



# National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

## KEY EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

**NRCDV is a group of individuals collectively responsible for NRCDV as an empowerment and anti-racist organization. The following are key elements of empowerment that we as an organization have identified to strive while working together to dismantle individual, institutional, and cultural racism.**

*Information about the empowerment principles will be provided and discussed with new staff during orientation and supervision to check in on access to necessary tools and support, as well as opportunities for professional development. Semi-annually, staff will have the opportunity to provide feedback about the overall implementation of the empowerment principles using the Assessment Tool developed for this purpose.*

### 1. Staff Have the Tools Needed to Perform their Job

**Organizational Responsibility:** Staff have access to tools and resources necessary to perform the functions of their job effectively and are empowered within the scope of their responsibilities. This includes and is not limited to access to organizational policies and procedures, relevant reports, necessary budget information, web solutions used by the NRCDV, databases to record programmatic information, accurate and up to date job descriptions, technology, racial & cultural diversity of staff and supervision.

**Staff Responsibility:** Staff are responsible for being knowledgeable about tools and resources the organization provides as well as using tools and resources in their work. Supervisory staff members are responsible for providing regular supervision and feedback, reviewing employee's documentation of their work and for supervising staff in a manner that is consistent with an empowerment framework. Staff are responsible for communicating about tools and resources needed to perform their responsibilities fully.

---

### 2. Staff Are Valued and Rewarded

**Organizational Responsibility:** Through written and spoken words, tone and body language, and other actions, staff understand that they are valued and appreciated for who they are and their work. No matter how an employee is performing on their current task, they feel respected as a human being. Staff are invested in through compensation and benefits and, as resources permit, training opportunities. Contributions and accomplishments are acknowledged; milestones and significant successes are recognized and celebrated. In supervision, a strengths-based approach that employs constructive criticism is utilized. Supervisory staff have the tools and skills to help staff identify and assess strengths and harness those to the benefit of the organization.

**Staff Responsibility:** Staff value and show respect for their colleagues. They are responsible for making the best use of technology, supervision and training opportunities to further strengthen their skills in this area.

---

### 3. Staff Are Trusted

**Organizational Responsibility:** Staff feel trusted within the scope of their expertise and responsibility and with the resources of the organization, to make good choices and decisions that, while maybe not exactly what everyone else would decide, still work. There is room for creativity.

**Staff Responsibility:** Staff are responsible to seek the information and resources needed to make good choices and decisions in their work while being stewards of the resources. Staff should start from the place of trusting each other's intentions and seeking information and resources from others in respectful ways. This process often requires a process of critical thinking, active listening, asking questions, which may take time.

---

### 4. Opportunities to Participate in Decision-Making

**Organizational Responsibility:** Staff members have opportunities to participate in decision making and have a clear understanding of decisions where they are only providing input and those in which the staff group is making a collaborative decision. Staff understand how decisions are made. Staff members have the information they need to make thoughtful decisions that support the mission, goals and values of the organization. Staff members share in decisions about how the organization's resources will be used and the setting of priorities. Decisions are made with as few organizational layers as possible and may include the organization's Board of Directors.

**Staff Responsibility:** Staff are responsible for understanding the decision making processes and opportunities within the organization and actively contributing their best ideas and critical thinking to help make the strongest decisions possible when they are involved in decision-making. Supervisors are responsible to inform and engage staff in decision making opportunities.

---

### 5. Opportunities for Growth and Increased Responsibility

**Organizational Responsibility:** Within the limits posed by funder requirements, staff have opportunities to grow, offer leadership, take on new challenges and develop new skills. Staff have opportunities for teamwork. Staff have opportunities to participate in internal and external workgroups and meetings, where they can contribute to the development of products and other efforts that are beneficial for NRCDDV's key constituents.

**Staff Responsibility:** Staff are responsible for creating professional development goals and reviewing them regularly with their supervisor. Staff are responsive to challenges and opportunities and are flexible and willing to pitch in and try new things, sometimes outside the scope of their normal duties. Staff volunteer for committees, actively participate on teams and help colleagues. Supervisors help staff to achieve their professional goals and provide leadership opportunities.

---

## 6. Open Communication and Access to Information

**Organizational Responsibility:** Staff members are provided information to help them understand NRCDV's policies, procedures, and values, what is expected of them, how they are doing, where they can find resources, and where they can seek support. There are clear standards for inclusion at all levels of the organization. A respectful and open communication style is used and supported. Staff are free to express a variety of ideas without fear of sanction or disrespect from colleagues and strongly encouraged and modeled by management staff.

Through a variety of means – staff meetings, surveys, committees, retreats, supervision, evaluations etc. – staff members have multiple opportunities per topic or issue to share their ideas and suggestions whenever possible. Staff members feel encouraged to share ideas and suggest new and creative ways to meet NRCDV's mission, goals and values.

**Staff Responsibility:** Staff are responsible to participate in an exchange of ideas and to communicate respectfully and directly.

Staff are responsible to actively participate in discussions, surveys, retreats, evaluations and other means of communication. In this process, staff should recognize and respect that individual NRCDV staff may view the world differently than they do, and may interact with other individuals and in groups in different ways. Staff are responsible to actively participate in discussions and trainings to enhance their understanding about cultural humility/competence and power, privilege and oppression.

---

## 7. Active and Collaborative Problem Solving regarding Staff Performance

**Organizational Responsibility:** When performance concerns arise, the staff members involved – supervisory and non-supervisory – will evaluate what factors from the work environment (e.g., clarity of job description, training, supervision, tools) and individual factors (e.g., skills, need for accommodations) may be contributing to problems or undermining staff performance. A constructive, thoughtful and respectful approach is used to solve problems and address performance issues.

**Staff Responsibility:** Staff are responsible to actively participate in identifying barriers and find feasible solutions to challenges in the work environment and individual factors that create barriers to their best performance. When performance problems are identified, staff address those and do their best to make the corrections needed for them to thrive in their role.

---

## 8. Shared Vision

**Organizational Responsibility:** Staff are actively involved in the development and regular review of the organization's mission, goals and values that shape the organization's approaches and activities. Staff feel that they are part of something bigger than themselves and their individual job, and that what they do everyday helps move the mission forward. They understand the organization's overall mission, vision, and strategic plans.

**Staff Responsibility:** Staff are responsible to participate in opportunities to provide thoughtful feedback about the organizational vision and to be familiar with all documents related to the strategic plan, values and mission. Staff are responsible to seek out information, engage with colleagues, and attend meetings

to assist in fully understanding how their individual job fits into the full scope of the organization and social change movement.

---

## 9. Shared Goals and Direction

**Organizational Responsibility:** Staff understand the goals and the strategic direction in which NRCDV is moving and the specific goals and objectives of the grant programs which fund their positions, as well as larger commitment to gender, racial, economic and social justice, and to individual and organizational wellness. Staff have multiple opportunities to help shape goals and objectives and have a clear understanding of the measurable outcomes they are working toward. NRCDV devotes time and resources to increase staff's capacity regarding racism, privilege, power and accountability.

**Staff Responsibility:** Staff are responsible in contributing to the formation of organizational goals, strategies and values, to remain familiar with the expectations of funders and the Board of Directors, and are responsible (through a variety of tools) to monitor their own progress toward goals and objectives that relate to their areas of responsibility. When staff anticipate difficulty in meeting goals, they notify supervisory staff in time for corrections to be made. Staff are responsible for actively participating in the organization's Racial Justice Initiative.

*Reviewed and recommended by the NRCDV Senior Leadership Team on 3/27/2017.*

*Reviewed and recommended by the NRCDV Management Team on 6/5/2017.*

*Adopted by NRCDV Staff on 7/11/2017.*

**Acknowledgement:** NRCDV staff are grateful to our colleagues at the Ohio Domestic Violence Network for sharing their Empowerment Principles with us and allowing us to make them our own.