

# *Trauma-Informed Lawyering Lunch & Learn*

Legal Network for Gender Equity Webinar  
June 27, 2023, 12:00 – 1:00 pm ET



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LEGAL DEFENSE FUND  
UP



**Bridgette Stumpf** (she/her) is the Executive Director of Network for Victim Recovery of DC (NVRDC), a position she has held since co-founding the organization in May 2012. As part of this role, Bridgette developed the Legal Services and Pro Bono Programs at NVRDC, which includes: civil legal assistance to survivors of sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking in DC Superior Court; representation to college campus survivors through administrative judicial hearings, appeals, and formal complaints to the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights for Title IX violations; and the assertion of crime victims' rights throughout the criminal legal process.

For over a decade, Bridgette has spent her legal career advocating to ensure those impacted by crime are afforded meaningful rights and access to supportive services to mitigate the negative effects of trauma post-victimization. As one of the few victims' rights experts in the country, Bridgette is frequently called to participate in local and national policy conversations around victims' issues—providing expertise to members of the U.S. Congress to increase the transparency of sexual assault prosecutions, and to the DC Council on how to enhance the rights of crime victims through multiple pieces of local legislation.

Bridgette became a certified police instructor in 2009 and is currently part-time faculty at George Washington University, where she teaches Victims, Victimization & the System. She was honored in 2014 by the Women's Information Network (WIN) Young Women Achievement Award (YWA) for her efforts in non-profit advocacy and in 2019 by the Center for Nonprofit Advancement with the Excellence in Chief Executive Leadership (EXCEL) Award, which recognizes innovation, motivation, community building, ethical integrity, and strategic leadership.



**Lindsey Silverberg** (she/her) is the Deputy Director NVRDC. She oversees the day-to-day operations of the advocacy and case management program. Lindsey directs the Sexual Assault Crisis Response Project, trains and supervises program staff, and manages the data collection and reporting for the organization.

Lindsey has worked as a victim advocate for almost 10 years providing hospital accompaniment for sexual assault survivors, attending court, and offering direct advocacy support to survivors of crime. Prior to joining NVRDC, Lindsey worked as an Associate Project Director at Danya International where she managed several federal public health research grants, developed educational content, and designed and implemented research evaluations. Lindsey also worked as the Manager of Outreach and Student Services at the University of Maryland's Office of the Victim Advocate. She received her B.A. from the University of Maryland and her M.A. from the University of North Carolina Wilmington.



# Today's Speakers



**Bridgette Stumpf** (she/her)  
*Executive Director*  
Network for Victim Recovery  
of DC (NVRDC)



**Lindsey Silverberg** (she/her)  
*Deputy Director*  
Network for Victim Recovery  
of DC (NVRDC)



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Recovery of DC

# Trauma-Informed Lawyering

Presented by Network for Victim  
Recovery of DC





SERVES SURVIVORS OF  
ANY TYPE OF CRIME

From sexual assault to homicide and elder  
abuse.



FREE, HOLISTIC, TRAUMA-  
INFORMED LEGAL &  
ADVOCACY SERVICES

Working together to increase access to services.



SURVIVOR-DEFINED  
JUSTICE

There's no "right" way to react to a crime.

# Network for Victim Recovery of DC

Pro Bono Opportunities at  
[probono@nvrdc.org](mailto:probono@nvrdc.org)





# JUST A NOTE

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## ON LANGUAGE

Victim v. Survivor

## ON CONTENT

Will be covering case examples

## SHORT & LONG-TERM SUPPORT







# **TRAUMA'S IMPACT ON LEGAL ADVOCACY**





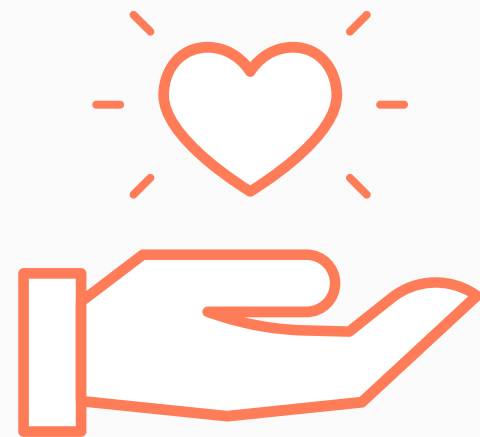
"[I]F ONE SET OUT BY DESIGN TO DEVISE A SYSTEM FOR PROVOKING INTRUSIVE POST-TRAUMATIC SYMPTOMS, ONE COULD NOT DO BETTER THAN A COURT OF LAW."

— JUDITH LEWIS HERMAN, TRAUMA AND RECOVERY: THE AFTERMATH OF VIOLENCE - FROM DOMESTIC ABUSE TO POLITICAL TERROR

# BEST PRACTICES



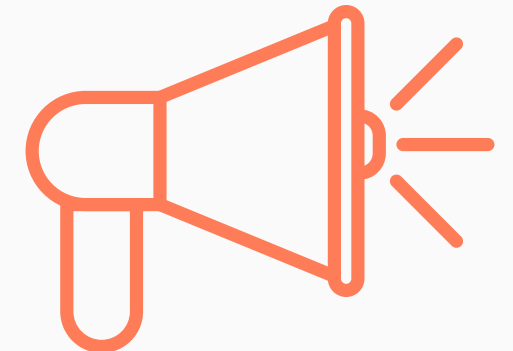
Build Trust &  
Rapport



Respectful  
approach to  
victims



Recognize and  
honor the role of  
culture in  
victimization



Advocate for  
victims' choices  
and rights





# OVER-GENERALIZED SIGNALS OF DANGERS



- Better for survival
- Emotionally can disrupt life
- Trauma victims can be more vulnerable to make false associations which interpret danger in an environment where none exist



The Invisible Epidemic: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Memory and the Brain, J. Douglas Bremner, M.D.

# COMMON TRIGGERS



- Identification of the assailant
- Sensing something similar to an awareness during the trauma
- News of the actual or similar events
- Proximity to “life events”
- Hearings, trials, appeals, critical phases in the proceedings





# TRAUMA & MEMORY

- The ability to recall details of the traumatic incident are not the same in the acute crisis moment as they are 48 hours (2 sleep cycles later).
- Sticky notes example.



U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice The Research, Development, and Evaluation Agency of the U.S. Department of Justice Transcript "The Neurobiology of Sexual Assault" with Dr. Rebecca Campbell.



**MINIMIZING TRAUMA  
EXPERIENCES DURING  
THE LITIGATION  
PROCESS**





# ASSUMPTIONS



REALIZES



RECOGNIZES



RESPONDS



RESISTS



REVISITS

# PRACTICE TIPS

Empower (opportunities for  
choice)

Roadmapping

Grounding Strategies

Healthy Boundaries in the  
Attorney/Client Relationship



# Screenings & Intakes

DATA  
COLLECTION

OBSERVATION &  
DATA INPUTTING

INTERPRETING  
INFORMATION

EMPOWERMENT  
TOOL

**Others?**

# The Interview Purpose







# TRAUMA-INFORMED INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK

SAFETY

TRUST &  
TRANSPARENCY

PEER SUPPORT

COLLABORATION

EMPOWERMENT  
& CHOICE

CULTURAL &  
HISTORICAL LENS



# TRAUMA-INFORMED INTERVIEW APPROACH

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Clarify other information (details) after facilitation and collection of the psychophysiological experiential evidence.



# Trauma-Informed Interview Approach



1) AFFIRM

2) ASK WHAT THEY CAN REMEMBER

3) ASK ABOUT THOUGHT PROCESS

4) ASK ABOUT SIGHTS, SMELLS, SOUNDS

5) ASK HOW IT AFFECTED THEM

6) ASK WHAT WAS MOST DIFFICULT

7) ASK WHAT THEY CAN'T FORGET



# Litigation Prep

# TRAUMA-INFORMED FRAMEWORK

## BEFORE

- 1) CHECK NON-VERBALS
- 2) SET AN AGENDA
- 3) MAKE IT STANDARD
- 4) IDENTIFY CONCERNS & COMFORT
- 5) CREATE CHOICE





# TRAUMA-INFORMED FRAMEWORK

## DURING

- 1) EXPLAIN WHY
- 2) ASK PERMISSION
- 3) BE CLEAR
- 4) MIND THE QUESTIONS



# TRAUMA-INFORMED FRAMEWORK

## AFTER

- 1) REVIEW
- 2) TALK NEXT STEPS
- 3) EXPRESS THANKS



# Trial Strategies

# DIRECT EXAMINATIONS

- 1) KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT
- 2) EXPLAINING YOUR ROLE AND PURPOSE OF DIRECT EXAMINATION
- 3) PRACTICE





# CROSS EXAMINATIONS

- 1) KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT
- 2) FINDING A BALANCE - AVOIDING  
SUGAR-COATING AND FEAR  
MONGERING
- 3) EXPLAINING YOUR ROLE AND  
PURPOSE OF CROSS-EXAMINATION
- 4) PRACTICE





# POST-PROCEEDING CONSIDERATIONS

- 1) KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT
- 2) TALK NEXT STEPS
- 3) EXPRESS THANKS





# TRAUMA- INFORMED LANGUAGE







# NEUROSCIENCE OF TRUST

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# Practice Scenarios



# HOW TO EMPATHETICALLY SET BOUNDARIES AROUND CLIENT COMMUNICATION:



A prospective client comes to you seeking representation. Their case has been stayed, but they are looking to reinitiate it as soon as possible. You are juggling a lot of competing deadlines for other clients whose cases feel more pressing. The prospective client emails you daily requesting updates. How do you explain to the client that their case is important and a priority while also setting realistic boundaries for yourself and realistic expectations for how quickly things can move forward?





# HOW TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES FOR MYSELF AND THE PEOPLE I SUPERVISE:

1. What do healthy boundaries look like?
2. How can I avoid burnout?
3. How can I as a manager support my junior staff who do a lot of client interviews to avoid burnout?

# HOW TO RECOMMEND SUPPORT OUTSIDE OF LEGAL REPRESENTATION:



My client appears to be struggling with their mental health? How can I suggest they seek out mental health services, and what is the best way to connect them with services?

# STRIKING THE BALANCE BETWEEN LEGAL ETHICS AND CLIENT COMFORT:



How should I advise clients when they want third parties (i.e. spouse, partner, parent etc.) to sit in on attorney-client meetings? (We know this triggers privilege issues but also can be a source of reassurance for the client.)

# DID YOU ENJOY THIS TRAINING?



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# CONTACT US

For more information:

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# Questions



**Bridgette Stumpf** (she/her)  
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*Deputy Director*  
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SUMMER MEMBERSHIP DRIVE



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Apply to become a member of our national network of attorneys working to support workers, patients, and students facing sex discrimination!

Apply or refer someone to the Legal Network for Gender Equity **before July 31** for a chance to win a special prize.



**Apply to join at:**

<https://nwlc.org/attorneys-join-the-legal-network-for-gender-equity/>

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