Principles & Practices of Trauma-Informed Evaluation

SAFETY
Respect preferred modes of contact (e.g., phone only, no phone, etc.)
Consider location of data collection: privacy, visibility, distractions; but also places that will feel safe, comfortable, culturally appropriate
Consider staffing (e.g., avoid male interviewer for female DV survivors)
Avoid any value-based language in instruments, questions (e.g., implying that there is a good or “right” response)
Help participants understand that you’re not judging them for what they say: neutral-positive default
Have resources for further help/support available. Share with participants: as needed, or for all, depending on project
Have written emergency protocol. Encourage professional help, if in distress

TRUSTWORTHINESS AND TRANSPARENCY
Practice informed consent
Confirm confidentiality or anonymity; note any potential risks to participants
Explain process, next steps
Acknowledge research goals, agenda (e.g., why you’re asking for participation, what you’ll do with info shared; support service organization? inform policymakers? publication?)
Don’t ask for information you don’t really need
Acknowledge a lack of lived experience: show humility
When introducing yourself: be a real, relatable person, not just a professional robot
Follow through on sharing final reports/results, if requested, so people can see what their input went toward

COLLABORATION AND MUTUALITY
Where possible, include staff with lived experiences, from community on projects
Create advisory board (AB), including subsample of client population
Involve AB in study/protocol design, as actually feasible (where not prescribed); incorporate feedback
Potentially identify themes within focus group data collection session itself, then ask group if your interpretation is correct: do these key ideas match up to what you’ve said today?
Present interim findings to AB; involve in interpretation

EMPOWERMENT, VOICE, AND CHOICE
Check in with participants during data collection to make sure they still agree to participate
Allow clients to skip a question/pause/stop, or choose to continue. Remind them that they can be in control of pacing
Practice active listening
Allow participants to choose location/timing, as possible
Respect that participants are “the experts of their own experiences.” Thank them for sharing
Normalize experiences and choices (e.g., “Yes, that response makes sense,” “I hear that a lot,” etc.)
Acknowledge strengths, resiliencies as possible

EQUITY & CULTURAL HUMILITY
Compensate people for their time, input. Consider kind of compensation that would be most accessible (digital vs physical gift cards; particular stores)
Actively work to encourage participation from underserved, underrepresented groups (non-English speakers, lower reading level, individuals with disabilities, lower SES, lower technology access, not White), EVEN if it requires different strategies, more time, resources
Translate materials, hire translators for focus groups
Offer to administer surveys over phone (instead of only written)
Have written emergency protocol. Encourage professional help, if in distress
Respect cultural norms (e.g., turn-taking in focus groups)
 Allow non-video/audio-only Zoom participation, if possible
Respect different levels of participation (e.g., English Language Learners might be limited in what they can contribute, but input is still valuable)