

# Survivors Speak

How to share your story to advocate for  
legislative change in Nebraska



**Written by Survivors,  
for Survivors**

## **WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?**

If you are a survivor who has experienced trauma and are considering getting involved in making changes to laws related to your experience, this guide is for you. Hearing about how a law or a service might have changed or impacted a life from someone with first-hand experience can help senators decide whether or not to support a bill.

This guide is specific to the process of getting involved in Nebraska's state legislature where Nebraska laws are passed; but much of the information included may apply in other states.

This guide also may also be used by organizations or agencies that serve individuals whose journey of healing might include getting involved in policy making and legislation.

## **HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**

Because there is so much to cover, this guide is intended to be used as one-page handouts on different topics, as well as used together in a full document. The intent is that these resources be available primarily online and that the resources continue to grow and evolve. Topics covered in this guide include:

1. How Bills Become Law in Nebraska
2. Ways to Impact Laws in Nebraska
3. Deciding to Get Involved
4. FAQs about Committee Hearings
5. Key Facts about Committee Hearings
6. Tips for Testifying in Person
7. Tips for Writing Testimony
8. Tips for Taking Care of Yourself
9. Appendix A: Trauma Recovery and Self-Care
10. Appendix B: Support Resources
11. Appendix C: Additional Reading

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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We are hopeful that our efforts will improve conditions for victims and survivors, and ultimately prevent future violence and exploitation of others.

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# HOW BILLS BECOME LAW IN NEBRASKA

*The legislative process in Nebraska is unique compared to other states. Knowing the basics of how a bill becomes a law in Nebraska will help guide you as you decide how to use your story to advocate for change.*



## The Unicameral

Most states have two legislative bodies, a Senate and a House of Representatives, who make the laws for that state. Unlike other states, Nebraska's legislature is a **unicameral**, meaning it only has one legislative body: the **Senate**. The Senate works on Nebraska's state laws, not national-level (federal) laws.



## Legislative Session

A **legislative session** is a period of 60 days (during even numbered years) or 90 days (during odd numbered years) during which **state senators** meet to do business such as changing, updating, and passing new laws.

**Legislative bills**, also referred to as **LB** or a **bill**, are proposals for changing existing laws or passing new laws that are considered by the state **Legislature** (all the state senators).

A **sponsoring or introducing senator** is the state senator who introduces a bill to be considered by the Legislature, in hopes that it will become law. Sometimes other state senators will add their name as a **co-sponsor**, to show that they also support the bill.



## Committees

Each bill is referred to a **committee** of state senators based upon the subject of the bill. One of the committee members will be selected as a **Chairperson** to lead and direct the work of the committee. There are 14 standing committees.

All bills assigned to committees will have a **public committee hearing**. A hearing is a scheduled time when the committee hears from the sponsoring senator and the public about the bill. The public can give spoken testimony about the bill or attend simply to watch. All public hearings are livestreamed on the internet, broadcast on public television and transcribed word for word to ensure accuracy and future review.

Anyone can provide testimony at a committee hearing. **Testimony** is a person's written or verbal statement offered to the committee at a hearing. Someone testifying in support of a bill at the committee hearing is called a **proponent** and someone testifying against a bill is called an **opponent**. A person can also testify neither for or against a bill, and this is called testifying in a **neutral capacity**.

After the hearing, state senators talk over all the information they received and the testimony they heard on each bill during **executive session**. State senators can vote to advance the bill to the full

Legislature for debate, indefinitely postpone, or take no action at all which will leave the bill ‘in committee’ until action is taken. If the committee re-writes or changes this bill, this is called a **committee amendment**.

A bill that is **voted out of committee** means the committee has decided they support the bill and want all state senators to have an opportunity to talk about the bill and debate it **on the floor** of the Legislature, where all the state senators gather to debate, discuss, and vote on bills.



## Debate

After a bill has been voted out of committee, it will have to pass three rounds of debate by the full Legislature and receive at least a simple majority of votes in support (25 votes) to advance. The first round of debate by all the state senators is called **General File**, the second round is called **Select File**, and the last round is called **Final Reading**. On General File and Select File, bills can be **amended** (changed).

A bill on **Final Reading** is voted on by state senators without debate and cannot be amended. To make amendments (changes), it must be returned to Select File. If the bill is voted forward from Final Reading, it goes to the governor for consideration and signature.



## Governor's Decision

The **governor** has five days, excluding Sundays, to decide what to do with a bill. If the governor signs a bill or declines to act on it in those five days, the bill becomes a **state law**. The governor may also veto a bill. The Legislature may choose to vote to override any veto from the governor, although it takes a vote of 30 out of 49 state senators to do so.

Sometimes bills do not make it all the way through the process to become law during a legislative session. There could be a lot of reasons for this, such as running out of time or not being able to agree to the bill as it is written.

## Resources

- List of Senators: [https://nebraskalegislature.gov/senators/senator\\_list.php](https://nebraskalegislature.gov/senators/senator_list.php)
- Search for a Bill: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/>
- List of Committees: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/committees/committees.php>
- Search for a Hearing: [https://nebraskalegislature.gov/calendar/hearings\\_range.php](https://nebraskalegislature.gov/calendar/hearings_range.php)
- Hearing Livestream: <http://netnebraska.org/basic-page/television/live-demand-state-government>
- Lawmaking in Nebraska: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/about/lawmaking.php>
- How a Bill Becomes a Law in Nebraska Video: <https://strongnebraska.org/>

“How Bills Become Law in Nebraska” is part of *Survivors Speak: How to share your story to advocate for legislative change in Nebraska*. For more information about how you can share your story to advocate for change, check out the full guide at <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/survivors-speak/>. Please do not reproduce or alter without express written permission from Survivors Rising.

# WAYS TO IMPACT LAWS IN NEBRASKA

There are many ways you can share your story to impact laws in Nebraska. Below are some ideas for how to get involved.



## Communicate with Senators

- Senators want to hear from the people that elected them, but they are often very busy.
- You can show up at their offices, but generally it is a good idea to call or email the senators' office staff in advance to set up a meeting if you want to talk with a senator in person.
- You can also simply call or email the senator's office to tell them about your opinion on a bill or to ask questions. This may not seem like it would make a difference, but it really does have a huge impact on legislation.
- If you are available to go to the Capitol while state senators are debating bills on the floor of the Legislature, ask the state senator's legislative staff if you could meet with the senator outside of the legislative chamber (or "pull them off the floor"). You can ask the state senator's staff to help you with this process.
- If you would like help deciding what to say, try connecting with Survivors Rising.



## Meet with Organizations and Agencies

- Some organizations and agencies will work with senators to build support for bills, help to write or change bills, and speak for or against bills at hearings.
- Many of these organizations and agencies would be interested in hearing your story and gaining your input on legislation because it could help them better understand how a law might impact people with lived experience.
- If you would like to meet with an organization to talk about a bill they are working on, but aren't sure where to start, contact Survivors Rising.



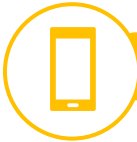
## Provide Testimony at a Hearing

- Your testimony is a statement that expresses specific reasons why you are asking senators to support or not support a bill. Testimony often includes supporting information such as statistics and your own personal experiences related to the bill.
- You can provide spoken testimony in-person during the hearing for a bill or you can provide written testimony by sending in your testimony via email or by having someone else read it on your behalf during the hearing.
- See "Tips for Testifying in Person" in *Survivors Speak* for more information on these ways to share your testimony.



## Share with Friends and Neighbors

- Sometimes people don't think about how a bill might impact people they care about, so talking to people you already know about the legislation is a good place to start.
- Hosting a dinner or coffee and telling those you invited about how a bill might impact you could be a helpful way to practice expressing your thoughts and experience more naturally.
- You can encourage others you know to call, email, or write state senators too.
- Connect with Survivors Rising for help or suggestions.



## Share on Social Media or Talk with the Press

- If you have social media accounts, you may want to write a short post about your opinion on a bill if it is safe for you to do so. If you do write a post, it may be helpful to check out “Tips for Writing Testimony” in *Survivors Speak* for help with what to say.
- Talking to the press, or other media, about your opinion on a bill is always an option. If you choose to talk to the press, remember that they can and often will ask you anything. Often you will spend thirty or more minutes talking to them and they will only share thirty seconds or less of what you said. It may be helpful for you to connect with Survivor Rising to get more information or support for talking to the media about your story and/or your opinion on a bill.

## Resources

- Senators' contact information: [https://nebraskalegislature.gov/senators/senator\\_list.php](https://nebraskalegislature.gov/senators/senator_list.php)
- If you're thinking about ways to get involved and need support with your decision, contact Survivors Rising: <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/>

**“Ways to Impact Laws in Nebraska” is part of *Survivors Speak: How to share your story to advocate for legislative change in Nebraska*. For more information about how you can share your story to advocate for change, check out the full guide at <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/survivors-speak/>. Please do not reproduce or alter without express written permission from Survivors Rising.**



# DECIDING TO GET INVOLVED

*Making the decision to get involved in legislation is a personal decision. If you have lived experience that would be impacted by the legislation you are thinking about supporting or opposing, making the decision to get involved could be overwhelming. Since there are so many ways to get involved, having some guidance in making that decision can be helpful. Here are a few things to consider as you decide what is best for you.*



## The importance of story

Senators want to know how legislation will impact the people they were elected to represent. Organizations and agencies can give information that will help understand some of it, but there is nothing quite like hearing a personal story to help drive home a point. Personal experiences help senators see how the bill might change life for real people. A story is easier to remember than a statistic and this can help senators during debate.



## Sharing your personal story

One way to educate and inform is through sharing your personal story to support or oppose legislation. If you choose to share your story, you get to choose how much you share and with whom. If this is the first time you have considered sharing your story, talking it through with someone you trust may help as you decide how to do that. Whether you decide to share with a group of friends, on your social media, testify at a hearing, or in some other way, you don't have to do it alone. Survivors Rising can help with deciding how to share your story and offer support throughout the process.



## Going public with your story

If you decide to testify at a committee hearing, you need to know that these hearings are open to the public, transcribed word-for-word, and live streamed on Nebraska Public Television (NET). If you are comfortable with your identity being public, sharing in person at a hearing may be a good fit for you. If it isn't safe for you to share publicly, or you aren't comfortable doing so, there are still many ways for you to get involved such as speaking with senators one on one, talking to your friends about the legislation, and even sending a letter to be read at a hearing.



## Building a support team

Having people who will be there for you no matter what you choose to do is important. Having support can be especially helpful if you decide to testify in person at a hearing. You may hear others share about their experiences while waiting to testify, and some of their stories can be hard to hear. Asking friends or family that you can trust to be part of your support team may seem strange, but knowing that you have someone walk through the process, or just be there with you, can help keep you calm and feeling confident. It can also be helpful to have guidance from other survivors who have shared their stories to support or oppose legislation. To speak with survivors who have experience with the Nebraska legislature, contact Survivors Rising.



### Learning the process

If you have never done work to impact legislation before, don't worry, the *Survivors Speak* guide was created just for you! The whole guide is full of information that will help you throughout the entire process, but it might be helpful to start with "How Bills Become Law in Nebraska" and "Ways to Impact Laws in Nebraska" in *Survivors Speak*. You can also connect with an organization that supports or is working on legislation you are interested in by consulting the "Support Resources" Appendix in *Survivors Speak* and even follow the progress of bills you are interested in online using a bill tracker.



### Time commitments

Committees will hear multiple bills during a hearing, one after the other. If you decide to testify at a hearing, you may have to devote an entire afternoon to the process. Not everyone can take off an entire afternoon during the week; if you aren't able to take the time, don't worry! There is more than one way that you can share your experience to make an impact on legislation, including meeting with senators outside of hearings which doesn't take so much time.



### Getting to the Capitol

All committee hearings are held in Lincoln, Nebraska. This can be a barrier to testifying in person for many people who want to share their stories. If you want to get involved by testifying in person and don't have access to transportation, consider reaching out to Survivors Rising to see if someone near you will be going and willing to carpool. Remember, if you can't get to Lincoln but still want to share your experience in a way that will impact legislation, there are lots of ways to do that without going to Lincoln.

## Resources

- Bill tracker: <https://www.nebraska.gov/billtracker/>
- If you have decided to get involved and want to learn more about different ways to do so, check out "Ways to Impact Laws in Nebraska" in *Survivors Speak*
- If you need support and guidance in deciding to get involved in the Nebraska legislative process, contact Survivors Rising: <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/>

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# FAQS ABOUT COMMITTEE HEARINGS

*With a few exceptions, all legislative bills must receive a public hearing by a committee of senators. The hearing decides whether a legislative bill will move forward in the process of becoming a law. Here are some frequently asked questions that might help you prepare if you are considering attending a hearing to observe or to testify.*



## Preparing for the Hearing

### When and where are hearings for a bill scheduled?

You can find information about a bill you are interested in, which committee it is assigned to, and when the hearing is set for on the Nebraska Legislature's website. Organizations that support or oppose bills follow them closely and often provide updates about each bill they are watching. To get updates from these organizations, sign up for their listservs listed in the "Support Resources" Appendix of *Survivors Speak*.

### How and when should I get to the Capitol Building?

The Capitol Building is located at 1445 K St, Lincoln NE 68508. Committees generally hear multiple bills on the same day, beginning at 1:30pm unless otherwise posted. You can find information on where to park and how the Capitol building is laid out on the Nebraska Legislature's website.

### What should I wear?

It is a good idea to dress in layers – the building is older and can be very warm or very cold in the building. Though most will be dressed in business or professional wear, you can decide what you are comfortable wearing.

### What should I bring with me?

If you go to the hearing for the purpose of testifying and you wrote your testimony out, you will want to bring 12-15 copies of your written testimony. Whether you intend to testify or not, you may also want to bring a pen, a notebook, a snack and something to drink. You might be in the hearing room for a long time.



## Attending the Hearing

### How do I get to the hearing room?

Each committee is assigned a different hearing room, and some may be on different floors. When you walk into the Capitol on the first floor, go straight forward all the way to the center of the building where you will see the information desk. Usually someone is at the desk to help, but even if the desk is unattended there is a map of the building on the desk that will help you find the hearing room.

## What should I look for in the hearing room?

Inside the room there will be a small table that has a sign-in sheet and testifier sheets. If you intend to testify, sign in on the big sheet, and then fill out a testifier sheet for each bill you're testifying on. The testifier sheet is a smaller, sometimes colorful sheet that you fill out and give to the clerk when you go up to testify. If you do not intend to testify, you do not have to sign in.

There will be a row of tables and chairs at the very front of the room – this is where the senators sit. In front of the senators' tables there will be a table with a single chair facing the senators. This is the table where testifiers sit when they give their verbal testimony. If you are planning to testify, you will want to note the rows of chairs nearest to the testifier table, when the bill you plan to testify on is called, you may want to move to that row so you can get to the table quickly when it is your turn to speak.

## Is everything recorded during hearings?

The hearings are recorded and broadcasted on NET and you will be on Nebraska Public Television if you testify. There will also be a recording device and indicator lights on the testifier table, so that testimony can be recorded and transcribed word for word. Though the livestream video is not available after the hearing, media may have cameras in the room, and audio recordings are transcribed, part of public records, and available indefinitely.

## What are the senators doing during hearings?

Senators on the committee may be doing several things while listening to testifiers, and sometimes they may even leave the room for a while. While they try to be present for the whole day, senators often have other hearings in other committees to get to, meetings to attend, and some may even have to go to work. A senator not looking at a testifier doesn't mean they aren't paying attention. In fact, many times they are researching things that testifiers said or pulling up information on the bill that is being heard.

## What if I am not going to testify?

If you are there to listen, observe, or support someone else, you may still have a long wait ahead of you. It can be helpful to find a seat where you feel the most comfortable, where you are able to see and hear what you are there to see and hear. You may listen to many people give testimony on bills, and sometimes what they say can bring up a lot of emotions. If you need suggestions on things to do while waiting, check out "Tips for Testifying in Person" in *Survivors Speak*.

## Resources

- Search for a Bill: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/>
- List of Committees: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/committees/committees.php>
- Parking and Maps of the Capitol: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/feature/visiting-capitol.php>
- Search for a Hearing: [https://nebraskalegislature.gov/calendar/hearings\\_range.php](https://nebraskalegislature.gov/calendar/hearings_range.php)
- Hearing Livestream: <http://netnebraska.org/basic-page/television/live-demand-state-government>

**"FAQs about Committee Hearings" is part of *Survivors Speak: How to share your story to advocate for legislative change in Nebraska*. For more information about how you can share your story to advocate for change, check out the full guide at <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/survivors-speak/>. Please do not reproduce or alter without express written permission from Survivors Rising.**

# KEY FACTS ABOUT COMMITTEE HEARINGS

*As you decide whether or not to get involved in changing laws and how that might look for you, it might be helpful to know more about hearings. Below is a list of things you can do when it comes to public committee hearings in Nebraska.*



## When attending a hearing, you can...

- Attend the hearing even if you are disenfranchised (can't vote in the U.S.), formerly incarcerated, have a criminal history, are a non-citizen, undocumented person, nonresident, or a minor.
- Attend the hearing and not testify.
- Attend the hearing with the purpose of testifying and decide not to testify
- Leave the hearing at any point; you do not have to stay for the whole hearing.
- Decline to answer questions from anyone, for any reason.



## When communicating with senators, you can...

- Reach out to most senators by email, phone, or in person at any time.
- Reach out to senators before hearings to let them know if you are planning to be at the hearing and your opinion on the bill – most senators really appreciate this.
- Request to pull senators from floor debate and speak with them personally about a bill they are hearing later. This may be a good option if you aren't sure you will stay for a hearing.



## When submitting written testimony, you can...

- Send a letter to the committee chairperson in support, opposition, or neutral capacity to be added to the public record during the hearing. If you are sending a letter, you must do this by 5pm on the last business day (Monday through Friday) before the scheduled hearing, whether you plan to testify in-person or not.
- Send a letter to the committee, or for someone else to read on your behalf, even if you are disenfranchised (can't vote in the U.S.), formerly incarcerated, have a criminal history, are a non-citizen, undocumented person, nonresident, or a minor. Your letter must include your full legal name.



You may be able to send a letter for someone else to read on your behalf at the hearing, and you can check with the chairperson of the committee to be sure. If you are able to send a letter for someone to read on your behalf, you do NOT need to provide your full legal name if it is not safe for you to do so. You will need to determine ahead of time who will be reading your letter, such as a friend or someone from an organization such as Survivors Rising.



## When testifying in person, you can...

- Testify in-person and attend hearings even if you are disenfranchised (cannot vote in the U.S.), formerly incarcerated, have a criminal history, are a non-citizen, undocumented person, nonresident, or a minor.
- Submit written testimony to senators and say something completely different when you share on the record.
- Change your mind about testifying while you are testifying, stop your testimony, and excuse yourself.
- Let the senators know if you are open to answering questions later and give your contact information to them so they can reach out to you after the hearing.
- Refuse to speak to members of the press, whether you testify or not.
- Identify yourself on your testifier sheet, and when you testify, without using your full legal name if it is not safe for you to give your full name (NOTE: this is NOT the case if you are sending in written testimony. See above).



You may be able to have a support person sit with you as you testify. You will want to check with the committee chairperson ahead of time, and if it is okayed, you will want to identify them to the committee as a person who is there to support you when you begin your testimony.

## Resources

- List of Committees: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/committees/committees.php>
- Find your Senator: [https://nebraskalegislature.gov/senators/senator\\_find.php](https://nebraskalegislature.gov/senators/senator_find.php)
- If you need someone to read a letter on your behalf, reach out to Survivors Rising (<https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/>) or Coalition for a Strong Nebraska (<https://strongnebraska.org/>)

**“Key Facts about Committee Hearings” is part of *Survivors Speak: How to share your story to advocate for legislative change in Nebraska*. For more information about how you can share your story to advocate for change, check out the full guide at <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/survivors-speak/>. Please do not reproduce or alter without express written permission from Survivors Rising.**

# TIPS FOR TESTIFYING IN PERSON

*Getting ready to testify on a bill can be overwhelming and exhausting. Not only are there a lot of things to know and understand about a bill, you may also be sorting through emotional responses to the bill and how it might impact you or other people you care about. Trust your gut and check in with yourself throughout the process. You know yourself better than anyone else so don't be afraid to change your mind about what you are doing if you need to. Here are some tips that may help you as you prepare, and even after you have finished.*

## Preparing to Testify

Print 12-15 copies of your written testimony for the committee no later than one day before the hearing date. Being prepared will help you avoid the last-minute rushing around or forgetting things, so you can get to the Capitol and focus on yourself and your testimony.

Read your written testimony to yourself no more than three times the day of the hearing. Once you get to the hearing, try not to read what you wrote until you sit down to testify. Reading your written testimony while waiting can increase anxious feelings and make it harder to read when it is finally your turn.

Remember that what you wrote down and what you say may not be the same thing, and that is okay. Often, you can have more of an impact if you summarize what you wrote down instead of reading it word for word.

## Waiting to Testify

Sometimes there is a wait before it's time for your bill to be discussed. It can be helpful to sit in the hearing room and observe how the hearings are going and listen to other testimony about different bills being heard, but this can also be overwhelming and bring up a lot of thoughts and feelings. You may need to use some coping skills (see "Tips for Taking Care of Yourself" in *Survivors Speak*). Do what is right for you to keep you feeling safe.

There will probably be quite a few people in the hearing room, some you may know and others you may not know. You may have to sit in a space you wouldn't normally choose to sit – such as the middle of the room – so be ready for this. There may also be people or organizations involved that do not share your support or opposition to the bill. While this might be a reason for you to have a conversation with them about their position, don't take it personally if you don't agree with each other at that time.

If you notice others sharing things you were going to say, or testimony of others reminds you of things you wanted to say, make a legible note on your copy so that you can adjust what you will say when it is your turn.

## When It's Your Turn to Testify

If you are in support the bill, you will testify when the committee chair asks for 'proponents.' If you are against the bill, you will testify when the committee chair asks for 'opponents.' If you are neutral about the bill, you will testify when the committee chair asks for those testifying in 'neutral capacity.' The committee chair will ask for proponents to testify first. Sometimes the sponsoring senator will have asked specific people to testify, you will notice they sit closest to the table and move to other seats after they have finished. Move to the row of seats nearest the testifier table and move closer as others finish testifying so that you can get to the testifier table when they are done.

## Starting Your Testimony

When it is your turn, go to the testifier table and sit down. Give your testifier sheet and copies of your written testimony, if you brought copies, to the clerk or page. When you sit, the indicator light goes green and this means your time has begun. Introduce yourself and spell out your first and last name for the record if it is safe for you to do so. If it is not safe for you to use your legal name, state this for the record and introduce yourself by another name of your choosing. If you have a support person with you at the table, let the committee know that person's name and that they are there for your support. Say hello to the committee members, thank them for letting you share, and then read your testimony or share what you came to say.

## Ending Your Testimony

Typically, you will have 3-5 minutes to testify. The committee chair will announce the length of time at the beginning of the hearing. When you have one-minute left, you will see the indicator light go to yellow, and you will know you need to finish your testimony. When you see the red light, you need to end your sharing if you haven't already. Be sure to thank the committee for letting you speak and let them know if you are willing to answer questions. It is best to wait at the table until the chair tells you to step down or says, "next testifier."

## Questions from the Committee

Sometimes the committee members will ask you questions about what you shared, but not about the bill. The kinds of questions they may ask could be about the work you do, your experiences, or your opinion about something specific. If you do not know the answer, or aren't comfortable answering at that time, it is okay to tell them you would rather not discuss that at this time, or that you aren't sure. It is also okay to give them your contact information so they can reach out later, if you are comfortable with that.

## After Your Testimony

When you are done sharing, you may want to leave or find some private space to process – there are quiet rooms at the capitol you can use for this. You may find that someone will want to talk to you after the hearing to ask more questions about what you shared. You do not have to speak with anyone you are not comfortable talking to, no matter who it is. It is also okay to leave and head back home when you are done. If you would like, you can also stay and listen to the rest of the hearings that are scheduled for the day – it is entirely up to you. No matter what you do, be sure to take care of yourself (see "Tips for Taking Care of Yourself" in *Survivors Speak*). You can follow the progress of legislative bills after the hearing by making sure you are signed up for a listserv (see "Support Resources" Appendix in *Survivors Speak*) or using a bill tracker.

## Resources

- Bill tracker: <https://www.nebraska.gov/billtracker/>
- Search for a Bill: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/>
- List of Committees: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/committees/committees.php>
- Search for a Hearing: [https://nebraskalegislature.gov/calendar/hearings\\_range.php](https://nebraskalegislature.gov/calendar/hearings_range.php)

**"Tips for Testifying in Person" is part of *Survivors Speak: How to share your story to advocate for legislative change in Nebraska*. For more information about how you can share your story to advocate for change, check out the full guide at <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/survivors-speak/>. Please do not reproduce or alter without express written permission from Survivors Rising.**



# TIPS FOR WRITING TESTIMONY

Whether you are planning to share your testimony in person, send it by email for the record, or ask someone to read it on your behalf, writing testimony can be intimidating. Below are some tips to help guide you as you prepare to write your opinion or story for a hearing.

	Spoken Testimony	Written Testimony for the Record	Written Testimony for a Reader
What You Need to Know	<p>If you are planning to testify, it can be helpful to write what you plan to say ahead of time. If you do that make sure to print 12-15 copies of your written testimony to give to the committee at the hearing.</p>	<p>If you would like to send testimony for the record, you must send it by email to the Committee chairperson by 5pm on the last business day before the hearing is scheduled. For example, your email must be sent by 5pm the Friday before if a hearing is scheduled for Monday. You can find contact information for the committee chairperson on the Nebraska Legislature website.</p> <p>If you are submitting your letter by email directly to the committee chair for the record, you will need to include your legal name and address on the letter. You will also need to clearly state whether you are for, against, or neutral about the bill.</p>	<p>Sometimes committees allow testimony to be read by someone else on your behalf. If you aren't sure if this will be allowed, contact the chairperson of the committee. If you are able to have another person read your testimony, you will want to connect with them at least one business day before the hearing</p> <p>Make sure to note on your testimony that you give permission for your statement to be read on your behalf.</p> <p>You do not have to use your name if someone else is reading for you. You can simply identify yourself as 'a concerned citizen unable to be present' or in some other way that shows you have an interest in this bill.</p> <p>No matter how you identify yourself, make sure you lay out how to pronounce the name or title you use. This way the reader doesn't say it incorrectly on the record.</p>
Content	<p>Ask yourself what you want others to remember when you are done speaking, and write down the three most important things as bullet points.</p> <p>Add as much personal detail beneath each point as you are comfortable with, and focus on writing down what supports that point.</p>	<p>You don't need to tell your whole story for your words to have an impact. Keep your focus on why the bill is important to you, and write about that, this will help senators better understand your position.</p>	<p>When writing for someone else to read, focus your content on what you really want the committee to know. If time for testimony gets shortened for some reason, the reader may need to summarize your testimony instead of reading it exactly as it is written.</p> <p>Take out words that might be tough for someone else to</p>

	Spoken Testimony	Written Testimony for the Record	Written Testimony for a Reader
<b>Length</b>	<p>You don't need to tell your whole story in order for your words to have an impact. Find the parts of your story that connect the most with the reasons the bill is important to you and use those.</p> <p>You only have 3 to 5 minutes to share your thoughts on the bill. When you edit your testimony, leave what you want the committee to know. Your testimony should about one page when typed.</p>	<p>Writing for public record is similar to writing like you are going to testify, but you aren't limited in what you write. However, it is still a good idea to keep what you are writing to the point, so what is important to you doesn't get lost.</p>	<p>pronounce. Check a thesaurus or use the 'synonyms' function for words that may be easier to say.</p> <p>Try to limit yourself to less than one page and focus on what is most important to you. This way the reader doesn't have to guess about what is most important to you, and can focus on getting your point across.</p>
<b>Format</b>	<p>Make the print large with space in between so there is room for making notes if you need them.</p>	<p>Formatted like a formal letter. Include the date, name, and address of the committee Chairperson at the top.</p>	<p>Make the print large with space in between. If the reader needs to make notes, it is helpful to have space for this.</p>

<b>Practice</b>	<p>No matter what option you choose, practice reading your testimony aloud. Notice how you feel, how long it took to read, and how it sounded to you. Make changes and adjustments until you are comfortable, you feel your points are clear, and it is readable in about two minutes.</p>
<b>Self-Care</b>	<p>Some parts of your story may be tough and overwhelm you. If there is something you wrote that is too hard to talk about, think about cutting it out for now and sharing it at another time. Give yourself time to take care of yourself and use your coping skills while you are writing. If you need suggestions, see "Tips for Taking Care of Yourself" in <i>Survivors Speak</i>.</p>

## Resources

- Committee Contact Information: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/committees/standing-committees.php>
- Search for a Hearing: [https://nebraskalegislature.gov/calendar/hearings\\_range.php](https://nebraskalegislature.gov/calendar/hearings_range.php)

**"Tips for Writing Testimony"** is part of *Survivors Speak: How to share your story to advocate for legislative change in Nebraska*. For more information about how you can share your story to advocate for change, check out the full guide at <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/survivors-speak/>. Please do not reproduce or alter without express written permission from Survivors Rising.

# TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

*Telling your story or using your experiences to make an impact on legislation can bring up a lot of memories and emotions. Sometimes those memories and emotions are positive, and other times they may be very difficult. Making sure that you are taking care of yourself can help you cope with overwhelming emotions, and help you keep healing if things get tough while you are sharing about your experiences. Self-care can include a variety of activities such as working out or yardwork, eating balanced meals, practicing yoga, words of affirmation, and even paying bills or finishing projects you have been putting off. You are the only one who will know what works for you from one moment to another, so it can be helpful to use a variety of activities when you are building your own self-care plan. Here are some tips to help you develop your own self-care and coping skills:*

<b>Practice relaxing</b>	Most of us do not realize how tense we are until we begin to relax. Take time to purposefully practice breathing techniques and meditation. This will help your body unwind and make it easier for you to focus. It is also helpful to have a space in your home that is set aside for relaxing and calming down and creating a bedtime routine that helps to physically slow you down and calm you.
<b>Move</b>	In whatever way you are able, change your location or move your body for a few minutes each day. Going outside or going to a different room, stretching, cleaning for a few minutes, or even changing positions can help clear your mind and lift your spirits.
<b>Write and create</b>	Writing about whatever comes to mind can help to get your thoughts and emotions outside your body, making a habit of writing for a few minutes every day can help you see things differently. Creating things, whether it is through baking or cooking, painting, coloring, or even music, can help to channel your emotions into something visible. Writing and creating can help to ease the mind, change perspective, and improve mood.
<b>Nourish your body</b>	Eating a balanced diet consistently can help keep your physical body functioning well. Whenever possible use fresh ingredients and cook for yourself in order to avoid eating things that might slow your body and mind. Make sure to drink plenty of clean water. If you don't generally like drinking water, try adding a slice of lemon or cucumber, or even unsweetened caffeine free herbal tea, to help make sure you're drinking enough to stay hydrated.
<b>Speak kindly to yourself</b>	Keep an eye on how you talk to and about yourself, take a moment to correct yourself if you begin thinking negatively. Take some time every day to write down a few things that you like or appreciate about yourself, if you can't think of anything in the moment, write down things you have accomplished.
<b>Talk to someone</b>	Everyone needs help every now and then, whether it is help with expressing what you are okay with or how you are feeling, figuring out what you need, or even learning new things. Healing takes time and it also takes support. Talking to someone is really important in the healing process and also in caring for yourself. Whether you talk to a therapist or a friend, find someone you can talk to who will support and challenge you as you keep growing.



## Self-Care at Hearings

***If you decide to attend a hearing or testify in person, here are some additional tips that can help you stay calm and grounded:***

- ✓ Make a point of getting a good night's sleep the night before and after. Sleep routine resources are linked below.
- ✓ Avoid extra caffeine, alcohol, or recreational substances while you are preparing or completing tasks. Caffeine, alcohol and recreational substances can stimulate bodily responses and make it more difficult to stay calm, sleep restfully, or use your coping skills.
- ✓ Drink extra water. Water helps to flush out stress toxins and makes it easier to problem solve and manage overwhelming emotions.
- ✓ Eat before you head out to the Capitol. Avoid overly greasy comfort foods, as that can lead to discomfort or drowsiness. Bring a small snack with you too, even if you don't think you will need it.
- ✓ Have a plan for dinner. Listening to a hearing or testifying can be exhausting and can make it difficult to concentrate on preparing food for yourself after you are home. Make sure you nourish yourself no matter how you feel about how things went.
- ✓ Make a safety plan with a friend or your therapist. If you haven't done this before, a simple safety plan template is linked below.
- ✓ Make time for therapy or lunch with a supportive friend during the process. No matter how you get involved, it is important to stay connected and grounded, so your healing isn't negatively impacted.
- ✓ Sometimes emotions can get overwhelming in the hearing room, and sometimes it can take time before the emotions bubble up. Pay close attention to how you are feeling for the next couple of weeks, and practice other forms of self-care.
- ✓ Have a plan to celebrate each step along the way. No matter what your goal is, every step along the way is a reason to celebrate.
- ✓ Use the supports available to you. Check out the "Support Resources" Appendix of *Survivors Speak* for a list of local and national resources.

### Resources

- Sleep information: <https://savvysleeper.org/sleeping-with-ptsd/>
- Simple sleep information: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/trauma-and-sleep>
- Sleep apps: <https://www.bustle.com/p/8-apps-for-insomnia-that-can-help-you-go-to-sleep-12197789>
- Safety Plan: [https://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get\\_help/safety\\_plan.html](https://www.nebraskacoalition.org/get_help/safety_plan.html)
- Healthy habits: <https://healingwellcounseling.com/blog/the-7-healthy-habits-of-trauma-survivors/>
- Benefits of drinking water: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/290814.php>
- Nutrition and healing: <https://strengthtoheal.org/how-nutrition-can-help-victims-of-trauma/>

**"Tips for Taking Care of Yourself" is part of *Survivors Speak: How to share your story to advocate for legislative change in Nebraska*. For more information about how you can share your story to advocate for change, check out the full guide at <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/survivors-speak/>. Please do not reproduce or alter without express written permission from Survivors Rising.**

# APPENDIX A: TRAUMA RECOVERY AND SELF-CARE

## Trauma Recovery

People affected by trauma tend to feel unsafe in their bodies and in their relationships with others. Regaining a sense of safety may take days to weeks with acutely traumatized individuals or months to years with individuals who have experienced ongoing/chronic abuse. Figuring out what areas of life need to be stabilized and how that will be accomplished will be helpful in moving toward recovery. For example:

- A person who has experienced trauma may struggle with regulating or soothing difficult emotions in everyday life which they might not associate directly to the trauma.
- A person who has experienced trauma may need to learn how to regulate and manage these difficult, overwhelming emotions.
- Some people who experienced trauma, particularly complex trauma, may find that speaking about their experiences emotionally overwhelming.

The next task shifts to processing the trauma, putting words and emotions to it, and making meaning of it. This process is usually undertaken with a counselor or therapist in group and/or individual therapy. It might not be necessary or required to spend a lot of time in this phase. It is however necessary to attend to safety and stability during this phase. Attending to safety allows the person affected by trauma to move through this phase in a way that integrates the story of the trauma rather than reacts to it in a fight, flight or freeze response.

Pacing and timing are crucial during this phase. If the person affected by trauma becomes quickly overwhelmed and emotionally flooded when talking about their trauma memories, safety and stability must be regained before moving further on with the story. The point is not to “re-live” the trauma nor is it to tell the story with no emotions attached.

This involves the important task of exploring and mourning the losses associated with the trauma and providing space to grieve and express emotions.

In the next phase there must now be a creation a new sense of self and a new future. This final task involves redefining oneself in the context of meaningful relationships. Through this process, the trauma no longer is a defining and organizing principle is someone’s life. The trauma becomes integrated into their life story but is not the only story that defines them.

In this third stage of recovery, the person affected by trauma recognizes the impact of the victimization but are now ready to take concrete steps towards empowerment and self-determined living.

Adapted from: <https://trauma-recovery.ca/recovery/phases-of-trauma-recovery/>

## Self-Care

Victim Connect Resource Center. Self – Care. 2019.

Retrieved from <https://victimconnect.org/learn/self-care/>

The term “self-care” refers to actions and attitudes we use to consciously contribute to the maintenance of our overall well-being and personal health. Self-care can include physical activities

as well as emotional practices and changing our perceptions of situations in our lives. While this concept is big in the field of victim services, it can also be generalized to those who are not currently experiencing trauma but are looking to feel more internally healthy and balanced.

Many crimes involve the use of force or violence against victims. Crime victims of all types of crime may experience trauma – physical damage to their bodies or emotional wounds or shock caused by the violence against them. Reactions to trauma vary from person to person and can last for hours, days, weeks, months, or years.

**Physical trauma:** Crime victims may experience physical trauma—serious injury or shock to the body, as from a major accident. Examples of physical trauma include:

- Cuts, bruises, fractured arms or legs, or internal injuries.
- Intense stress reactions where breathing, blood pressure, and heart rate may increase, and muscles may tighten.
- Feeling exhausted but unable to sleep
- Headaches
- Increased or decreased appetites, or digestive problems

**Emotional trauma:** Victims may experience emotional trauma—emotional wounds or shocks that may have long-lasting effects. Emotional trauma may take many different forms:

- **Shock or numbness:** Victims may feel “frozen” and cut off from their own emotions. Some victims say they feel as if they are “watching a movie” rather than having their own experiences. Victims may not be able to make decisions or conduct their lives as they did before the crime.
- **Denial, Disbelief, and Anger:** Victims may experience “denial,” an unconscious defense against painful or unbearable memories and feelings about the crime. Or they may experience disbelief, telling themselves, “this just could not have happened to me!” They may feel intense anger and a desire to get even with the offender.
- **Stress:** Some crime victims may experience trouble sleeping, flashbacks, extreme tension or anxiety, outbursts of anger, memory problems, trouble concentrating, and other symptoms of distress for days or weeks following a trauma.

Some examples of self-care might include activities such as:

- **Positive Affirmations** – Each day (or in stressful situations) think through some kind thoughts about yourself and your life. Remind yourself that you have taken steps to care for yourself that might seem easy but are very important, like taking a shower, getting out of bed, or going for a walk. Remind yourself that you are worth praising through nice notes about your appearance, goals, and confidence on your mirror or written down throughout your day.
- **Relaxation Exercises** – Anything from breathing techniques to practicing meditation and creating bedtime routine can help to create a relaxing environment to heal and reflect.
- **Channeling pain into creativity** – Taking up activities like poetry writing, short stories, journaling, drawing or dance serve as outlets to release and process emotions that might otherwise be overwhelming.
- **Physical Self-Care** – Getting up and moving your body in a way that feels good to you can change your whole mood. If you’re not a person who loves the gym, you can go for a walk with a friend, do some stretches, or dance at home to some feel good music. Anything that allows you to connect to what your body physically needs in that moment.

- **Know and communicate your boundaries** – Let others around you know up front what is and is not okay for you. This is especially important in the context of sexual partners but can be applied to any friends, loved ones, and acquaintances.
- **Ask for help** – No one should be expected to go through life alone and everyone needs help from time-to-time. Asking loved ones for help with life feels overwhelming is important.
- **Remind yourself it is okay to walk away from situations that are too stressful or triggering.**

## Support Resources

- Love Is Respect - <https://www.loveisrespect.org/for-yourself/self-care/>
- Your Life, Your Voice - <http://www.yourlifeyourvoice.org/pages/tip-99-coping-skills.aspx>
- The Mighty - <https://themighty.com/2016/04/self-care-ideas-for-a-bad-day/>
- RAINN - <https://www.rainn.org/news/self-care-tips-survivors>
- The National Domestic Violence Hotline - <https://www.thehotline.org/2016/03/31/5-self-care-tips-for-abuse-and-trauma-survivors/>

Contact the Victim Connect Hotline by phone at 1-855-4-VICTIM or by chat for more information or assistance in locating services that can help you or a loved one with self-care ideas.

**“Appendix A: Trauma Recovery and Self-Care”** is part of *Survivors Speak: How to share your story to advocate for legislative change in Nebraska*. For more information about how you can share your story to advocate for change, check out the full guide at <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/survivors-speak/>.

## APPENDIX B: SUPPORT RESOURCES

*The following directory is an alphabetized list of organizations operating across Nebraska that can provide survivors with a wide range of different supports. An \* indicates organizations that you can reach out to directly if you want to support their legislative efforts or have questions about the legislative process. A \*\* indicates services to be accessed only after a report of child abuse to law enforcement or DHHS.*

### **Black and Pink**

**Service Area:** Nationwide (Headquarters in Omaha)

**Focus:** Currently and Formerly Incarcerated LGBTQIAS2+ and people living with HIV/AIDS

**Services:** Transitional housing (Lydon House in Omaha), re-entry programs, support groups, advocacy

**Phone:** 531-466-3346 • **Email:** [admin@blackandpink.org](mailto:admin@blackandpink.org) • **Website:** [www.blackandpink.org](http://www.blackandpink.org)

### **The Bridge (Crisis Center for DA/SA)**

**Service Area:** Burt, Cuming, Dodge, Saunders, and Washington Counties (Offices located in Fremont, Blair and West Point)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, emergency shelter, support groups, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 888-721-4340 • **Office:** 402-721-4340 • **Website:** [www.bridgefromviolence.com](http://www.bridgefromviolence.com)

### **Bridge of Hope Child Advocacy Center**

**Service Area:** Arthur, Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Grant, Hayes, Hitchcock, Hooker, Keith, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, Perkins, Red Willow, and Thomas Counties (Offices located in North Platte and Ogallala)

**Focus:** Child Abuse (including sexual abuse and assault, trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation of minors), Child witnesses of violent crimes

**Services:** Forensic interviews\*\*, medical examinations\*\*, advocacy and support for children and caregivers, referrals to mental health services, training on child abuse.

**Phone:** 308-534-4064 • **Website:** <http://www.bridgeofhopecac.org/>

### **Bright Horizons**

**Service Area:** Keya Paha, Brown, Rock, Boyd, Holt, Knox, Antelope, Pierce, Madison, and Stanton Counties (Offices located in Norfolk, O'Neill and Ainsworth)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, shelter services, support groups, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 402-379-3798 • **Office:** 402-379-2026 • **Website:** [www.brighthorizonsne.org](http://www.brighthorizonsne.org)

### **CAPstone Child Advocacy Center**

**Service Area:** Nebraska Panhandle - Banner, Box Butte, Cheyenne, Dawes, Deuel, Garden, Kimball, Morrill, Scotts Bluff, Sheridan, and Sioux Counties (Offices located in Gering, Alliance, Chadron and Sidney)

**Focus:** Child Abuse (including sexual abuse and assault, trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation of minors), Child witnesses of violent crimes

**Services:** Forensic interviews\*\*, medical examinations\*\*, advocacy and support for children and caregivers, referrals to mental health services, training on child abuse.

**Phone:** 308-632-7274 • **Website:** <http://www.capstonenebraska.com/>



### **Catholic Charities The Shelter**

**Service Area:** Douglas County (Office located in Omaha)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Intimate Partner Stalking, Sexual Violence, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, shelter services, after-shelter support

**24/7 hotline:** 402-558-5700 • **Office:** 402-558-5700 • **Website:** [www.ccomaha.org](http://www.ccomaha.org)

### **Center for People in Need**

**Service Area:** Lincoln

**Focus:** Services and programs for that address basic needs and economic independence.

**Services:** Food, diapers, household goods distributions, emergency services, English as Second Language, educational and employment training.

**Phone:** 402-476-4357 • **Email:** [info@cfpin.org](mailto:info@cfpin.org) • **Website:** <https://www.cfpin.org/>

### **Center for Survivors**

**Service Area:** Platte, Colfax, Nance, Polk, Boone, and Butler Counties (Office located in Columbus)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, shelter services, support groups, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 402-564-2155 • **Office:** 402-564-2155 • **Website:** [www.centerforsurvivors.net](http://www.centerforsurvivors.net)

### **Central Nebraska Child Advocacy Center**

**Service Area:** Clay, Garfield, Greeley, Hall, Hamilton, Howard, Merrick, Nuckolls, Webster, and Wheeler Counties (Office located in Grand Island)

**Focus:** Child Abuse (including sexual abuse and assault, trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation of minors), Child witnesses of violent crimes

**Services:** Forensic interviews\*\*, medical examinations\*\*, advocacy and support for children and caregivers, referrals to mental health services, training on child abuse.

**Phone:** 308-385-5238 • **Website:** <http://www.cn-cac.org/>

### **Central Nebraska Human Trafficking & Immigration Outreach (CNHTIO)**

**Service area:** Dawson County, Western Nebraska

**Focus:** Trafficking/Sexual Assault

**Services:** Direct services, emergency transportation, emergency shelter, trauma focused therapy, criminal justice advocacy, support group, ongoing support

**24/7 English and Spanish Crisis Line:** 308-325-2295 • **Email:** [Leticia.bonifas45@gmail.com](mailto:Leticia.bonifas45@gmail.com)

### **Child Advocacy Center - Lincoln**

**Service Area:** Southeastern Nebraska - Butler, Cass, Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Lancaster, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Polk, Richardson, Saline, Saunders, Seward, Thayer, and York Counties (Offices located in Lincoln, Auburn and York)

**Focus:** Child Abuse (including sexual abuse and assault, trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation of minors), Child witnesses of violent crimes

**Services:** Forensic interviews\*\*, medical examinations\*\*, advocacy and support for children and caregivers, referrals to mental health services, training on child abuse.

**Phone:** 402-476-3200 • **Website:** <https://www.smallvoices.org/>

## **Coalition for a Strong Nebraska\***

**Service Area:** Statewide (Office located in Lincoln)

**Focus:** Supports nonprofit organizations with the skills, tools and resources for public policy work

**Email:** info@strongnebraska.org • **Website:** <https://strongnebraska.org/>

## **Community Action Agencies**

**Service Area:** Statewide (Offices located in Chadron, Gering, Kearney, Loup City, Pender, Omaha Lincoln, Fairbury and Humboldt)

**Focus:** Assist individuals struggling with poverty to more economic stability and mobility

**Services:** Housing, food assistance, disaster relief, employment programs, child development, transportation, health care

**Phone:** 402-471-3714 • **Website:** <http://canhelp.org/>

## **Crisis Center, Inc.**

**Service Area:** Howard, Hall, Hamilton, and Merrick Counties (Office located in Grand Island)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, shelter services, support groups, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 308-381-0555 • **Office:** 308-382-8250 • **Website:** [www.gicrisis.org](http://www.gicrisis.org)

## **Domestic Abuse/Sexual Assault Services**

**Service Area:** Red Willow, Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, and Hitchcock Counties (Office located in McCook)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, shelter services, support groups, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 308-345-5534 • **Office:** 308-345-1612 • **Website:** [www.dasas.net](http://www.dasas.net)

## **The DOVES Program**

**Service Area:** Sioux, Dawes, Sheridan, Bow Butte, Scotts Bluff, Morrill, Banner, Kimball, and Cheyenne Counties (Offices located in Gering, Alliance, Chadron and Sidney)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, emergency shelter, support groups, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 866-953-6837 • **Office:** 308-436-2787 • **Website:** [www.dovesprogram.com](http://www.dovesprogram.com)

## **Family Advocacy Network**

**Service Area:** Adams, Blaine, Buffalo, Custer, Dawson, Franklin, Furnas, Gosper, Harlan, Kearney, Loup, Phelps, Sherman, and Valley Counties (Offices located in Kearney, Hastings and Broken Bow)

**Focus:** Child Abuse (including sexual abuse and assault, trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation of minors), Child witnesses of violent crimes

**Services:** Forensic interviews\*\*, medical examinations\*\*, advocacy and support for children and caregivers, referrals to mental health services, training on child abuse.

**Phone:** 308-865-7492 • **Website:** <https://www.familyadvocacynetwork.com/>

## **FoodBank for the Heartland**

**Service Area:** Statewide and western Iowa

**Focus:** Food access

**Services:** Provide emergency and supplemental food to people in need in through distribution to food pantries and centers.

**Phone:** 402-331-1213 • **Email:** [info@FoodBankHeartland.org](mailto:info@FoodBankHeartland.org) • **Website:**

<https://foodbankheartland.org/>

## **Friendship Home**

**Service Area:** Lancaster County (Office located in Lincoln)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence and Intimate Partner Stalking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, pre-shelter services, safety planning, advocacy, shelter services, case management, economic self-sufficiency services

**24/7 hotline:** 402-437-9302 • **Office:** 402-434-6353 • **Website:** [www.friendshiphome.org](http://www.friendshiphome.org)

## **GLSEN – Omaha Chapter**

**Service Area:** Statewide and western Iowa

**Focus:** LGBTQ Students, Bullying, Harassment

**Services:** Public policy advocacy, school policy advocacy, school administrator and teacher training, clubs and support groups

**Email:** [info@oma.glsen.org](mailto:info@oma.glsen.org) • **Website:** [www.glsen.org/chapters/omaha/](http://www.glsen.org/chapters/omaha/)

## **Haven House**

**Service Area:** Cedar, Dixon, Dakota, Wayne, and Thurston Counties (Offices located in Wayne and South Sioux City)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, emergency shelter, support groups, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 800-440-4633 • **Office:** 402-375-5433 • **Website:** [www.havenhousefsc.com](http://www.havenhousefsc.com)

## **Healing Hearts and Families**

**Service Area:** Blaine, Loup, Garfield, Wheeler, Custer, Valley, Greeley, and Sherman Counties (Offices located in Broken Bow and Ord)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, emergency shelter, support groups, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 308-872-5988 • **Office:** 308-872-2420 • **Website:** [www.healingheartsandfamilies.com](http://www.healingheartsandfamilies.com)

## **Heartland Family Service Domestic Abuse/Sexual Assault Program**

**Service Area:** Sarpy and Cass Counties (Office located in Papillion)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence and Intimate Partner Stalking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, advocacy, crisis counseling, emergency shelter, therapy, support groups,

**24/7 hotline:** 800-523-3666 • **Office:** 402-339-2544 • **Website:** [www.heartlandfamilyservice.org](http://www.heartlandfamilyservice.org)

## **Heartland Family Service Heartland Housing Sanctuary**

**Service Area:** Omaha Metro Area

**Focus:** Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 shelter lines, housing, advocacy, therapy, case management

**Phone:** 402-597-1009 or 402-672-8608 • **Email:** [sanctuaryhouse@heartlandfamilyservice.org](mailto:sanctuaryhouse@heartlandfamilyservice.org) •

**Website:** <https://heartlandfamilyservice.org/housing-financial-stability/heartland-housing-sanctuary/>

## **Heartland United Way**

**Service Area:** Grand Island

**Focus:** Connect neighbors to services that can help

**Services:** Rent and utility assistance, food pantries, housing services, clothing, support groups, behavioral health, disaster services, legal services, health care, financial assistance and education, family support

**Phone:** 402-444-6666 • **Email:** [ne211@uwmidlands.org](mailto:ne211@uwmidlands.org) • **Website:**

<https://www.heartlandunitedway.org/get-help>

## **Hope Crisis Center**

**Service Area:** York, Seward, Fillmore, Saline, Thayer, Jefferson, and Gage Counties (Offices located in Fairbury, Crete, Beatrice, Seward and York)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, temporary shelter, emergency assistance, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 877-388-4673 • **Office:** 402-729-2570 • **Website:** [www.hopecrisiscenter.org](http://www.hopecrisiscenter.org)

## **Hope Harbor**

**Service Area:** Grand Island

**Focus:** Provide services to near homeless, displaced homeless women and children.

**Services:** Safe shelter, meals, case management

**Phone:** 308-385-5190 • **Email:** [jbernth@hopeharborgi.org](mailto:jbernth@hopeharborgi.org) • **Website:**

<http://www.hopeharborgi.org/>

## **Lutheran Family Services**

**Service Area:** Statewide

**Focus:** Serve all people who seek help and hope as part of the mission of the Lutheran church

**Services:** Children's services including prevention and early intervention programs as well as behavioral health; community services including survivors of human trafficking; behavioral health services.

**Phone:** 1-833-903-2376 • **Email:** [info@lfsneb.org](mailto:info@lfsneb.org) • **Website:** <https://www.lfsneb.org/>

## **Magdalene Omaha**

**Service Area:** *Residential:* Greater Omaha Area; *Non-residential:* Nationwide

**Focus:** Sex Trafficking, Prostitution and Addiction

**Services:** Long-term residential recovery program, therapy, legal support, educational assistance, economic self-empowerment, substance abuse counseling, peer support.

**Phone:** 402-934-8599 • **Email:** [tesa@magdaleneomaha.org](mailto:tesa@magdaleneomaha.org) • **Website:**

<http://magdaleneomaha.org/>

### **Nebraska Alliance of Child Advocacy Centers\***

**Service Area:** Statewide (Office located in Omaha)

**Focus:** Child Abuse (including sexual abuse and assault, trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation of minors)

**Services:** Training and technical assistance for multidisciplinary team members (prosecutors, law enforcement, child protective services, and child advocacy center staff), statewide policy work and legislative advocacy, statewide initiatives to enhance the response to child abuse

**Phone:** 402-933-7422 • **Email:** [info@nebraskacacs.com](mailto:info@nebraskacacs.com) • **Website:** <https://www.nebraskacacs.com/>

### **Nebraska Coalition to End Sexual and Domestic Violence\***

**Service Area:** Statewide (Office located in Lincoln)

**Focus:** Oversees and supports Domestic/Sexual Violence, Stalking, and Trafficking agencies statewide

**Phone:** 402-476-6256 • **Email:** <https://www.nebraskacoalition.org/contact.html> • **Website:** <https://www.nebraskacoalition.org/>

### **Northeast Nebraska Child Advocacy Center**

**Service Area:** Antelope, Boone, Boyd, Brown, Burt, Cedar, Cherry, Colfax, Cuming, Dakota, Dixon, Dodge, Holt, Keya Paha, Knox, Madison, Nance, Pierce, Platte, Rock, Stanton, Thurston, Washington, and Wayne Counties (Offices located in Norfolk, O'Neill and Fremont)

**Focus:** Child Abuse (including sexual abuse and assault, trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation of minors), Child witnesses of violent crimes

**Services:** Forensic interviews\*\*, medical examinations\*\*, advocacy and support for children and caregivers, referrals to mental health services, training on child abuse.

**Phone:** 402-644-7402 • **Website:** <http://frhs.org/our-services/directory/child-advocacy-center/>

### **Parent-Child Center**

**Service Area:** Dawson and Gosper Counties (Office located in Lexington)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 308-324-3040 • **Office:** 308-324-2336 • **Website:** [www.dawsoncountyne.net/pcc/](http://www.dawsoncountyne.net/pcc/)

### **Ponca Tribe of Nebraska Domestic Violence Programs**

**Service Area:** *Nebraska:* Douglas, Lancaster, Sarpy, Hall, Knox, Burt, Wayne, Platte, Madison, Boyd, Holt, Stanton Counties (Office located in Niobrara); *Iowa:* Pottawattamie, Woodbury Counties; *South Dakota:* Charles Mix

**Focus:** Domestic/Sexual Violence, Stalking, Elder Abuse, Trafficking

**Services:** Advocacy and case management, community resource referrals, development of safety plans, job readiness skills, legal and court advocacy, protection orders, shelter referral and placement, transportation and financial assistance

**Phones:** 402-438-9222 (Lincoln), 402-734-5275 (Omaha), 402-371-8834 (Norfolk), 402-857-3391 (Niobrara), 712-258-0500 (Sioux City) • **Website:** <https://www.poncatribene.org/services/social-services/domestic-violence/>

## **Project Harmony**

**Service Area:** Douglas and Sarpy Counties in Nebraska and 16 counties in Southwest Iowa (Office located in Omaha)

**Focus:** Child Abuse (including sexual abuse and assault, trafficking, and commercial sexual exploitation of minors), Child witnesses of violent crimes

**Services:** Forensic interviews\*\*, medical examinations\*\*, advocacy and support for children and caregivers, mental health services, training on child abuse and related topics.

**Phone:** 402-595-1326 • **Website:** <https://projectharmony.com/>

## **Project Response**

**Service Area:** Otoe, Johnson, Nemaha, Pawnee, and Richardson Counties (Offices located in Auburn and Nebraska City)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, emergency shelter, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 402-274-5092 • **Office:** 402-274-5092 • **Website:** [www.projectresponseinc.org](http://www.projectresponseinc.org)

## **Rachel Pointer Coaching & Consulting**

**Service Area:** Statewide, Nationwide

**Focus:** Survivor Leadership Development, Program Support, Violence Against Persons

**Services:** Resilience coaching for staff and survivors, trauma response education, program development and consultation, legislative advocacy, program networking, working group facilitation

**Email:** [rpointer@rachelpointer.com](mailto:rpointer@rachelpointer.com) • **Website:** <http://www.rachelpointer.com/>

## **Rape/Domestic Abuse Program**

**Service Area:** Cherry, Hooker, Thomas, McPherson, Logan, and Lincoln Counties (Office in North Platte)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, shelter services, support groups, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 308-534-3495 • **Office:** 308-532-0624 • **Website:** [www.nprdap.org](http://www.nprdap.org)

## **S.A.F.E. Center**

**Service Area:** Buffalo, Phelps, Kearney, Harlan, and Franklin Counties (Office in Kearney)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, support groups, therapy, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 308-237-2599 • **Office:** 308-237-2599 • **Website:** [www.safecenter.org](http://www.safecenter.org)

## **Safest Place Support Group**

**Service Area:** Omaha Metro Area

**Focus:** Sex Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Assault, Domestic/Dating Violence, Stalking

**Services:** Peer support group

**Phone:** 402-281-9504 or 712-326-8709 • **Email:** [terriessel.healthyminds@gmail.com](mailto:terriessel.healthyminds@gmail.com)

## **Salvation Army's Wellspring Program**

**Service Area:** Omaha Metro Area

**Focus:** Sexual Exploitation, Sex Trafficking, Sex Work

**Services:** Therapy, substance abuse treatment, peer support

**Phone:** 402-898-5871 • **Website:** <https://centralusa.salvationarmy.org/omaha/wellspring/>

## **Sandhills Crisis Intervention Program**

**Service Area:** Garden, Deuel, Grant, Arthur, Keith, and Perkins Counties (Office located in Ogallala)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, emergency shelter, support groups, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 308-284-6055 • **Office:** 308-284-8477 • **Website:** [www.scipogallala.com](http://www.scipogallala.com)

## **Santee Sioux Nation Dakota Tiwahe Service Unit “Tribal Services” DV/SA and Family Support Program**

**Service Area:** Santee Sioux Reservation (Office located in Niobrara) – *Anyone can receive services whether or not they are a tribal member living on the reservation.*

**Focus:** Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Human Trafficking, Stalking, Dating Violence

**Services:** Counseling, victim advocacy (medical, criminal, civil legal, cultural), support groups, victim witness notification, transportation services, referrals, resources, safety planning, goal planning, parenting one-on-one, parenting classes, daily living skills, supervised exchange, home visits, supervised visitation, financial assistance, and other advocacy and supportive services (applying for benefits, birth certs, driver's license, ID, social security/card, job search, housing search, GED, college etc.)

**Phone:** 402-857-2342 • **Email:** [dana.yunker@ssndatkota.com](mailto:dana.yunker@ssndatkota.com) or [shannon.lee@ssndakota.com](mailto:shannon.lee@ssndakota.com)

## **SASA Crisis Center**

**Service Area:** Adams, Nuckolls, Clay, and Webster Counties (Offices located in Hastings and Superior)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, emergency shelter, support groups, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 402-463-4677 • **Office:** 402-463-5810 • **Website:** [www.sasacenter.org](http://www.sasacenter.org)

## **Survivors Rising\***

**Service Area:** Statewide (Office located in Omaha)

**Focus:** Sex Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Assault, Domestic/Dating Violence, Stalking

**Services:** Survivors Rising is a group of survivor leaders using their experiences to provide advocacy and education in the community and provide support for survivors in their next stage of healing.

**Phone:** 402-999-2725 • **Email:** [survivorsrisinginfo@gmail.com](mailto:survivorsrisinginfo@gmail.com) • **Website:** [survivorsrisingomaha.org](http://survivorsrisingomaha.org)

## **Thriving Warrior**

**Service Area:** Statewide

**Focus:** Domestic and intimate partner violence, Sexual Assault, Sexual Exploitation

**Services:** Online support for survivor entrepreneurs, legislative advocacy, survivor networking

**Email:** <https://athrivingwarrior.com/contact/> • **Website:** <https://athrivingwarrior.com/>

## **Voices of Hope**

**Service Area:** Lancaster County (Office located in Lincoln)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, safety planning, advocacy, support and educational groups, criminal and civil justice support

**24/7 hotline:** 402-475-7273 • **Office:** 402-476-2110 • **Website:** [www.voicesofhopelincoln.org](http://www.voicesofhopelincoln.org)

## **Winnebago Domestic Violence Intervention & Family Preservation Program**

**Service Area:** Winnebago Reservation (Office located in Winnebago)

**Focus:** Domestic Violence

**Services:** Temporary shelters, support programs, identify safety needs, health and educational services and counseling

**Phone:** 402-878-4308 • **Website:** <http://www.winnebagotribe.com/index.php/services/health-department/domestic-violence>

## **Women's Center for Advancement (WCA)**

**Service Area:** Douglas County, Western Iowa (Office located in Omaha)

**Focus:** Intimate Partner Violence, Sexual Violence, Stalking, Trafficking

**Services:** 24/7 hotline, navigation through systems, counseling, legal aid, financial training, career services, ongoing support

**24/7 hotline:** 402-345-7273 • **Office:** 402-345-6555 • **Website:** <https://wcaomaha.org/>

## **Women's Fund of Omaha\***

**Service Area:** Statewide (Office located in Omaha)

**Focus:** Research, funding, and advocacy in support of issues impacting women and girls. Key programmatic areas include economic security, freedom from violence, sexual literacy and women in leadership.

**Phone:** 402-827-9280 • **Email:** [info@omahawomensfund.org](mailto:info@omahawomensfund.org) • **Website:** <https://www.omahawomensfund.org>

## **YouTurn**

**Service Area:** Douglas County

**Focus:** Domestic/Sexual Violence, Gang violence involving Women, Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation for Youth ages 12-25+

**Services:** Navigation through systems including counseling, legal aid, financial training, job placement support, ongoing support, school/education support

**Phone:** 402-933-7850 • **Email:** [info@youturnomaha.org](mailto:info@youturnomaha.org) • **Website:** <https://youturnomaha.org/en/>

**“Appendix B: Support Resources” is part of *Survivors Speak: How to share your story to advocate for legislative change in Nebraska*. For more information about how you can share your story to advocate for change, check out the full guide at <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/survivors-speak/>.**



# APPENDIX C: ADDITIONAL READING

## Nebraska Legislative Process

- Lawmaking in Nebraska: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/about/lawmaking.php>
- How a Bill Becomes a Law in Nebraska Video: <https://strongnebraska.org/>

## Self-Care

- Sleep information: <https://savvysleeper.org/sleeping-with-ptsd/>
- Simple sleep information: <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/trauma-and-sleep>
- Sleep apps: <https://www.bustle.com/p/8-apps-for-insomnia-that-can-help-you-go-to-sleep-12197789>
- Calm App: <https://www.calm.com/>
- Healthy habits: <https://healingwellcounseling.com/blog/the-7-healthy-habits-of-trauma-survivors/>
- Benefits of drinking water: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/290814.php>
- Nutrition and healing: <https://strengthtoheal.org/how-nutrition-can-help-victims-of-trauma/>

**“Appendix C: Additional Reading” is part of *Survivors Speak: How to share your story to advocate for legislative change in Nebraska*. For more information about how you can share your story to advocate for change, check out the full guide at <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/survivors-speak/>.**