

## Trust isn't always easy

People who have been traumatized may have trouble trusting others, even those who appear to have good intentions. Survivors may not trust advocates, counselors, therapists or other social service providers for a variety of reasons:

- *Negative past experiences.* People with multiple issues may have been passed from one agency to another for years without getting their needs met. Or they may have encountered providers who treated them in ways that felt confusing or disrespectful.
- *Fear of authority figures.* People with a history of trauma have often encountered authority figures who abused power, discounted them, or blamed them for their problems instead of helping them.
- *Fear of legal sanctions.* Survivors may fear prosecution if they disclose illegal behavior such as drug use, theft or commercial sex. Someone who has been incarcerated may fear going back to jail or prison. Someone with immigrant status may fear being deported.
- *Fear of being judged.* People with multiple issues may have heard repeatedly that their problems are caused by their own behavior, lack of personal responsibility, inappropriate decisions or bad character traits.
- *Fear of being discounted.* People who have been victimized by interpersonal violence often have a history of not being believed when they are telling the truth, especially if they have co-occurring issues such as a substance use disorder, mental illness or disabilities.
- *Fear of encountering stereotypes on the part of the provider.* Some survivors have encountered people who avoided or excluded them because of race, culture, disability, socioeconomic background, substance use history or mental health status.
- *Fear of losing children.* Some people fear that disclosure of parental substance abuse, mental health concerns, domestic violence or illegal activities will trigger an investigation by a child welfare agency. Survivors who have a substance use disorder, psychiatric symptoms, or physical or developmental disabilities, may fear being judged incompetent to provide adequate parenting.
- *Fear of being denied services.* Some survivors may fear being barred from a shelter or residential facility, denied public assistance or disqualified from other benefits if they disclose issues such as domestic violence, substance abuse, psychiatric issues, involvement in commercial sex or past incarceration. People who receive public assistance or live in subsidized housing may fear losing benefits or being evicted if they disclose that they are living with a partner.
- *Fear of losing autonomous decision-making power.* Providers who think they know an individual's needs better than she or he does may try to impose their own solutions and values.
- *Fear of reprisals.* People victimized by interpersonal violence may fear retaliation from the perpetrator if they report sexual assault to the police, seek an order of protection against a violent partner, or report any kind of abusive behavior directed toward them in an institutional setting.
- *Fear of being scapegoated.* Some individuals may fear being accused of things they didn't do. For example, someone who discloses a history of substance abuse or incarceration may be the prime suspect if something turns up missing from a shelter or residential facility.