

2022-2023 SURVIVOR LEADERSHIP COHORT



Centering the voices and experiences of survivors is foundational to the work of preventing and healing from violence. In our effort to be led by survivors and value their lived experience as expertise, the National Health Resource Center on Domestic Violence (HRC) at Futures Without Violence (FUTURES) launched a one-of-a-kind leadership opportunity comprised solely of survivors of domestic and sexual violence (DSV), called the Survivor Leadership Cohort (SLC).

In April of 2022, 10 survivors from around the country were selected through a competitive nomination and application process. These 10 survivors have diverse experiences and identities, yet they share an expressed interest in advocating for a more trauma-informed healthcare system.

SLC goals were to:

- Promote meaningful community and connection among survivors
- Promote skill and leadership development, and
- Develop valuable resources to support survivors in ways that truly honor, lift up, and center lived experience.

The HRC trusted and positioned SLC members as expert partners to identify and promote survivor-centered strategies to inform and improve the healthcare response to DSV.

"As a professional advocate, I have never had space to center my survivorship. Centering my survivorship feels like a privilege, when this really should be a part of me. I appreciate not having to apologize for being me."

- Survivor Leadership Cohort Alumni

Over the course of the year-long program, the cohort met monthly via Zoom where they built community, provided peer support, and participated in learning opportunities designed to build their capacity and foster their leadership within the anti-violence movement. Together, they visioned, developed, and improved new and existing resources centered on strengthening survivor support and trauma-informed care within the healthcare system, including:

- A new survivor-facing healthcare brochure to address challenges with accessing care as a survivor
- A vision for a new platform for survivor-facing online resources, and
- A series of both provider and survivor-facing video to share their experiences and advocate for a more trauma informed healthcare system

At the conclusion of the year in March 2023, cohort members expressed that their participation was a transformative experience that exceeded expectations. They described feeling safe, seen, heard, affirmed, and cared for throughout the experience, and shared that their participation contributed to their healing process in unexpected ways. One survivor shared that this cohort has “taken trauma-informed care to another level.” Many voiced the tremendous impact of being in a space made exclusively of survivors for the first time. They also shared the impacts the cohort had on their skills, capacity, and successes as thriving leaders in this movement. These successes include writing and publishing books, speaking on webinars and panels, and even starting a new nonprofit.

The SLC comes highly recommended by the entire cohort, and they are committed to staying connected with each other as well as serving as mentors moving forward. FUTURES could not have predicted the magnitude and impact the SLC would have on the participants’ growth- and just as importantly, on HRC staff learning, resource development, and ultimately the field.



FUTURES is proud and excited to launch the second annual cohort in October 2023. The application process opens June 2023. For more information, contact Jennifer Haddad Bell at jhaddad@futureswithoutviolence.org and Kelli McIntyre at kelliconsults@gmail.com.