



Strand² Squared



A Paradigm Shift Solution

How to make the most of your Advocacy: being an advocate is tough

“We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.” -Elie Wiesel

Experiencing a victimization such as rape, domestic violence, child abuse or human trafficking can be the most complicated and devastating of experiences. Lauren von Bernuth wrote about her experience with rape *“It’s to have your soul murdered. It feels like someone taking a knife and stabbing your soul over and over until nothing is left but the bloody remnants of what was once self-worth and self-love.”*

Research articulates that when a victim of crime has support and assistance directly after victimization, they are more likely to transcend and heal back to a place where they can potentially resume living- which ultimately is the goal.

Victim advocates play a critical role in the transcendence process as they are able to help in many aspects of victims’ lives and with the complicated decisions in the aftermath of victimization. They help victims, witnesses and their families to navigate barriers, address difficulty, and access resources. Being an advocate is very difficult because they are often working with people who have been traumatized and are experiencing, what may be, the worst day of their lives. It is essential that they are able to approach the complicated work through a lens of compassion and empathy- while being able to maintain their own well-being and health.

Advocates are change agents, community organizers and trusted champions. They are often the cornerstone of any systems effort to bring and embrace more human centric, trauma informed methodologies to their local systems. They drive evolution and systems improvement. Thus, it is essential that they are able to successfully navigate the complicated systems in which victims are forced to play out their trauma. Unfortunately, in many communities, advocates are not situated in positions of power and are forced to navigate complicated power dynamics on behalf of the needs of victims.

This presentation will help advocates and allied professionals understand key shifts in paradigm that will enable them to be more successful in their advocacy. We will explore implicit bias and intersectionality, human centric trauma informed service delivery, complex trauma and strategies to work with those complicated needs and principled negotiations to help with their systems advocacy. We will also articulate gaps in the current advocacy system structure and ways to mitigate those gaps in order to improve service delivery.

Objectives:

- To articulate the need for change and systems improvement
- To explore ways in which advocates can enhance their voice through principled negotiation
- To expand upon the human centric trauma informed lens
- To articulate implicit bias and applied intersectionality
- To provide tools to effectively work with people who have complex trauma
- To challenge current systemic hierarchy