance requirements including abandonment of position which is usually three days of unexcused absence. Abandonment of position shall be considered voluntary termination of employment.

Benefits

Purpose: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy on benefits.

- A. **Employee Leave:** Center policies shall address applicable employee leave. Examples include:
- 1) Holiday Leave
 - 2) Vacation Leave
 - 3) Sick Leave
 - 4) Administrative Leave
 - a. Bereavement Leave
 - b. Jury Duty
 - c. Military Leave
 - d. Leave Without Pay
 - e. Family Medical Leave
 - 5) Paid Time Off
- B. Centers with the qualifying number of employees must provide family medical leave and must comply with Florida Statutes. It is suggested that all centers consider similar unpaid leave.
- C. **Insurance:** Center policy shall address workers compensation, health insurance (if available) and retirement (if available).

Bonding or Employee Dishonesty Insurance

Purpose: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that addresses which employees must undergo additional screening or bonding. At a minimum, center policy must require a bond or employee dishonesty insurance for center fiscal staff or of those responsible for major fiscal functions and shall be included in the center's professional liability insurance policy.

Training Requirement for Certified Domestic Violence Center Staff

Purpose: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy to provide quality training for all employees and direct-service volunteers. Training provided to paid and unpaid direct service staff shall be based on Florida statutory requirements for advocate-survivor privilege, as required under Section 90.5036, Florida Statutes.

Statement of Policy:

Domestic violence centers shall provide ongoing, quality training for its employees and direct-service volunteers who have direct contact with survivors and/or their related documents. Any employee who supervises or oversees direct-service advocates shall be included in these requirements. Executive Directors and/or CEO's shall maintain advocate-victim privilege and it

is required that they take the core competency training within 90 days of employment.

Definitions

- A. **Direct Service:** The rendering of support, counsel or assistance to a victim of domestic violence who seeks assistance specific to her situation from a domestic violence center staff member (employee or volunteer) and who is employed by or associated with a certified domestic violence center. (Section 90.5036 Florida Statute (1) (c) describes a “victim” as a person who consults a domestic violence advocate for the purpose of securing advice, counseling, or assistance concerning a mental, physical, or emotional condition caused by an act of domestic violence, an alleged act of domestic violence, or an attempted act of domestic violence). Note: FCADV realizes that some statute language differs from advocacy language and practice, e.g., statute incorporates “advice” whereas advocacy provides “support”; statute incorporates “mental, physical or emotional condition”, whereas advocacy recognizes “the resulting circumstance”; statute incorporates “alleged act”, whereas advocacy utilizes such terms as “reported act” or “stated act”.
- B. **Direct Services Staff:** Center employees or volunteers who have face-to-face, telephonic, electronic or other direct communication with adult and child participants receiving any services such as: empowerment-based advocacy; support; safety planning; service management; information, resources and referrals; or other assistance to help address the immediate or long-term needs of participants receiving services from a certified domestic violence center.
- 1) Employees are individuals paid to work any number of hours for a certified domestic violence center.
 - 2) Direct-Service Volunteers are non-paid individuals who provide direct services (as defined above) to victims of domestic violence.
 - 3) Domestic Violence Advocate, regardless of actual job title, refers to any employee or volunteer who renders direct service- this includes staff that provides direct services for center programs such as, but not limited, to transitional housing and supervised visitation.
- C. **Privilege Registration: As provided under Section 90.5036 Florida Statutes (see Appendix B)**
- 1) Registration applications for advocates can be submitted only by certified domestic violence centers under the following conditions:
 - a. The Executive Director of the applicant’s domestic violence center must certify, by witness of a Notary Public, that the advocate(s) being registered has (have) completed 30 hours training to qualify for advocate-victim privilege.
 - b. Records of advocate’s training must be maintained by the certified domestic violence center.
 - c. The advocate(s) applying for privilege must be a current employee or volunteer with a certified domestic violence center.
 - d. On a quarterly basis, FCADV is to be notified of any advocates who no

- longer volunteer or are no longer employed by the center.
- 2) Domestic violence centers will comply with the following requirements regarding privilege registration:
 - a. All domestic violence center employees and volunteers who render direct service to survivors of domestic violence shall complete 30 hours of training in order to qualify for advocate-victim privilege. This shall include those who supervise and oversee direct service advocates. Twenty-four of the 30 hours of training shall be accomplished by either:
 - (1) Completing the 24-hour FCADV Competency-Based Core Curriculum as presented by the FCADV training department staff, or
 - (2) Completing the 24-hour FCADV Competency-Based Core Curriculum as presented by an FCADV Authorized Trainer (an individual who has successfully completed the FCADV Train the Trainer course on the FCADV Competency-Based Core Curriculum). No more than three hours of the FCADV curriculum may be presented by a non-authorized guest trainer, or
 - (3) Completing a 24-hour competency-based curriculum developed and presented by a trainer(s) of a Florida certified domestic violence center and approved by the FCADV training department staff in advance of the training.
 - (a) To assure advocate-victim privilege, advocates will complete this training within ninety (90) days of initial employment. No unsupervised survivor contact will be permitted prior to completion of training and registration with the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence.
 - (b) Privileged staff shall be active and registered at a new center of employment within 30 days of beginning employment.
 - (c) Centers shall notify FCADV quarterly of staff changes to their privilege database.
 - b. Direct-service volunteers will complete this training prior to any unsupervised survivor contact.
 - 3) The Executive Director will document a minimum of six (6) hours of additional specialized training. This training may include on-the-job orientation, or training of skills related to performance of required duties.
 - 4) Individuals or groups providing specialized services (such as teachers, school crossing guards, beauticians, cosmetologists, etc.) will be exempt from training and registration requirements as long as:
 - a. Program participants and others seeking services at the center are informed that these individuals or groups do not have privilege.
 - b. The domestic violence center and the provider have a written agreement that includes provisions for survivor and shelter confidentiality, orientation to the center's services and any policies/procedures relevant to the service being provided.

Requirements for Certified Domestic Violence Center Program Staff

Policy: **Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy to provide certain protections that support the quality of a staff member’s job performance.**

- A. **Competency:** In accordance with Rule 65H- 1.013 12(b)(c), Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), all personnel, paid or unpaid, who work with victims and their dependents must have documented in their personnel file sixteen hours (16) of training annually in domestic violence, child abuse, elder abuse, and other issues that are pertinent to providing quality services to domestic violence survivors and their dependents. In addition to in-service training, all staff members shall receive, at a minimum, annual training on implementing the center’s emergency management plan. All staff must receive emergency management training.
- B. **Vicarious Trauma (VT)/Debriefing for Staff:** Certified centers shall have policies and procedures that address when and how assistance related to vicarious trauma is provided to staff. Staff members who provide counseling, service management and advocacy will be provided, if needed, opportunities to debrief in order to identify the symptoms and ease the potential effects of vicarious trauma. Opportunities for vicarious trauma education and debriefing may take place in an on-going forum, such as regular staff meetings.

Governance and Leadership

The following issues shall be covered in either written By-Laws or Policies. The Board of Directors and the center shall operate within said By-Laws and Policies.

A certified center that operates under the umbrella of another agency shall have a separate center Board or Advisory Committee, a separate budget, and separate policies for the center. To ensure contract compliance, there shall be a liaison to the umbrella Board. It is understood that the umbrella Board has the ultimate responsibility for decisions made by the Advisory Committee. All trust funds, designated donations and designated grants to the certified center shall be used exclusively for the benefit of the center. The following policies are to apply to the Board or the Advisory Committee as appropriate.

Meetings

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that establishes meeting guidelines.

- A. Meeting policies shall address what constitutes a quorum. It is strongly recommended that a quorum consist of 51% or more of the elected members.
- B. Meeting policies shall address when and where meetings are to be held.
- C. It is recommended that policies also address special meetings including who gets notice; time frame before meeting notice is mailed; notice to be by: e-mail, fax, phone; and for emergency meetings and a process for changing meeting dates and times.

Vacancies/Terms

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that establishes standards covering Board and Officer vacancies and term of office of same.

- A. The policy shall include who nominates; when voting takes place; who votes; and length of term.
- B. It is strongly recommended that reasonable board term limits be established.

Removal of Board Members/Officers

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that establishes guidelines regarding removal of Board Members/Officers.

- A. Policy shall cover process for removal of Board Members and Officers for cause and for non-attendance.

Officer Duties

Policy: **Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that establishes and defines Officer duties.**

- A. By-laws or Policies shall define the officers, the process for nomination and election, term of office, and duties and responsibilities of each office. Officers of the Board are in service of the Board. As such, they are bound by Board policy and limits of Board authority.
- B. It is recommended that policies note that the officers may meet as a group for purposes of preparing agenda and other pre-Board meeting work, but they may not act in place of the Board except as the Board specifically delegates.
- C. Centers may have additional officers but shall have a President, a Treasurer and a Secretary.

Board Responsibilities

Policy: **Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that establishes and defines Board responsibilities.**

- A. Board members act as a governing body. Policy shall note that individual Board Members shall not speak or act for the Board without the approval of the Board.
- B. It is the responsibility of the Board to provide fiscal oversight and strategic leadership rather than administrative details. Clear distinctions shall be established between Board and staff roles, with Board focus on major involvement on the intended long-term impact of the organization not the administrative or programmatic means of obtaining those effects.
- C. To ensure the integrity of the Board Governance role, Board Members or their immediate family shall not serve in a volunteer staff capacity (day-to-day operations). Board members or their immediate family members shall not have access to participant files and shall not be permitted to engage in direct service work with center participants. This does not restrict Board members or their family members from assisting with special projects.

Fiscal Responsibility of the Board

Policy: **Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that defines the fiscal responsibility of the Board.**

- A. The Board is responsible for fiscal oversight and shall have fiscal policies that cover approval of annual budget; audit; investment/endowment policies; protection of assets; signatory authority, and periodically reviewing financial statements.
- B. Policies shall establish expectations and responsibilities/limitations of the Board, including their responsibility to personally financially support the center.

Committee Responsibilities

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that establishes standing and other committees, their responsibilities, membership, meetings and other procedures, including documentation.

Advisory Board/Committees/Guilds/Trustees

Policy: If certified domestic violence centers have Advisory Board/Committees, Guilds and/or Trustees, then centers shall have a policy that establishes, at a minimum, duties, membership, term length and removal.

Board Orientation/Training/Self Assessment

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that establishes minimum required Board training and orientation.

- A. Orientation shall be provided and training shall be completed within the first six (6) months. Members should not accept an office before completing training.
- B. Orientation and training shall include governance-based roles and responsibilities; by-laws and policy review; fiscal review; history of the center; program services and service management; privilege and confidentiality; and, basic domestic violence training. Governance board training shall be approved by FCADV. Centers shall submit governance board training for FCADV approval or, shall utilize FCADV pre-approved governance board training.
- C. It is recommended that the Board conduct an annual self-assessment for the purpose of ensuring its ongoing viability.

Conflict of Interest/Ethics/Code of Conduct for Board Members

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that addresses conflict of interest.

- A. Policies shall be established and shall cover such issues as awarding contracts; honoraria and other forms of compensation; becoming a program participant or employee; and, interactions with program participants and employees, including hiring, gifting, soliciting, socializing and nepotism.
- B. Policy shall include language that Board of Director members shall avoid activities that may allow for the appearance of a conflict of interest and any potential of conflict shall be disclosed.

Board Composition

Policy: **Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that establishes guidelines on addressing the composition of the board.**

- A. Policy shall address the fact that at least one member shall be an employee of a local law enforcement agency within the service area, as much as possible; the Board shall racially and ethnically reflect the participants they serve.

Board Role with Executive Director

Policy: **Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that clearly delineates the role of the Board in relationship to the Executive Director.**

- A. Policies shall address performance evaluation, compensation, and benefits of the Executive Director. This section shall make it clear that it is the responsibility of the Board to do an annual evaluation of the Executive Director and to determine compensation and benefits, and that the Executive Director cannot change the compensation/benefit package established by the Board. This section shall also address the Executive Director's role regarding communication to the Board and employee supervision. This policy shall make it clear that the Executive Director supervises all other employees and the Board's role in supervision is limited to the Executive Director.
- B. The policy shall address authority delegated to the Executive Director and executive limitations.

Finance Policies

Certified domestic violence centers are required to maintain sound financial policies in order to meet stewardship obligations in accordance with the provisions of Federal Regulations, State of Florida, Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. These principles are mandated by the American Standards Board, American Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Federal Regulations of the Office of Management (OMB) Circulars, A-87 (2 CFR, Part 225), A-102, A-110 (2 CFR, Part 215), A-122 (2 CFR, Part 230), A-133, along with the statutes of the State of Florida.

Record Retention

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that addresses retention of financial records in accordance with Internal Revenue Service guidelines.

Purchasing

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that addresses purchasing procedures.

- A. Procedures shall address the conditions or values at which three or more competitive bids are required. It shall also acknowledge that some funders may require bids on other items purchased with grant funds.
- B. Petty cash procedures shall address amount and location of petty cash and that petty cash is intended to be used for minor purchases or emergency expenses.

Contracts/Signatures

Policy: Centers shall have a policy stating that only the Executive Director and/or the President of the Board of Directors are authorized to sign contracts and to financially obligate the agency.

Cash Disbursements

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that addresses cash disbursement procedures.

- A. Policy shall address how separation of duties is accomplished, including but not limited to: check signing, opening and logging of mail, bank deposits and reconciliations.

Payroll

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that addresses payroll procedures.

Independent Audit

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy to contract for an independent audit of agency records for each fiscal year, which will include review by the Board of Directors, if required by state and federal regulations. Center policy shall be in compliance with the Federal Circular A-133 Single Audit Act and the Florida Single Audit Act.

Bank Accounts

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that addresses maintenance of bank accounts for agency funds.

Travel

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that addresses travel procedures.

Financial Condition and Activities

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that addresses the financial condition and activities of the center. With respect to the actual, ongoing financial condition and activities, policy should stipulate that the Executive Director does not cause or allow the development of fiscal jeopardy or material deviation of actual expenditures from established Board priorities.

Financial Planning and Budgeting

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy that addresses the financial planning and budgeting of the center.

A. Policy shall address when budgetary changes require Board approval.

Asset Protection

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers shall have a policy to maintain asset protection.

Investment Policies

Policy: Certified domestic violence centers that receive endowed gifts shall establish policies that address investment philosophy, restrictions and risk tolerance for endowed gifts.