DV/MH Collaboration Project Update

Alison Iser, Domestic Violence & Mental Health Collaboration Project Coordinator

A lawyer, a domestic violence advocate, and a mental health service provider walk into the bar. No, this is not the start of a joke, but the beginning of a very productive meeting. The “bar” is the King County Bar Foundation. The lawyer, advocate, and mental health service provider are participants in the Tools for Attorneys Work Group. The group is one of four multi-disciplinary, interagency work groups that are creating innovative tools as part of KCCADV’s Domestic Violence and Mental Health Collaboration Project. The Collaboration Project has been focusing this year on meeting the needs of domestic violence survivors who have mental health concerns and who are involved with protection order or family law cases.

Wonderful, smart, dedicated service providers from Consejo Counseling and Referral Service, King County Bar Foundation, King County Protection Order Advocacy Program, LifeWire, and Sound Mental Health, as well as some truly impressive women who have experienced domestic violence, have been hard at work creating four new guides:


2. *Preparing Domestic Violence Survivors for Custody Evaluations* Guide for Mental Health Service Providers;

3. *To Tell or Not to Tell? Deciding Whether to Disclose Mental Health Concerns in Protection Order & Family Law Cases* An Advocate’s Guide to Helping Domestic Violence Survivors; and

4. *Understanding the Family Law System in King County Information for Domestic Violence Survivors.*

We are looking forward to completing these guides soon and sharing them with our Collaboration Project partner agencies. We are confident that they will help survivors more effectively navigate the daunting labyrinth that is the civil legal system. However, our work will not stop there. We will be developing additional tools and delivering training on them in 2014. We will keep you posted.

In the meantime, since you thought you were getting a joke, here is a joke for you:

*How many collaboration members does it take to change a light bulb?*

*None. We are too busy changing the conditions that caused the light to go out.*
Seriously, though, I am so grateful to everyone who is participating in the Collaboration Project and who is working to pursue justice and wellbeing for survivors and their children. I can see the scales tipping toward a more equitable future.

If you are interested in learning more about the Domestic Violence and Mental Health Collaboration Project, visit [www.kccadv.org/reports/mental-healthdv-reports/](http://www.kccadv.org/reports/mental-healthdv-reports/) or please feel welcome to contact me at [alison@kccadv.org](mailto:alison@kccadv.org).