



**Sexual Assault Prevention and Response for  
People with IDD:  
A Trauma-Informed Listening Session Protocol**

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and



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### Introduction

This protocol was developed by Strategic Education Solutions as it planned and implemented a series of listening sessions for the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities' Sexual Assault Prevention and Response project. It was designed to ensure the mental health and well-being of participants in listening sessions about sexual assault while also learning what we need to know from them.

This protocol was developed in close cooperation with [SAFE](#) (Stop Abuse for Everyone), an organization with significant expertise in sexual assault prevention/response for people with a variety of disabilities. Special thanks are given to Michelle Schwartz, Director Disability Services Program, for mentoring and training our staff throughout this process.

This protocol specifies key considerations at each of five phases:

- Planning
- Recruitment
- Session Preparation
- Hosting
- Follow-Up

We encourage anyone working with individuals or groups on these sensitive topics to adapt and use the tools we have developed for the well-being of participants.

### Planning

#### Logistics

1. Determine the desired number of groups and the number of people in each group. Some basic guidelines:
  - Focus on your goal—are you looking for broad information from many people or in-depth information from a few?
  - For groups with people with IDD (PwIDD), keep it no more than six people per group if in person, no more than four if over videoconference.
  - Determine minimum age of participants. If younger than 18, consider appropriate parental consent and involvement.
2. Determine how much the participants will be paid and how they will be paid (cash, check, gift cards--based on participant preference).
3. Select the number of times the groups will meet and how long the meetings will be.
4. Begin planning for specific timeframes based on the availability of a trauma-informed therapist. (See below.)

#### Safety

1. Hire a trauma-informed therapist with specific experience with PwIDD. If possible, this person should also be licensed in the state in which the focus groups are taking place and be familiar with mandatory reporting laws. This person should:
  - be available for any session that includes PwIDD—whether or not they have identified themselves as survivors—due to the high incidence of unreported sexual assault/abuse in this population
  - be available for any sessions with family/friends/allies
  - participate in training related to safety planning, informed consent, or other topics.
  - be free of other session obligations to ensure that they are completely focused on participant support at all times
  - be comfortable with special functions of videoconferencing tools used for the sessions (if any) so that participants are able to access the person through 1:1 chat and/or breakout rooms
  - be available post session should a participant need to further process their experience
2. Train all team members who will be recruiting participants, moderating the groups, and taking notes. This training may include:
  - mandatory reporting laws
  - informed consent processes
  - pre/during/post meeting safety planning for participants
  - how to monitor for potential triggers
  - how to help participants distress prior to exiting the session
  - how to support healing post-session

3. Create a Personal Safety Plan for participants that:
  - is written in clear, accessible language and uses visuals to support understanding
  - provides information for before, during, and after the session
  - previews what will be asked and the choices and control participants have about their participation
  - emphasizes privacy and clearly states what that means both for in-person and videoconference sessions (e.g., having a closed door between the participant and any other person, not talking with others about any aspect of the session)
  - describes rules for participation (taking turns, being respectful, placing no shame or blame, etc.) and what will happen if rules are not followed. Also asks participants ahead of time if they would like to contribute to rule-making
  - ensures participants feel comfortable managing their own use of the technology used for video conferencing (if used)
  - ensures participants understand what happens if they report a sexual assault or abuse situation during the session (mandatory reporting)
  - explains the role of each person on the call who is not a participant
  - explains the resources available to them to support effective reporting and/or recovery if needed. (Note that rape crisis centers/services in the participants' areas should be alerted prior to sessions that a person with IDD might call in for support.)
  - acknowledges the discomfort of the topics without assigning shame to participants
  - is reviewed and discussed with participants prior to the session, at the start of the session, and at the end of the session

See [Example Personal Safety Plan](#)

4. Create an Informed Consent agreement that will be reviewed with and signed by participants prior to the session. *No person should participate without signing an Informed Consent agreement.* The Informed Consent agreement should:
  - be brief
  - be written in accessible language and use images to aid understanding if necessary
  - describe the purpose of the session and how information will be used
  - describe, in broad terms, what will be discussed in the session, who will be present, how they will be expected to participate, etc.
  - describe the pros and cons of participating in the session
  - describe the supports available before, during, and after the session
  - describe how confidentiality will be ensured
  - have the participant agree to sections of the document
  - give the participant the opportunity to ask questions along the way
  - give the participant the opportunity to not participate once they have learned more about the session

- enable the person to sign remotely if needed. This might include, for example, using a Google form submitted online; using a PDF with a signature field; reviewing the form on videoconference while recording, including the participant’s agreement; etc.

See [Example Informed Consent Agreement](#)

## Recruitment

### Criteria for Participation

1. Set the desired composition of each group. This may include:
  - diversity needs, possibly including people with differing disabilities, race/ethnicity, primary language, geography, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation.
  - experience of participants that will help meet the specific goals of the session. For example, this might include that the individuals have identified themselves as sexual assault/abuse survivors, that they live in congregate housing, that they have little experience talking about these issues, etc.
2. Determine which criteria are most important for each group and rank those criteria. With small groups, it is unlikely significant diversity across *all* desired areas will be achieved. *Always focus on the desired outcome of the session.*

### Recruitment Messages

1. Create recruitment messages for different groups. These messages should:
  - for PwIDD, be in plain language and include follow-up with verbal communication (in person or by phone)
  - clearly state any “make-or-break” requirements for participation (e.g., ability to videoconference in a location where non-participants cannot see or hear the other participants, willingness to talk openly about sensitive issues)
  - state what participants will be paid and what they must do to earn that pay. *Note that throughout the listening session process, participants’ control should be maximized by allowing them to change their minds at any time without penalty.*
  - include only the most critical details—too much information can be overwhelming
  - emphasize the impact this work will have—people feel good about contributing to important work
  - clearly state what the person receiving the recruitment message should do when they finish reading. Provide options. For example: “Please complete this form online to sign up: {form link}. Or reply to this email with your phone number. Jane Smith will call you to help you sign up.”

### Recruitment Process

1. Identify potential sources for recruitment and assign team members to those sources where they have personal connections. For example, a team member who has trained law enforcement officers should be assigned to recruit those participants. Self-advocate team members with ties to self-advocacy groups should be assigned to recruit those participants, and so on.
2. Create a form for documenting critical information of participants, such as demographic data, previous experience, technology equipment and experience, etc. You may opt to create separate forms for different stakeholder groups, as you may need specific information from one group that you don't need from another. Keep the number of questions to a minimum, and use direct, accessible language. Have this form available in various formats (online, written, completed verbally) and in any languages other than English, as needed. Note that data collected through this form should be converted to aggregate form for reporting purposes and any personally identifying data should be destroyed., as well as any original data sources (such as online forms or surveys).
3. Have one contact person for all potential participants. This person can request help from team members if needed, but it is most efficient to have one person coordinating.
4. Create contingency plans for participants, including 1:1 interviews, online surveys, and having alternate participants in each group. The subject matter can make it challenging to recruit participants.
5. Once participants have been selected, notify all potential candidates, including those who are not selected to participate.
6. Document demographic information for all participants.

### Scheduling Sessions

1. Select dates and times for sessions based on participant availability. Prior to confirming details with participants, make sure each:
  - has completed the form or that you have the needed demographic data
  - has the needed technology and skills to participate independently
  - is able to be in a private location for the duration of the session. *Note that throughout the listening session process it should be emphasized that the session itself nor anything project staff or moderators say is not a secret, as secrecy can trigger a trauma response.*
2. Inform participants of the selected dates/times. Attach the Personal Safety Plan. Ask participants to schedule a time to talk prior to the session to:
  - go over the plan to ensure they understand what will be discussed, the implications of reporting during the session, the importance of privacy and confidentiality, etc.
  - have an opportunity to suggest some session rules of their own (which increases buy-in and comfort)
3. If participants are not comfortable using the videoconferencing technology (if virtual), schedule a practice meeting where participants can join and practice using the controls.



## **Session Preparation**

### Staffing

1. Designate who will moderate the listening sessions and who will take notes. Consider with whom the participants might feel most comfortable. For example, a self-advocate team member should moderate—with support—all self-advocate sessions. However, first responders might feel more comfortable with someone who has experience with law enforcement as moderator.
2. The moderator and note-taker must be two different people. This allows the moderator to focus on listening to participants to guide the conversation.
3. The therapist should be made a co-presenter for all meetings so that they can open a breakout room independently from the moderator if needed (if online).
4. If any participant speaks a language other than English, it is best to have a moderator for that group who also speaks that language.

### Interview Guide Development

1. Carefully consider the goal of your sessions as you develop each interview guide.
  - Identify the most important issue(s) for each group.
  - Get richer information about what did or can make a difference.
  - Don't duplicate what was already learned from the research. This is an opportunity to learn different or more in-depth information.
  - When addressing sensitive topics such as sexual assault, do not ask participants directly about their personal experience but instead ask more general questions that allow them to draw off their experience.
2. Build in at least one 5–10-minute break per hour of discussion. These topics are challenging and sensitive. Part of supporting participants is making sure they have breaks as needed.
3. Include suggestions in the interview guides in case discussions stall or if moderators need clarity. For example:
  - Allow some amount of silence. This can promote more discussion.
  - Use prompts such as “Can you say more about that?” or “What do other people think about that?”
  - Ask questions for more clarity such as “Can you give me some examples of what you mean?” or “Why is \_\_\_\_ important?”
4. Include approximate times for the moderator in the interview guides. Assume about 5 minutes per question. Some may take more time; some may take less. Include suggestions in the guide for tabling questions if discussion is running very long on one or more questions. For example:
  - “It's clear this issue needs more exploration. Let's move on, and we can follow up outside of this session.”
  - “Clearly this is important to you all, but I want to make sure we cover everything we need to. Let's have the note-taker record this as a very important issue that should be explored more later.”

5. More than likely, you will find you have many more questions to ask than you reasonably have time to cover. As you review and revise the interview guides, keep a list of questions that you have omitted and could be asked if the session runs short.
6. Only after the interview guides are finalized, translate any questions to languages other than English as appropriate for the groups' needs.

See [Example Interview Guide](#) (self-advocate)

### Training and Practice

1. Ensure each moderator has ample time with the interview guides. This will enable them to be present in the moment and guide discussion without being distracted by what questions will need to be asked next.
2. For self-advocate moderators, role-playing exercises that address possible situations may be helpful. For example:
  - how to make sure everyone gets a chance to speak
  - how to handle it when one person has been monopolizing the conversation
  - how to let participants know it's time to move on from a conversation
  - how to ask the support moderator for help when needed
  - what to do if participants become upset or need offline support
  - what to do if a participant discloses a sexual assault/abuse situation that has not previously been reported
3. Ensure all moderators participate in a safety training. Preferably, this should be done by an organization with significant experience in sexual assault prevention and response *for people with IDD*, such as [SAFE](#). This training should fill gaps in knowledge related to the following broad areas:
  - safety planning for people with IDD
  - mandatory reporting laws
  - trauma-informed approaches
  - recognizing and mitigating potential trauma triggers
  - enabling access to support before, during and after sessions

### Gaining Informed Consent

1. Informed consent agreements must be signed by all participants prior to their session(s).
2. Generally, these can be signed electronically and emailed back.
3. For people who need support to understand the informed consent agreement, who may have trouble signing it, and/or for *all* PwIDD, project staff should review the form and its components on a videoconference or over the phone.
  - Record the videoconference or call. (Be sure to ask permission to record at the start of the call.)
  - After each section, ask, "May I sign for you?"
  - Save all recordings for future use.
  - For anyone who has not completed their Informed Consent Agreement, ask them to attend the meeting 10 minutes early to complete the agreement.

## Hosting

### Setting Up Therapist Help Sessions

1. Prior to the meetings, ensure that there is a quiet, private place in which the trauma-informed therapist can provide help, if needed, as well as a quiet, calm space for participants to wait, if more than one person needs assistance.
2. If virtual, set up a breakout room in which participants will receive trauma support. Set up a process by which participants will be placed in the breakout room. (Note that in Zoom, only the hosts or co-hosts can assign people to the breakout room.) Decide what will happen if more than one participant needs support simultaneously (e.g., the host or therapist may need to create multiple rooms and assign the therapist consecutively).

### Starting the Meeting (See Example Interview Guide for script)

1. Thank participants for joining. If on videoconference, state the need to confirm that everyone is in a private place with a door closed between them and others. Ask each participant to raise their hand to indicate they are. If anyone is not (or, if it becomes obvious to you that they are not), explain that participants' privacy is the most important part of the listening session, and that if it becomes clear a participant is not in a private place, you will ask that person to leave the meeting. Remind participants that they will not be penalized for doing so.
2. Introduce staff who are present and their roles. Ask participants to introduce themselves only if they want to.
3. If on videoconference, remind participants that the meeting will be recorded and that they agreed to that when they signed their Informed Consent Agreement. Explain that the recording will only be used to take notes, that no names will be used, and that once the notes are taken the recordings will be destroyed. Ask if anyone has changed their mind about participating and let them know what they should do if they have (e.g., leave the room, leave the Zoom call). Again remind participants that participation is always *their choice* and there are no penalties for leaving the call.
4. Review the rules and logistics of the meeting. These should be based on the rules included in the Personal Safety Plan. It may be helpful to have these on a white board or shared screen, if meeting via videoconference.
  - Remind participants of the purpose of the listening session: to learn from them.
  - Review the basic rules of the meeting—whether participants should speak up or wait to be called on, waiting for others to finish speaking before talking, having no judgment, etc. Remind participants that they contributed to making the rules.
  - Review how a person will/can access the therapist if needed. For example, if in person, the participant may use a hand signal and leave the room. If on videoconference, the person may use a hand signal or private chat to the therapist, who will open the breakout room and assign the participant to it.
  - Review the number of questions, when breaks will occur, and when the session will end. Remind participants that they can step away for a mini-break at any time.

- Ask if there are any questions, then begin with the first question.

### During the Meeting

1. The moderator should ask each question, checking for understanding after each.
2. The moderator and note-taker (if present) should keep an eye on approximate times for each section of questions. The moderator should gently ask participants to wrap up comments on a question if:
  - the discussion is unproductive—e.g., focusing on an insignificant detail instead of the larger picture
  - the discussion becomes combative or demoralizing
  - the discussion has provided enough information and the overall session is getting off schedule
3. The moderator should ask the note-taker (if present) to make a note of issues that felt important but that the group did not have time to discuss. These could be addressed in a follow-up session or in one-on-one interviews.
4. The therapist should monitor for signs of triggering. They should communicate with the moderator via text (outside of the video conference, so that it is easier for the moderator to see quickly). They might use specific terms, for example, “trigger warning, move on,” or “\_\_\_ may need to see me privately now.”
5. Participants should have one 5-10 minute break about mid-session, preceded by a very brief distress activity. This might include, for example, a [five-finger breathing exercise](#), guided visualization, or other 1-2 minute activity. The moderator should direct participants to mute themselves and turn off their video during break time.
6. The moderator should suggest additional breaks as need to:
  - break tension
  - enable a participant to access the therapist
  - stimulate conversation (e.g., if participants seem tired or drained)
7. If there is time, the moderator should ask as many of the additional questions as possible.

### Ending the Meeting

1. At least 10 minutes before the official end of the session, the moderator should indicate that it is time to wrap up. They should ask if there are any important comments participants want to share and/or any questions they need answered.
2. At about five minutes before the official end of the session, the moderator should review the “After the Session” section of the Personal Safety Plan to ensure everyone understands how to stay well and seek help if needed. They should also explain that an online survey link will be sent to them if this is part of the follow-up plan. (Because the content of the session can be stressful and anxiety producing, it is best to wait until well after the session to solicit any satisfaction data.)
3. At least three minutes before the end of the session, the moderator should indicate that they will do a brief centering exercise. The exercise is designed to help participants destress from the session and move forward with a feeling of well-being. This could include sharing a video of a relaxation meditation, doing a brief guided visualization, or other 2-3 minute activity.

4. Finally, the moderator should thank participants and end the meeting.

### Follow-Up

#### Participant Follow-Up

1. Within the first day of the session, project staff should follow up individually with participants to thank them and check on their well-being. This can be done via email. However, if no response is received, a follow-up call should be made.
2. If any participant needs post-session time with the therapist, arrange for that time within about a week of the session.
3. Within the first week of the session, project staff should follow up individually with participants who need additional support to complete any satisfaction surveys online. Once all surveys have been completed, response spreadsheets should be generated and saved in the appropriate format.

#### Staff Follow-Up

1. Within the first week of the session, notes should be consolidated with transcripts, edited, and reviewed. Once the notes are approved by the Project Director, the recording of the Zoom session (if any) should be destroyed.
2. When participants have completed all sessions and any related tasks, project staff should provide them with the agreed-upon payment.
3. When planning for the second round of listening sessions (if any), staff should focus on areas in which more or deeper information is needed or on new areas of inquiry.

### Example Personal Safety Plan (used for videoconference sessions)

Thank you for being part of our listening sessions! Your safety and mental health are the most important thing to us.

We have made this safety plan for you. It tells you how to stay safe and well before, during, and after our session. You can share this safety plan with others. The listening session is not a secret.

If you need help or have questions, you can **always** contact:

[Contact name 1], XXX-XXX-XXXX, xxx@gmail.com

[Contact name 2], XXX-XXX-XXXX, xxx@yahoo.com

#### Before the Session

1. Make sure you have a private place to be for the session. When you are on the call, others around you must not be able to see the people on the call. Others must not be able to hear what they say. You can always tell others about what we (the moderators) say and do. The meeting is not a secret. But you must be private to keep the others on the call safe.
2. Gather water, a snack, and a fidget toy or de-stress item. You might want these during the session.

#### During the Session

1. Follow the session rules:
  - Take turns talking.
  - Listen when others talk.
  - Wait for others to finish talking before you start.
  - Do not judge others. Listen and offer support.
  - Ask a question if you don't understand something.  
*Are there any other rules you would like to add to this list?*
2. Something you hear might make you remember something. It might make you feel scared or stressed. You might want to talk about it.

We will have a therapist named Ms. [Therapist] on the call. She can help you with your feelings. If you need her:

- Raise your hand and say, “I need to talk to Ms. [Therapist] alone.”  
– Or –
- If you know how, send a message to Ms. [Therapist] in the Zoom chat.

She will assign you to a breakout room in Zoom. She will meet you there to talk in private. When you are done, she will help you rejoin the group if you want to. But you don’t have to rejoin if you don’t want to.

3. We will only tell your story to others if you say that you or someone you know is being abused now. If you say that, we must tell your story to Adult Protective Services. That is the law. They will listen to your story and decide how they can help you. We will tell you if we are calling them. You are welcome to make the report with us. Or you can watch us make the report. It is always your choice to say something or not to. It is always your choice to be with us when we make the report.
4. Use a hand fidget or other thing that helps you feel less stressed.
5. Ask for a break whenever you need to. Say, “stress break,” or just turn off your video and mute yourself.
6. If you need to leave the call, that’s OK. Just let us know you are leaving. You will not be in trouble for leaving. You will still be paid even if you leave.
7. We will do a de-stress activity at the end. It will help you feel calm.

### **After the Session**

You might still feel upset or stressed.

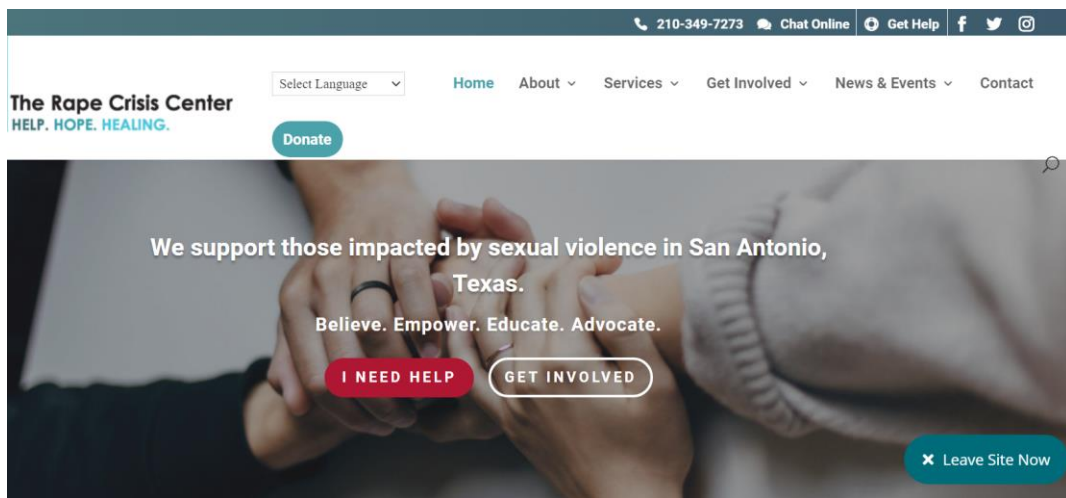
1. You can do more de-stress activities. Check out this YouTube page:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmFUDkj1Aq0>
2. You might need to talk to Ms. [Therapist] about it. Email or call [Contact Name 1] or [Contact Name 2] and they will get Ms. [Therapist] to help you.

3. You might realize you have been sexually assaulted or abused. You might need help near you. You can contact:

- RAINN National Sexual Abuse Hotline: 1-800-656-4673  
You can also [go to their web site](#) and do a live chat instead.

[Insert contact information for local rape crisis center and APS in the participant's area, for example:]

- [The Rape Crisis Center](#): Phone, Chat, Help Button



- [Texas Department of Family and Protective Services](#)

Phone Hotline: 1-800-252-5400



## Example Informed Consent Agreement

You want to join a listening session about sexual assault prevention.

We need to know that you understand what that means.

Signing or saying you agree with this form will show that you understand and agree.

If you agree, then you can join a session.

It's OK not to agree. Nothing bad will happen if you decide not to join.

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### Goals

We want to learn how to prevent sexual assault and abuse. We want to learn to help people if it happens. Talking with people like you will help us.

We will tell others what we learn. But we won't use your name. We won't use any private information about you.

Do you understand these goals?

Do you have any questions?

I understand and agree to these goals: \_\_\_\_\_

---

### About the Groups

You will be in a Zoom group with 2-4 other people. There will be a person asking questions. There will be another person taking notes.

Everyone in the group must be private. When you are on the Zoom call, others around you must not be able to see the people on the call. Others must not be able to hear what they say. You can always share things we (the moderators) say and do. The meeting is not a secret. But you need to be private to keep the people on the call safe.

We will talk for about an hour and a half. We will take breaks. You can take extra breaks if you need to. You can leave the call if you need to. You will still be paid if you leave the call.

We will have a therapist on the call. You might feel upset by what you hear. You might need support. She will help. If you feel upset after the call, she will help you then, too.

Do you understand how the groups will work?

Do you have any questions?

I understand and agree to how the groups will work: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Pros: Good things about being in the session**

Your ideas will help others.

You will be paid \$75.

We might ask you to help with our work in the future.

**Cons: Bad things about being in the session**

You might feel uncomfortable. We will talk about sexuality and assault or abuse.

You might remember something that happened to you. That might be very upsetting. We will have a therapist to help if this happens.

Do you understand these pros and cons?

Do you have any questions?

I understand and agree to these pros and cons: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**Confidentiality: What we say during the session is private.**

We will not tell others about you or what you say. Other people in the session will not tell others about you or what you say. You must also not tell others about the people in the session or what they say. You can always tell others about what we (the moderators) say. The meeting is not a secret.

We will only tell your story to others if you say that you or someone you know is being abused now. If you say that, we must tell your story to Adult Protective Services. That is the law. They will listen to your story and decide how they can help you. We will tell you if we are calling them. You are welcome to make the report with us. Or you can watch us make the report. It is always your choice to say something or not to. It is always your choice to be with us when we make the report.

Do you understand confidentiality?

Do you agree to keep the session private?

Do you have any questions?

I understand and agree to confidentiality: \_\_\_\_\_

**Recording**

We want to make sure we don't miss any important information.

We will record the Zoom session. We will also take notes. Then, we will destroy the recording.

We will not write down who said what. We will not write down any names.

Do you understand about the recording?

Do you agree to be recorded?

Do you have any questions?

I understand and agree to the recording: \_\_\_\_\_

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You have learned more about the listening sessions.

Do you have any questions?

Now that you know all of this, do you still want to participate?

I understand what we talked about. I still want to participate: \_\_\_\_\_

## Example Interview Guide

### Greeting/Introduction [5 minutes]

[Co-Moderator 1:]

Thanks for taking the time to speak with us. This project is funded by the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities. Our goal is to learn all we can about sexual assault of people with IDD so that we can help others.

I need to make sure that everyone is in a private place. Others around you must not be able to see the self-advocates on the call. Others must not be able to hear what they say.

You can always share things we (the moderators) say and do. The meeting is not a secret. It is in a private place to keep all participants safe.

Please raise your hand in front of the camera to show you are private. If you are not, or if you lose privacy during the call, we ask you to log off the call until you can become private. You can rejoin once you are in a private place. There is no penalty for logging off. You can choose to log off at any time.

*[Pause to take care of any privacy issues.]*

Please keep yourself muted unless you want to speak. Does everyone know how to do that? Just click the button in the zoom toolbar at the bottom of your screen that looks like a microphone. If you want to speak, just raise your hand in front of your camera and I'll call on you.

My name is [Co-Moderator 1] and I'm the co-moderator for this session. Also on the call are [Co-Moderator 2] who will be asking questions and leading discussion. We also have [Note Taker] who will be taking notes and [Therapist] who is a therapist. Her role is to make sure our conversation stays safe and to give support if someone gets upset or needs help during the call.

Please briefly introduce yourself if you want to. You don't have to if you don't want to. If you do, then just say your name and where you're from.

*[Pause for time to introduce.]*

I need to remind you that the meeting will be recorded and that you agreed to that when you signed the informed consent agreement. This recording will only be used to take notes. We don't want to miss any important information. We will not use names, and once the notes are taken the recording will be destroyed.

Has anyone changed their mind about participating and being recorded? If you have changed your mind, please leave the Zoom call now. You will not get in trouble for leaving now.

*[Pause to address any issues of people who have changed their minds.]*

*[Press Record and visually verify that session is recording.]*

OK, I'm recording.

I want to let you know what to expect during this session. We will ask questions about sexual assault prevention and response. We want you to do most of the talking—we are here to learn from you.

We are scheduled to finish our call at [End time] We will have a ten-minute break around [break time]. You can also take small breaks whenever you need to. Just say "stress break." Or, just turn off your video and mute yourself for a few minutes while you take a break.

About five minutes before the end of the call, we'll do a short relaxation activity to help you destress.

We shared the rules of the session in your Safety Plan. We also asked if you had any rules of your own to add. Here is a reminder:

- Take turns talking.
- Listen when others talk.
- Wait for others to finish talking before you start.
- Do not judge others. Listen and offer support.

- Ask a question if you don't understand something.

Remember, the things we talk about are important. But they can be upsetting. If you start to feel upset, anxious, or remember something from your past that you need help with, [Therapist] can help. She will be listening and might ask you to join her in a breakout room away from others. This room will not be recorded.

You can also ask to join [Therapist] in a private breakout room. If you know how to chat privately to her in Zoom, you can do that. But the easiest way to let us know is to signal with a big thumbs down in front of the camera. If she sees that, she will open the breakout room and a message on your screen will ask you to join it.

Does anyone have any questions about that?

*[Pause to address any questions about the therapist.]*

Does anyone have any other questions before we start?

*[Pause to address any questions.]*

Great. Let's get started.

### **Ice-Breaker [5 min]**

Let's all get comfortable with each other. It's easier to talk when we feel comfortable.

[Co-Moderator 2] is going to read a list of things. If you like that thing, give a thumbs up in front of the camera. If you don't like that thing, don't do anything.

[Co-Moderator:]

[Say these things one at a time. After everyone votes, ask, "who wants to share why they like or don't like that?" Maybe share a joke or say something funny about one or more of the things.]

- Cats
- Dogs
- Spicy Food
- Scary Movies
- Summer
- Winter
- A hug
- A Surprise
- The ocean
- Traveling

[Co-Moderator 1:]

Did you notice that you have some things in common with others, but not everything?

Do you find it easier to relax with people you have something in common with? I do. Hopefully getting to know each other a little will help us be more comfortable with each other.

OK. Let's start our talk. Remember, at any time you can say "stress break." You can step away from your screen. You can ask to talk to [Therapist] if you are upset.

[Co-Moderator 2], let's start with the first question.

*[Awareness]*

Q1. How would you be able to tell if someone you know was being sexually assaulted or abused?

Do you understand the question? Do you need more information?

*Potential Prompts:*

Do you think the person would tell you? Why or why not?

Could you tell from the way they look? How would they look?

Could you tell from how they were acting? How would they act?

Q2. Do you feel like you understand relationship boundaries? (Friendship, love, sex, professional)

Do you understand the question? Do you need more information?

*Potential Prompts:*

What is confusing to you about boundaries (if anything)?

Do you think not having good boundaries can be dangerous? How?

*[Time Check: \_\_\_ minutes in, \_\_:\_\_\_]*

*[Prevention]*

Q3. Have you had sex education?

Do you understand the question? Do you need more information?

*Potential Prompts:*

Where did you get sex education? (School, home, elsewhere, more than one place)

Did it talk about sexual assault or abuse?



Do you think sex education is important to prevent sexual assault or abuse?  
Why or why not?

*[Reporting]*

Q4. Do you know who to report to if you or someone you know is sexually assaulted or abused?

Do you understand the question? Do you need more information?

*Potential Prompts:*

Who would you report to?

Why would you choose that person?

Q5. How comfortable would you be reporting about sexual assault? (Either for you or someone else)

Do you understand the question? Do you need more information?

*Potential Prompts:*

Who do you feel safe with to do that?

What kind of support would you want if you had to report about a sexual assault?

Who do you like to have with you when you're stressed?

What do you like to do when you're stressed?

Q6. Do you know what happens after a person reports sexual assault or abuse?

Do you understand the question? Do you need more information?

*Potential Prompts:*

Do you have any fears about what might happen? What are they?

Do you ever feel threatened or intimidated? How do you deal with that?

*[Time Check: \_\_\_\_\_ minutes in, \_\_:\_\_\_]*

[Co-Moderator 1:]

It's time to take our 10-minute break.

Before we do, how is everyone doing? Does anyone need to speak with

[Therapist] in a breakout room?

*[Pause to handle breakout room if needed.]*

I want to invite you to do a destress activity with me for about one minute before your break. If you don't want to, turn off your video and mute yourself. Have snack and drink some water. Destress in whatever way works for you. Then come back on at \_\_:\_\_\_.

*[Pause to wait for folks to leave.]*

OK. This is a simple activity called five-finger breathing. It's a way to help you relax by deep breathing. Open your hand and place it on your chest. Or, you can just watch my hand. I'm going to trace up and down my fingers while I breathe in and out. You do the same, or just breathe while I trace my fingers.

OK. Breathe in while I trace up to the tip of my pinky...Now breathe out while I trace down my pinky...Breathe in while I trace up my ring finger...Now breathe out while I trace down my ring finger...In....and out...In...and out...[repeat until finished with thumb].

Now do the same from thumb back to pinky...In...and out...[repeat until done.]

Excellent. This is a great way to destress any time you need to.

Now turn off your video and mute yourself. Have a snack and drink some water.

Destress in whatever way works for you. Then come back on at \_\_:\_\_\_.

[Co-Moderator 1:]

Welcome back. Is everyone still doing OK? Does anyone need to talk to [Therapist]? Are we ready to talk some more? OK. [Co-Moderator 2] is going to ask some more questions. These questions will be about your experiences with law enforcement.

[Co-Moderator 2:]

*[Adjudication]*

Q7. How do you think you'd feel if you had to talk with police?

Do you understand the question? Do you need more information?

*Potential Prompts:*

Why do you feel that way?

Have you had any experiences talking to police? Tell us about those if you want to.

Q8. What experiences (if any) do you have with Adult Protective Services?

Do you understand the question? Do you need more information?

*Potential Prompts:*

Do you feel Adult Protective Services are helpful or harmful? Or both?

*[Time Check: \_\_\_\_\_ minutes in, \_\_:\_\_\_]*

Q9. How do you think you'd feel if you had to testify in court?

Do you understand the question? Do you need more information?

*Potential Prompts:*

Have you ever been in a court?

Have you ever talked to lawyers or a judge?

Tell us about those experiences if you want to.

What do you think it's like to go to court? Do you have any fears about that?

[Survivor Support]

Now we're going to talk about the help and support people might need after an assault.

Q10. What is the most important thing for a person with IDD to have to help them recover from a sexual assault?

Do you understand the question? Do you need more information?

*Potential Prompts:*

Would you want to talk about it?

What other support would you want?

Q11. In general, what do you need when you're hurting?

Do you understand the question? Do you need more information?

*Potential Prompts:*

Are there things that make you feel better?

How do you like people to treat you when you're hurting?

What do you not like for people to do when you're hurting?

[Time Check: \_\_\_\_\_ minutes in, \_\_:\_\_\_]

[Additional Questions if time]

- Has anyone ever talked to you about dangerous things related to relationships and sexuality?
  - For example, has anyone ever talked to you about porn—when it’s OK and when it is dangerous to you or others?
  - What about saying loving words to or touching others. Has anyone talked to you about when that’s OK and when it’s not? And what can happen if you do something that’s not OK?
  - Do you feel like you understand these ideas—or are you confused about them?
- Think about times when you need help from an organization or official. It could be a service coordinator. Or a supervisor at work. When you have to ask for help, how do you feel about that?
  - What can people do to make you feel more at ease when you are asking for help?
  - What do you dislike about how people treat you when you need help?
- Do you think you’d know if a person meant you harm? How would you know?
- What if a person said they were trying to be your friend—how would you spot someone who was not telling the truth or meant you harm?

*Wrap-Up [8 minutes]*

[Co-Moderator 2:]

- What questions do you have after our talk?
- What didn’t you have a chance to say that you want to before we go?
- What is the most important thing you learned today?
- Would you be interested in being an advisory group member over the next few years?

[Co-Moderator 1:]

Thank you so much for helping us. Your courage is amazing and your words will help many others. I want to remind everyone that your privacy and safety is our number one priority. We will never identify anyone by name in our work. We will destroy the recording of this session as soon as we have finished taking notes. You must never identify participants to others or tell other self-advocates' stories. You can always share things we (the moderators) say and do. The meeting is not a secret.

Your Personal Safety plan has some resources if you find after this session that you are upset or stressed out about what we've discussed. There are links to meditations. If you need to, you can meet with [Therapist]. Email or call [Co-Moderator 1] and they will set up a time for you to talk.

Now we are going to do a closing relaxation activity to get ourselves calm and centered. I'm going to share a meditation on my screen. You follow along until the end.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLhOGEnEedk>

[Co-Moderator 2:]

Thank you again. Remember, if someone hurts you it is not your fault at all. If you need help please email or call us. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ email and phone number are on your safety plan.