

ACWS

Alberta Council of
Women's Shelters



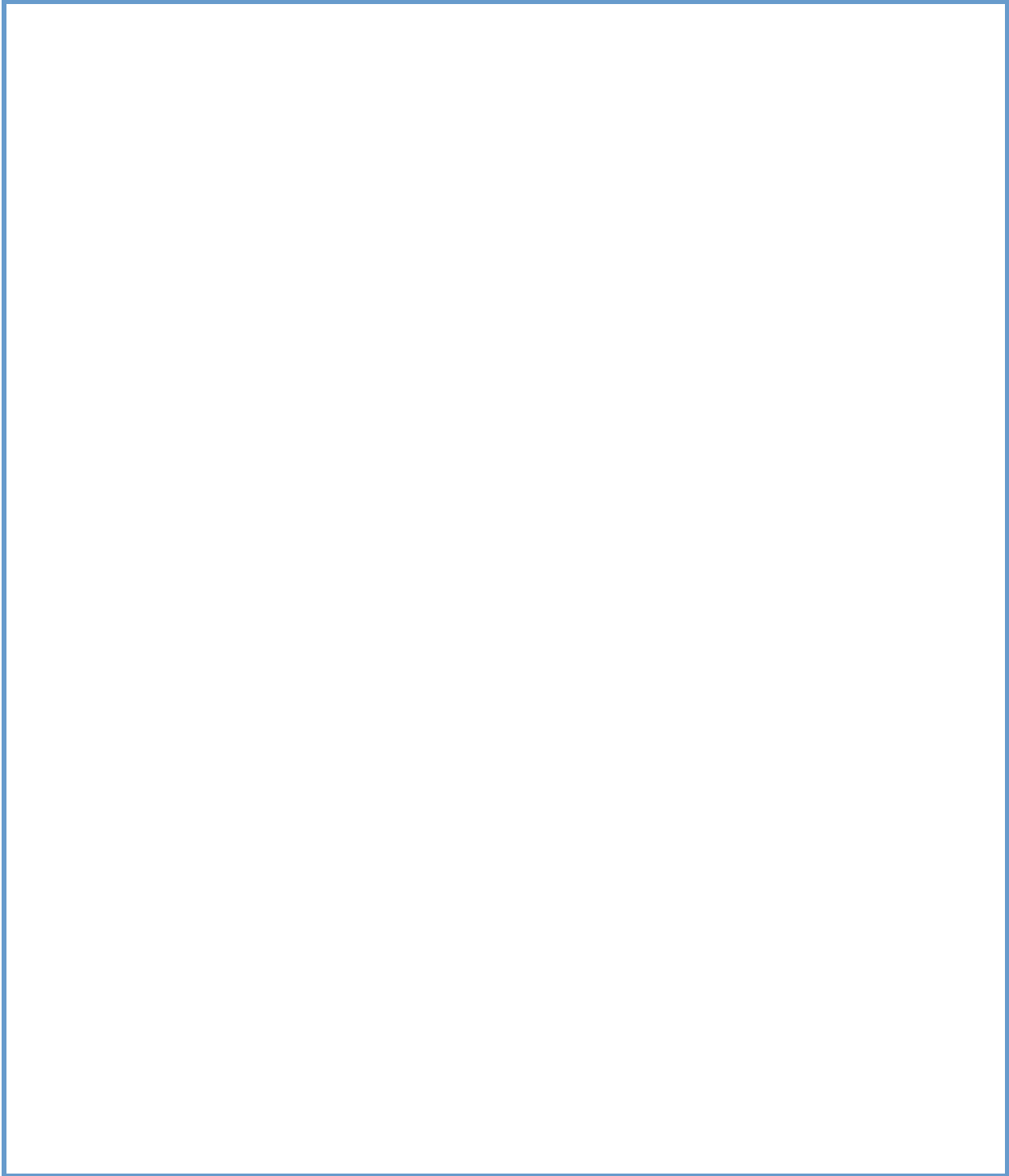
**Level 1:
Foundations**

**Case Management
Foundations Workbook
Module 5**

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Introduction

Welcome to Case Management Foundations Module 5.

Use this Workbook to capture your thoughts, reflections, ideas, or insights as you go through the eLearning module.

Acknowledgements

The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters (ACWS) wishes to acknowledge the traditional territories on which we live, work and play. We recognize that all Albertans are Treaty people and have a responsibility to understand our history so that we can honour the past, be aware of the present, and create a just and caring future.

We honour the courage and strength of Indigenous women. We honour them as life givers and caregivers as we honour and learn from their continuing achievements, their consistent strength, and their remarkable endurance.

We acknowledge that this course, Case Management Foundations, was created on Treaty 6, 7, and 8 lands, as well as the six Métis regions of Alberta. We dedicate this education to all the women and families who inspire us with their courage, strength, resilience, and kindness. We thank the many individuals whose work, input, and expertise have contributed to its development.

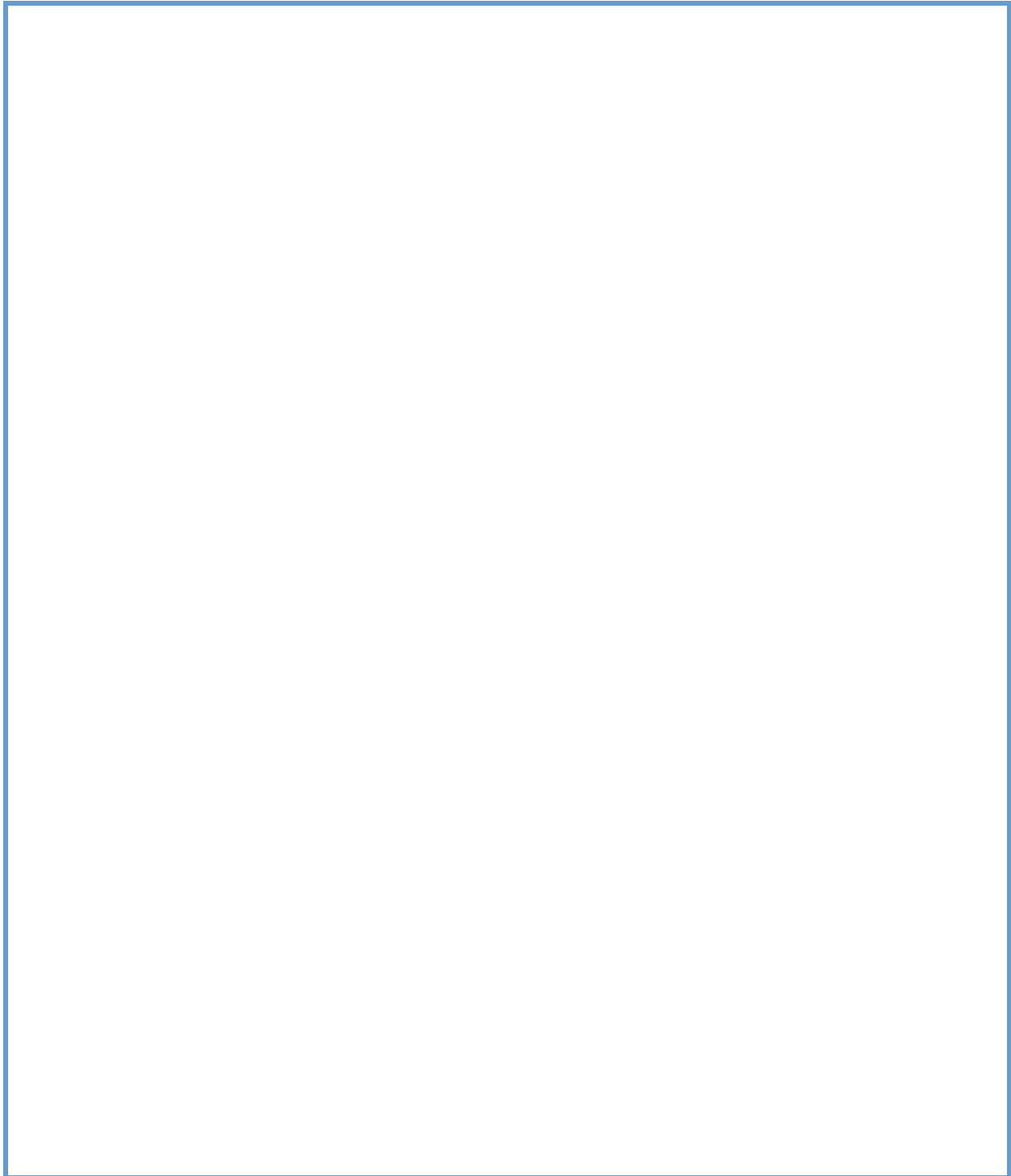
ACWS benefits from the wisdom, expertise, and innovation of our members across Alberta, who provide front-line support to individuals and families experiencing domestic abuse. This project could not be completed without their generous support and knowledge-sharing. Case Management is an evolving practice and the ongoing input and feedback from ACWS members, both individually and collectively, has made and will continue to make this course relevant for, reflective of, and responsive to the Alberta context of domestic abuse shelter practice. Special thanks to Stepping Stones Crisis Society for providing specific exercise content for this course.

We would also like to acknowledge that this educational offering is made possible with funding and partnership from the Government of Canada under the Community Services Recovery Fund, and from the Ministry of Children and Family Services.



Questions, ideas or suggestions? Contact learning@acws.ca

Notes





Module 5: Collaborate on Safety Plans

Lesson 1: Frame your learning

A safety plan is a **personalized strategy** a survivor creates to **mitigate risks** AND **promote long-term well-being and safety**.

Safety planning is a dynamic and ongoing process that evolves with the survivor's changing circumstances and needs. We work with and support the survivor to identify potential dangers, facilitate access to resources and support systems, and create practical steps to address safety concerns.

A safety plan requires regular review and adaptation to ensure its effectiveness and relevance over time.

Lesson 2: Key components of safety plans

A safety plan, grounded in survivor strengths and needs, consists of **actionable measures** to mitigate risks, maintain basic human needs, and promote well-being.

Physical safety strategies

- **Emergency contacts:** A list of trusted individuals and support services to contact in case of crisis
- **Safe places:** A list of physical locations where the survivor can seek refuge if necessary
- **Safety pack:** An emergency bag containing essential items and documents for quick access when leaving an unsafe situation
- **Warning signs:** A list of indicators of escalating violence or danger and strategies to respond effectively
- **Escape plan:** A step-by-step plan for leaving a dangerous situation safely

Emotional safety strategies

- **Support network:** A list of individuals or organizations that can provide emotional support and practical assistance
- **Self-care:** Grounding or self-soothing techniques for managing stress, maintaining mental wellness, and/or practicing self-compassion
- **Sentimental items:** removal or storage of items that are important to the survivor and their children to allow for access upon leaving
- **Pets:** Planning for the removal and caring for pets in advance

Economic safety strategies

- **Financial resources:** Identification of financial assets, access to funds, and strategies for managing finances independently if necessary
- **Housing stability:** A list of safe and stable housing options, including both emergency and second-stage shelters
- **Healthcare:** A record of relevant healthcare information, such as health card numbers, a list of medications and their dosages, and vaccination records
- **Food security:** Information about local food banks, free meals, and community kitchens

Legal safety strategies

- **Legal options:** Avenues for legal protection, restraining orders, civil orders, criminal charges, parental arrangements, and accessing legal assistance if needed
- **Safety at the courthouse:** Strategies and support to enhance safety for getting to, while inside, and leaving the courthouse



Talk to your team

Engage your team in a discussion about safety plan templates available at your shelter. Examples may include:

- Safety when leaving an abusive relationship
- Safety if living with an abusive partner
- Safety at work
- Keeping children safe
- Legal responses for keeping safe
- Safety after leaving an abusive relationship

Learn from each other's experiences in using these resources. Brainstorm ways to integrate them effectively to enhance your confidence and competence in collaborative safety planning with survivors.

Additional considerations

Additional factors can impact a survivor's safety and well-being. We must keep them in mind to co-create more comprehensive and effective safety plans tailored to the individual needs of each survivor.

Survivor with children

Children present unique challenges in safety planning. We need to:

- Remind the survivor to avoid discussing safety strategies with her children when the abuser is present or nearby.
- Remind the survivor's children not to share safety planning information with the abuser.
- Help the survivor to develop age-appropriate safety plans for her children.

Survivor with pets

Pets are often targeted by the abuser to exert power and maintain control. We need to help the survivor to:

- Identify trusted individuals who can temporarily care for pets.
- Explore local agencies that offer temporary shelter for pets.
- Locate pets' hiding spots to minimize search time during emergencies.

Otherwise, the survivor may increase her personal risk by delaying leaving to ensure her pets' safety.

Indigenous people

Indigenous people are disproportionately impacted by violence and abuse. Indigenous people may experience anger, mistrust, and fear in their interactions with institutions given historical and political events such as the Indian Residential School experience, the 60's Scoop and current rates of child apprehension and incarceration. We need to:

- Recognize the stigma faced by Indigenous women.
- Acknowledge the harm that has been done and continues to impact Indigenous peoples.
- Earn survivors' trust with intentional efforts to help them feel safe.
- Expand your view to include traditional healing practices and connection with culture if these are identified as relevant to the survivor.
- Avoid making assumptions and allow the survivor to identify which resources would be most helpful.

Seniors

Elder abuse is any action or inaction by someone in a trusting relationship that jeopardizes the health and well-being of an older adult. With this type of abuse, the older adult may be uniquely vulnerable due to factors such as:

- Physical frailty
- Isolation
- Immobility
- Cognitive ability
- Dependency on others for care and assistance
- Lack of social support
- Shame about disclosing abuse

Survivors with disabilities

Survivors may be particularly vulnerable to abuse if they have disabilities or are isolated. You need to know if your shelter has the capacity to accommodate:

- Service animals
- Special equipment
- Medical caregivers

Survivors who are newcomers

Immigrants, newcomers, and refugees bring their own personal, cultural, and political experiences when they first arrive in Canada. We need to:

- Avoid making assumptions about survivors based on their appearance, identities, language, or citizenship status.
- Educate survivors about their legal rights.
- Be aware of certain ethno-cultural beliefs and values that can make survivors feel bound to silence.
- Access interpretation services, such as CanTalk, to minimize language barriers.

... to be effective, safety plans must be **comprehensive, meeting basic human needs**, and **providing a life plan**, not just strategies to respond to physical violence.

— Jill Davies, Deputy Director of Greater Hartford Legal Aid

Lesson 3: Engage in “survivor-defined advocacy”

“Survivor-defined advocacy” (Davies, Lyon, and Monti-Catania, 1998) **empowers** survivors to make decisions about their own safety, well-being, and recovery.

Your role as the supporting partner involves listening to survivors, validating their experiences, and providing support and resources based on their self-identified needs and priorities.

Before

You need to build trust, establish rapport, and lay the foundation for effective safety planning:

- Spend time to create a safe place to talk.
- Discuss the purpose of the safety assessment and see if the survivor wishes to participate.
- Clarify with the survivor that her choices are important.
- Explain that the information she shares is confidential, as well as the limits of confidentiality.
- Provide choice about whether the safety plan is written down.

During

As a supporting partner working with the survivor to develop her individualized safety plan, you must:

- Collect only the information you need for the survivor's safety.
- Listen with curiosity and humility.
- Use plain language and avoid jargon.
- Validate the survivor's experience and feelings.
- Ask open-ended questions:
 - *“What have you done in the past?”*
 - *“How did it work?”*
 - *“What would you do differently?”*
 - *“What do you mean by...?”*
 - *“Help me to understand...”*
- Help her explore and identify available and relevant options and resources.

- Help her assess each of these options and then develop and implement the safety plan.
- Identify abuser-generated risks (e.g., physical violence; risks to children; psychological harm; loss of housing, healthcare, employment, etc.).
- Identify life-generated risks (e.g., health concerns, poverty, and discrimination).
- If the survivor is taking her written safety plan with her, discuss how she'll keep it safe from the abuser.

After

Collaboration doesn't end at the end of the safety planning conversation. You continue to:

- Ensure the survivor feels confident in implementing the plan. If she finds it too complex, work together to simplify it or identify key focus points.
- Review and rehearse the safety plan to increase the likelihood of implementation.
- Provide emotional support to the survivor.
- Check in with the survivor to ensure that the plan remains responsive and effective to her evolving needs and circumstances.

Monique: I am wondering if you would be open to talking about an emergency escape plan. I know this is difficult to think about, but if we develop this in advance and you have the opportunity to practice and prepare, it is more likely you will be able to implement the plan if you need to. When we spoke previously, we talked about some of the important documents you may need if you had to leave suddenly. Have you been able to remove those from the house or make copies?

Simran: Um... yeah, I think I have most of them.

Monique: Wonderful. We also talked about an emergency bag prep. Have you had the chance to pack it and include the things you identified as important such as medications, toiletries, clothing, and other essentials?

Simran: I think I have that too... somewhere...



Write it out

What are your initial thoughts, feelings, and reactions to this interaction between Monique and Simran?

How might this interaction impact Simran?

How might you approach the safety planning process?

Keep the safety planning checklist in your head as you engage in conversations with a survivor about safety planning. Then refer to the checklist to see if there is anything important that you have forgotten. This creates a **more flexible and relational approach**, while making sure everything important is considered and addressed.

— Tessa Parkes

Survivor-centred advocacy = trauma-informed case management

Collaborative safety planning recognizes that each survivor's journey is unique. It must respect her autonomy and agency in determining the most appropriate course of action for herself and her children.

Lesson 4: Put it all together



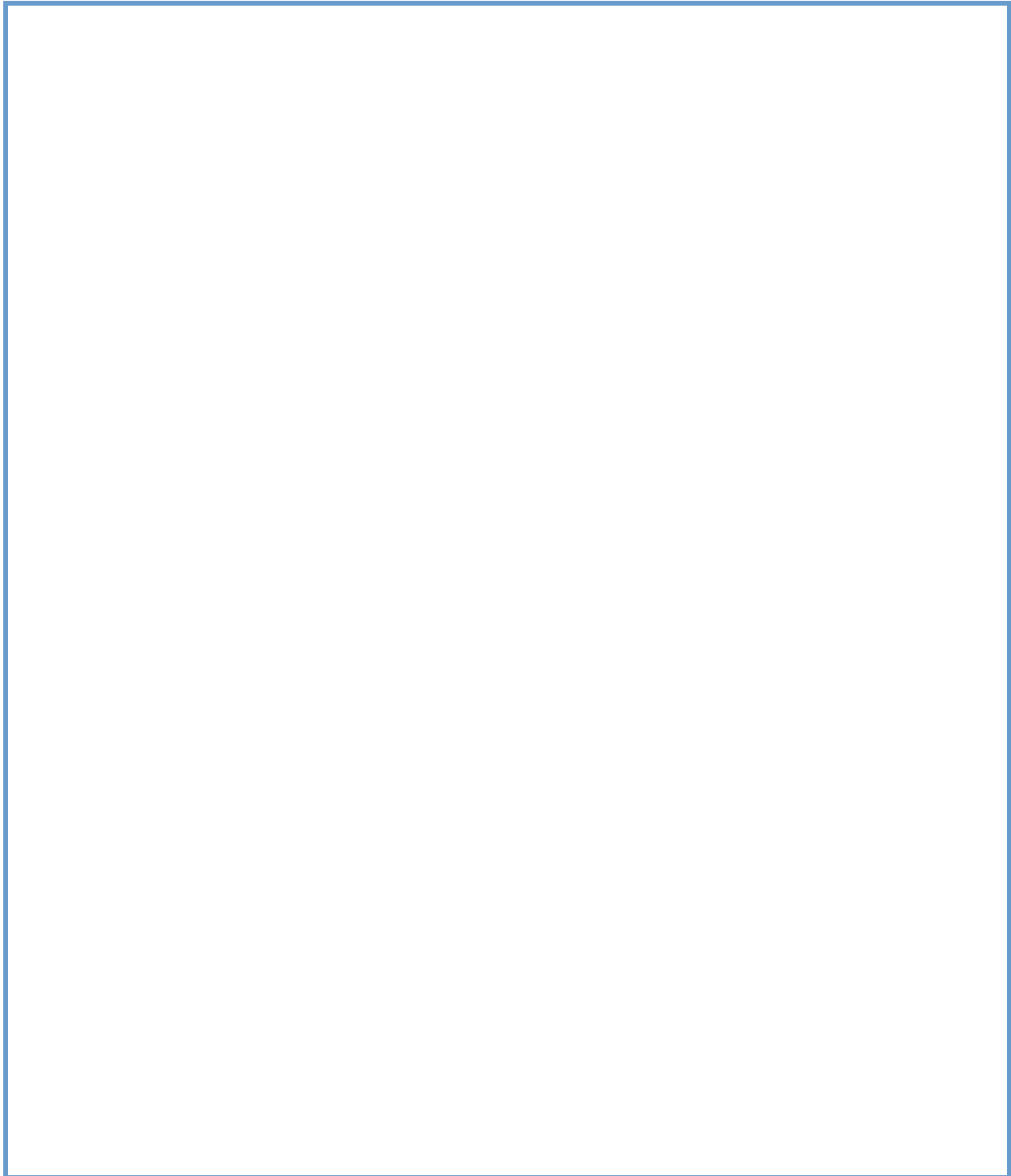
Write it out

What are your biggest takeaways from this module?

What is ONE thing you'll implement in your practice right away?

Collaborative safety planning requires us to **respect survivors' choices and right to self-determination** while being aware of any biases or judgment we may hold.

Notes



References

Module 5

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- Parkes, T. (2007). Safety Planning With Survivors of Violence. In Freedom from Violence: Tools for Working with Trauma, Mental Health and Substance Abuse. Resource Tool Kit, B.C. Association of Specialized Assistance and Counselling Programs, 142-152. www.endingviolence.org/node