

EXPLORE THE VICTIM'S OPTIONS

Practitioners must ensure that each client is fully informed of shelter, legal, housing, health care and welfare options. As the practitioner explores options with the victim, it is important to keep the following tasks in mind:

- Always ask the client what she tried in the past and what worked for her. Explore the consequences of her choices.

- Help the client prioritize; what is important to her now?

- Remember that, in a crisis, clients forget. Write things down in a language she understands. Break tasks into manageable pieces.

- Help the client mobilize her support system. Sometimes the perpetrator tears the victim away from family and friends. Rebuilding those connections, if they are good and safe, is crucial to her well-being and may also open new options for her.

- Remember that clients use systems to meet their needs. The client should not be expected to meet the systems' needs. For example, clients may drop a court case, or fail to follow through with options available through the criminal-justice system. Do not pressure the client to meet the needs of the system(s).

Schechter, S. 1987. Adapted from "Guidelines for Mental Health Practitioners in Domestic Violence Cases." Washington D.C.: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.