



WELCOME

INTRODUCE

Survivor Assistance:
Introductory Session
October 2025



Agenda



- Introductions
- Role of the SAC
- Disclosure
- Survivor-Focused Approach
- Support
- Adult Cases
- Discussion



Introductions





Role of the SAC

SAC/VAC/ Pastoral Responder

Standard 2, R1:

The Institute has designated a survivor assistance coordinator to accompany survivors throughout the Institute's response to reports and allegations of abuse.

Rationale:

The Member Institutes of CMSM have publicly recognized the need to designate a competent individual to coordinate assistance for the immediate pastoral care of persons who allege sexual abuse as a minor by a Member.





Standard 2(continued)

Requirements For Accreditation:

R2. The Institute ensures the survivor assistance coordinator(s) have education, training, and/or experience in the following content areas:

- a. Dynamics of sexual abuse;
- b. Effects of sexual abuse;
- c. How to provide comfort to those who have experienced sexual abuse;
- d. How to encourage trust in those who report being sexually abused as a minor; and
- e. How to promote healing using a trauma-informed approach.

R2. The Institute ensures survivor assistance coordinators have written guidelines for fulfilling their role.

R3. While the Major Superior may participate in providing a pastoral response, the Institute ensures he does not serve as the survivor assistance coordinator.

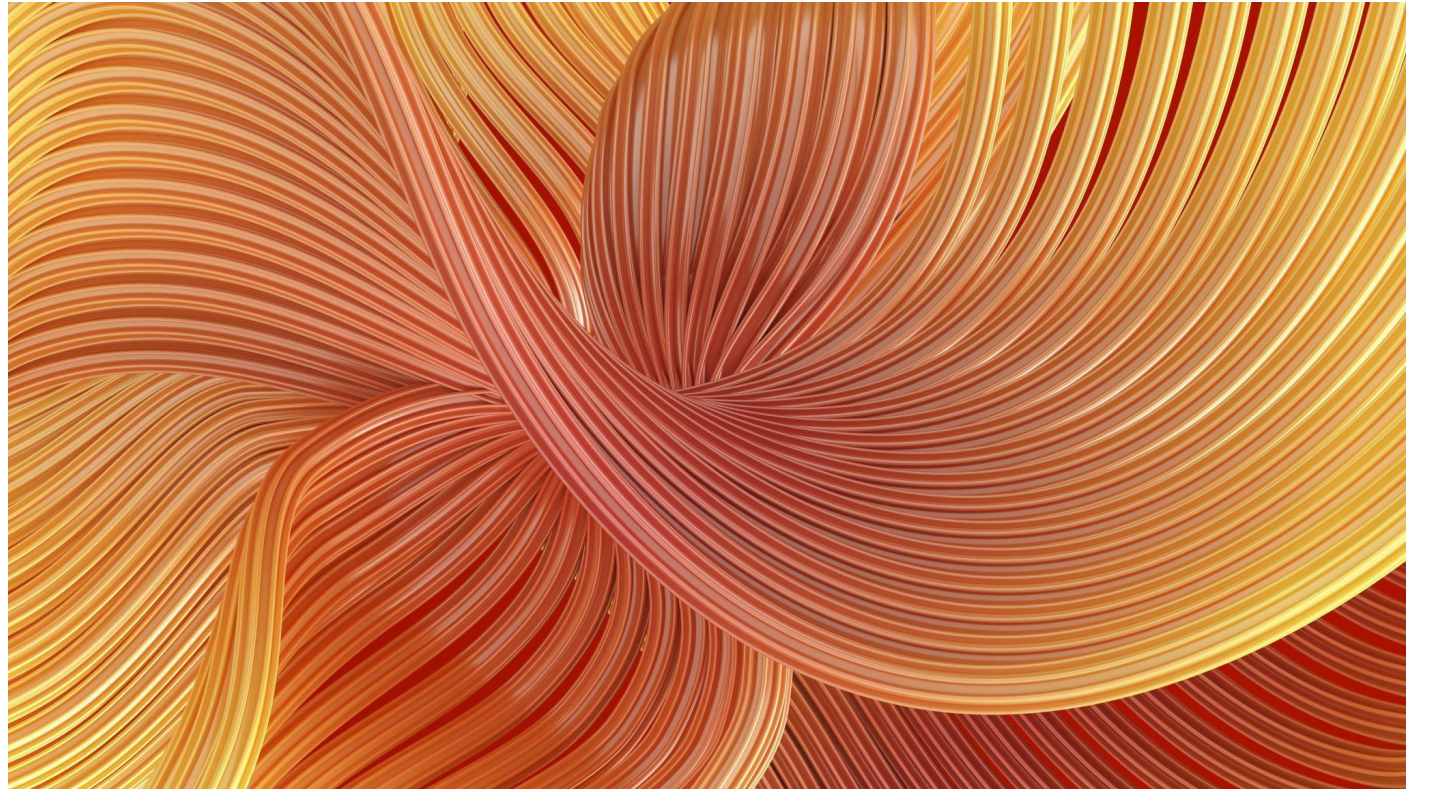
USCCB Definition

Victim Assistance Coordinator: An individual designated by the Archbishop to be responsible for initial pastoral response and subsequent pastoral care in the name of the Archdiocese to victims of sexual abuse by Church Personnel.



What's our role?

- Intake
- Reporting – internally, civilly, attorney, local diocese, RB, institutions, other
- Advocate
- Connect with resources
- Ongoing follow up with survivor



Accompaniment

Companions on the journey

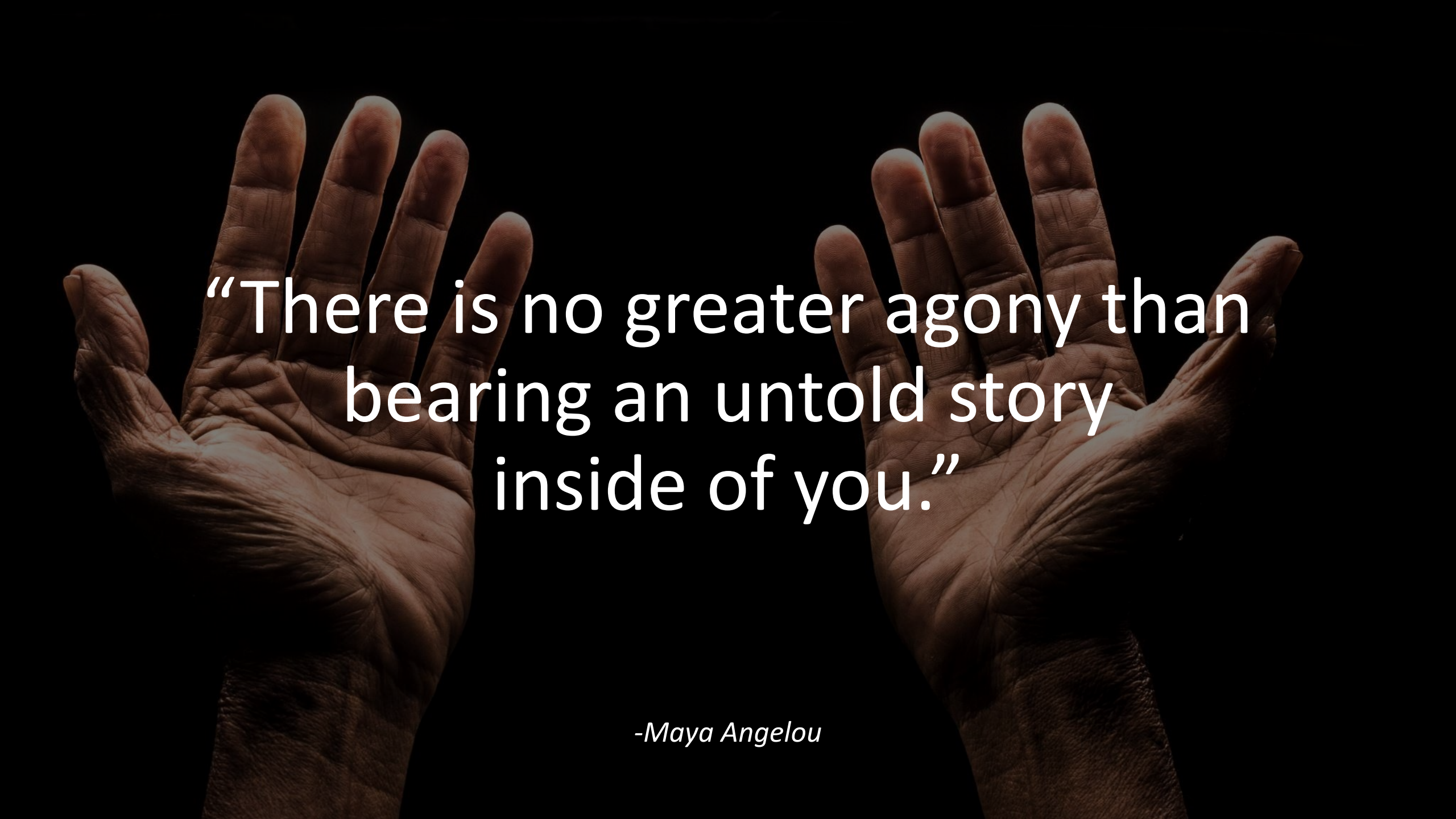
- ❖ *"May you be blessed with a wise and compassionate guide who can accompany you through the fear and grief until your heart has wept its way to your true self."*
- ❖ John O'Donohue, Poet and mystic
- ❖ *For someone awakening to the trauma of his or her past*





Disclosure



A close-up photograph of two open hands, palms facing up, against a solid black background. The hands are positioned symmetrically on either side of the center, with fingers spread. The skin is a warm, brownish-tan color, and the lines on the palms and fingers are clearly visible. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin.

“There is no greater agony than
bearing an untold story
inside of you.”

-Maya Angelou



“What we reveal, we can heal.” – *a survivor*



Disclosure

- That moment of disclosure and all moments thereafter are precious because of the complexities of what they are bringing.
- Above all – victim/survivors need to be listened to in their pain, anger, helplessness. They may question themselves and feel guilt/shame.
- They may not want another religious “dictating” things to them.



Betrayal Trauma

A betrayal of trust

Feel can't trust self or others; how do you judge who is safe when this has not worked for you in the past?

We know trauma lives in the body so that moment of disclosure activates their nervous system; person may be in overdrive while disclosing.

Think about your body language. What are you inadvertently communicating?



- Affirm their courage
 - Tell them they are not to blame
 - Assure them this is their experience to share; go at their pace
 - Confidentiality: who in the Order/Institute/Society will be informed/involved, etc.
 - who will **not** be informed
 - Explain the process: Next steps, possible RB involvement, your availability
 - Communication is imperative
-

Considerations



Language Matters

*The Posture of
Compassion*

- Use of the “Father” or “Brother”
- Use of the word “vulnerable”
- Use of the word “victim”

INITIAL ALLEGATION REPORT FORM - CHARTER

Date of Call:	
Complainant's Name:	Complainant's Phone Number: Okay to Leave Message? ____yes ____no Best Time to Call:
Complainant's Address:	Complainant's Email:
Complainant's Date of Birth:	Age of Complainant at Time of First Incident:
Name of Accused:	Date(s) of the Incident(s):
Location(s) of the Incident(s):	Relationship Between Complainant and Accused:
Name of School/Parish/Apostolate where Accused was assigned at the time of the incident(s):	City/State of School/Parish/Apostolate:
Caller's Name (if different from Complainant):	Caller's Phone Number: Okay to Leave Message? ____yes ____no Best Time to Call:

Detailed description of the incident(s):

Frequency of the incident(s):

Were there any witnesses to the incident(s)? Yes: ____ No: ____
If yes, please provide their name and contact information:

Has the incident(s) been disclosed previously to the Order or any of its members?

Yes: ____ No: ____
If yes, indicate the specific dates and to whom it was disclosed:

Has the incident(s) been reported to the civil authorities? Yes: ____ No: ____

If yes, indicate the specific date of report, name of individual who reported the incident and name/agency to whom the report was made:

Has the incident been reported to anyone else (family, friend, therapist, etc.)?

Yes: ____ No: ____
If yes, indicate their name, contact information, and date of disclosure:

Desired Outcome of Caller:

CHECKLIST WITH CALLER:

Caller assessed for SI/HI?	☐ Yes	☐ No	Date:
Caller informed of civil reporting protocol of the Province?	☐ Yes	☐ No	Date:
Caller informed of their right to report to civil authorities?	☐ Yes	☐ No	Date:
Caller informed of need to notify Accused?	☐ Yes	☐ No	Date:
Guide sent to Caller?	☐ Yes	☐ No	Date:
Was the offer made to meet with Caller in person?	☐ Yes	☐ No	Date:
Caller informed of right to an attorney?	☐ Yes	☐ No	Date:
Counseling assistance offered?	☐ Yes	☐ No	Date:
Counseling assistance accepted?	☐ Yes	☐ No	Date:
Caller informed of process and next steps?	☐ Yes	☐ No	Date:



Possible Barriers

- Disclosing to the organization from which their harm came
- Having to speak with or be in a room with someone in a collar
- Fear that further abuse of power will happen in disclosure
- Having not been believed in the past
- Church history and response

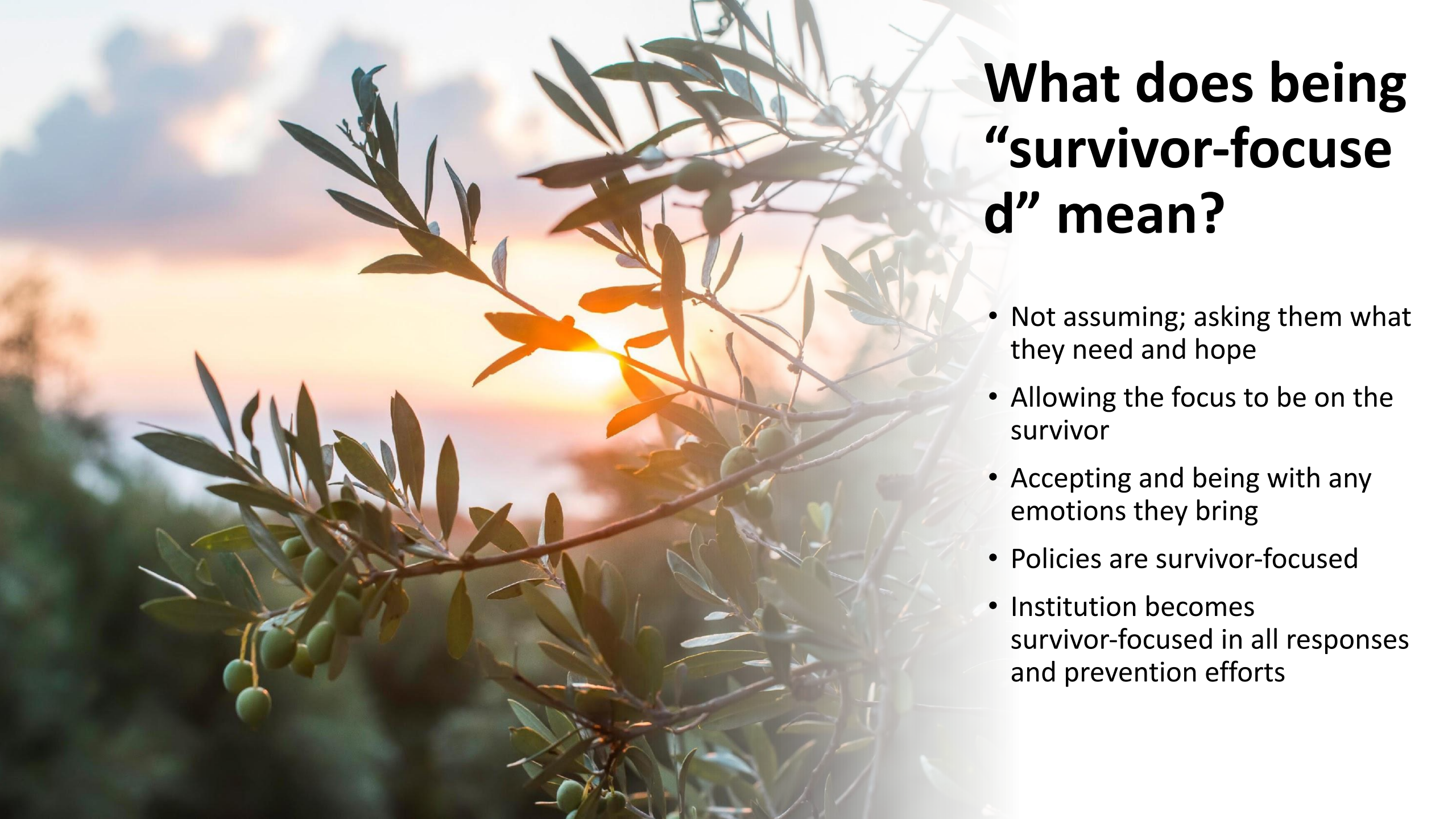


Survivor-Focus ed Approach

“Victims often view the Church’s way of reacting to accusations of abuse as if she were an institution concerned only with herself rather than acting as a ‘loving mother.’”

– *Pope Francis, 2019*



A photograph of an olive branch with several green olives, set against a soft, out-of-focus background of a sunset or sunrise sky with warm orange and yellow tones. The branch is in the foreground, and the sun is visible through the leaves in the background.

What does being “survivor-focused” mean?

- Not assuming; asking them what they need and hope
- Allowing the focus to be on the survivor
- Accepting and being with any emotions they bring
- Policies are survivor-focused
- Institution becomes survivor-focused in all responses and prevention efforts



Survivor-Focused Approach

- Lack of survivor-informed sensitivity and perspective ☐ prolonged processes and cases, reopening investigations, frustration, lack of trust
- Empathy and transparency ☐ reduces friction and builds trust, aids in investigative process
- Focusing on empathy and the desire to learn and heal establishes a commitment to uncovering the truth

How do we empower survivors?

How can we help them navigate any barriers?

How are we being the field hospital Pope Francis calls us to be?





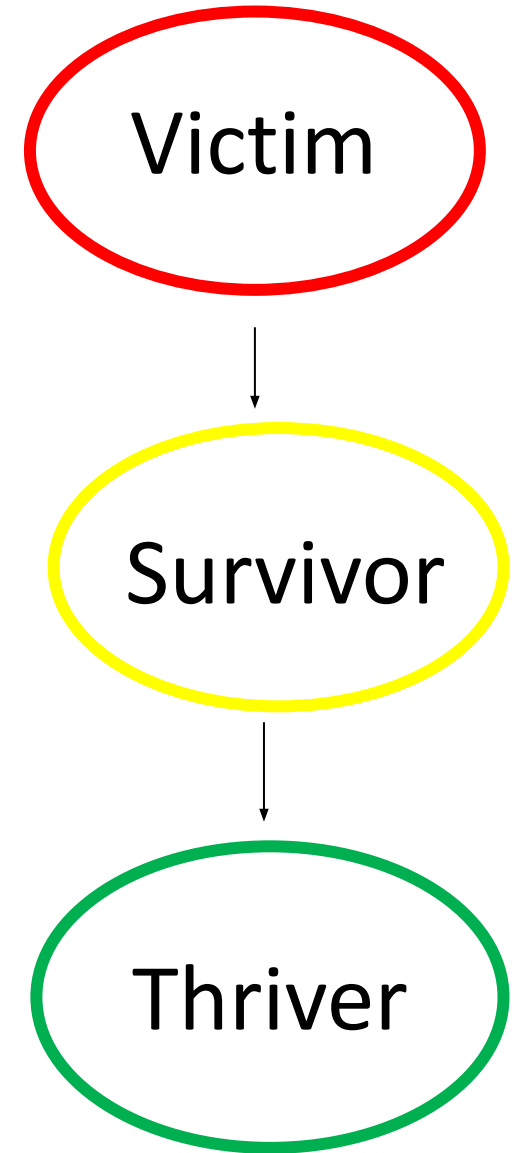
“Be humble instruments of the Lord, at the service of the victims of abuse.” – *Pope Francis*



Support



The Trauma Journey



Barbara Whitfield – 2003

Accompanying

Listening to them identify their needs or desired outcomes

Helping them achieve those needs as we are able



What can aid in healing?

- Validation/acknowledgment
- A sense of justice
- Support from loved ones
- Professional help
- Faith

A large, bright orange life preserver with three white horizontal stripes is floating on a surface of deep blue, rippling water. A white rope is tied around the top of the ring, and a yellow rope is visible at the bottom left. The background transitions from a dark blue on the left to a lighter, hazy blue on the right.

Supportive Options

- Therapeutic:
 - CBT
 - EMDR
 - Cognitive Processing Therapy
 - Narrative Therapy
- Retreats
- Spiritual direction
- Psychoeducation
- Support Groups
- Restorative justice/mediation
- Family support



Adult Cases

Figure 7
INCIDENT CATEGORY PRIOR TO 2015

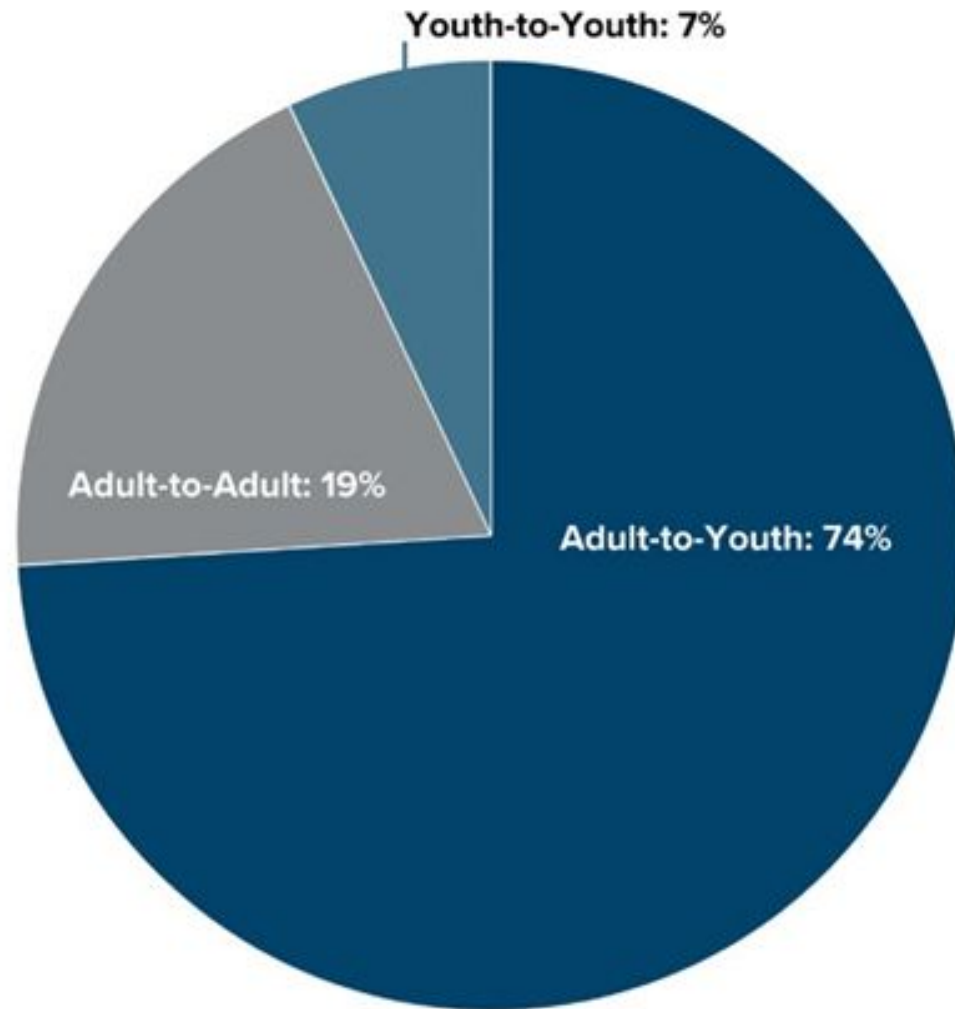
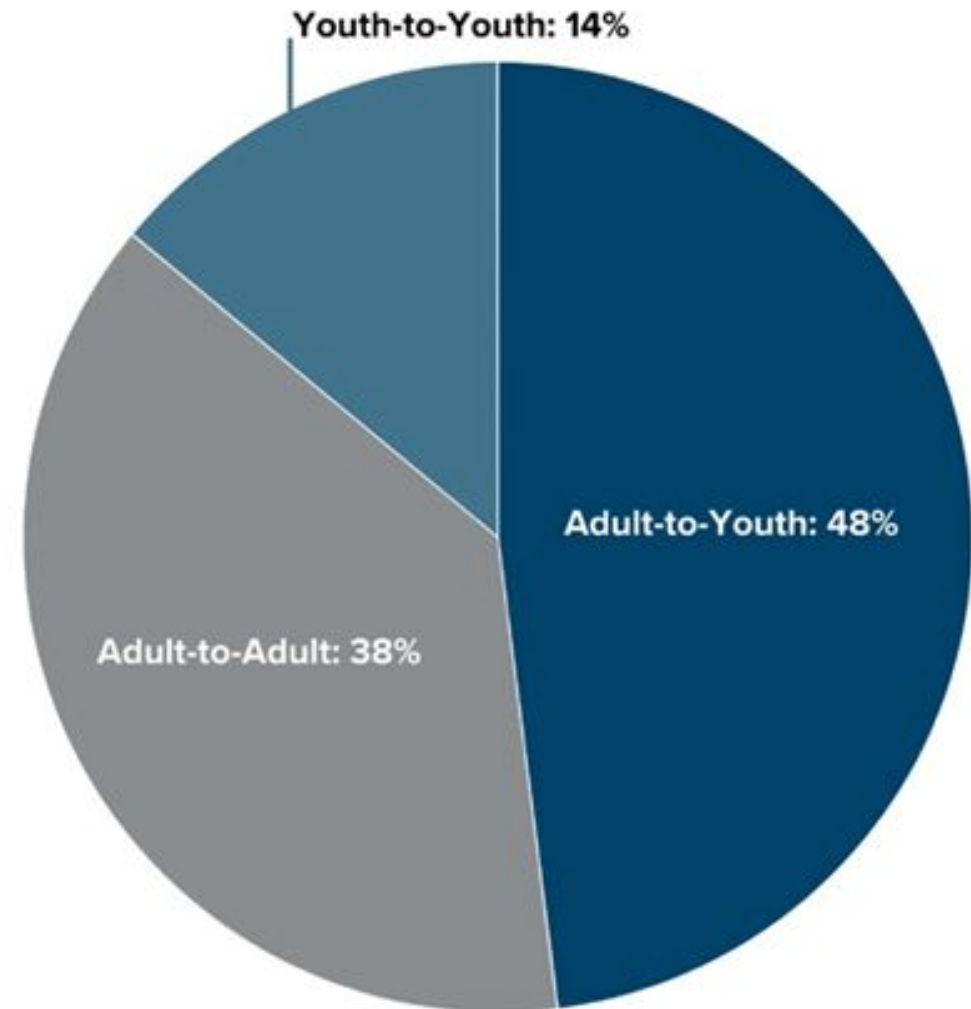


Figure 8
INCIDENT CATEGORY SINCE 2015



Adult Misconduct and Abuse

- Spiritual abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Financial/exploitative abuse



Why is it
different for
religious vs
other
professions?



- Charged with guiding the soul toward salvation and absolving sin
- Trust is a unique characteristic and accompanied by admiration and respect
- Multiple hats: chaplain, supervisor, pastor, friend, colleague, counselor, teacher, rep of Christ, etc.
 - Overlapping roles can blur boundaries in pastoral care



New Challenges

- Clarifying/expanding terminology
- Policies for handling cases
 - Relevant parties?
 - Same as Charter?
- Naming member-on-member abuse/incidents
 - Process for how these are handled
- Use of review boards/consultative bodies



This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-SA-NC](#)

Grooming doesn't happen
in a vacuum



Discussion

THANK
YOU

Kristin Austin, LCSW-C, CCTP
Secretary for Safeguarding
(443) 462-7787
JCCUsafeguarding@jesuits.org