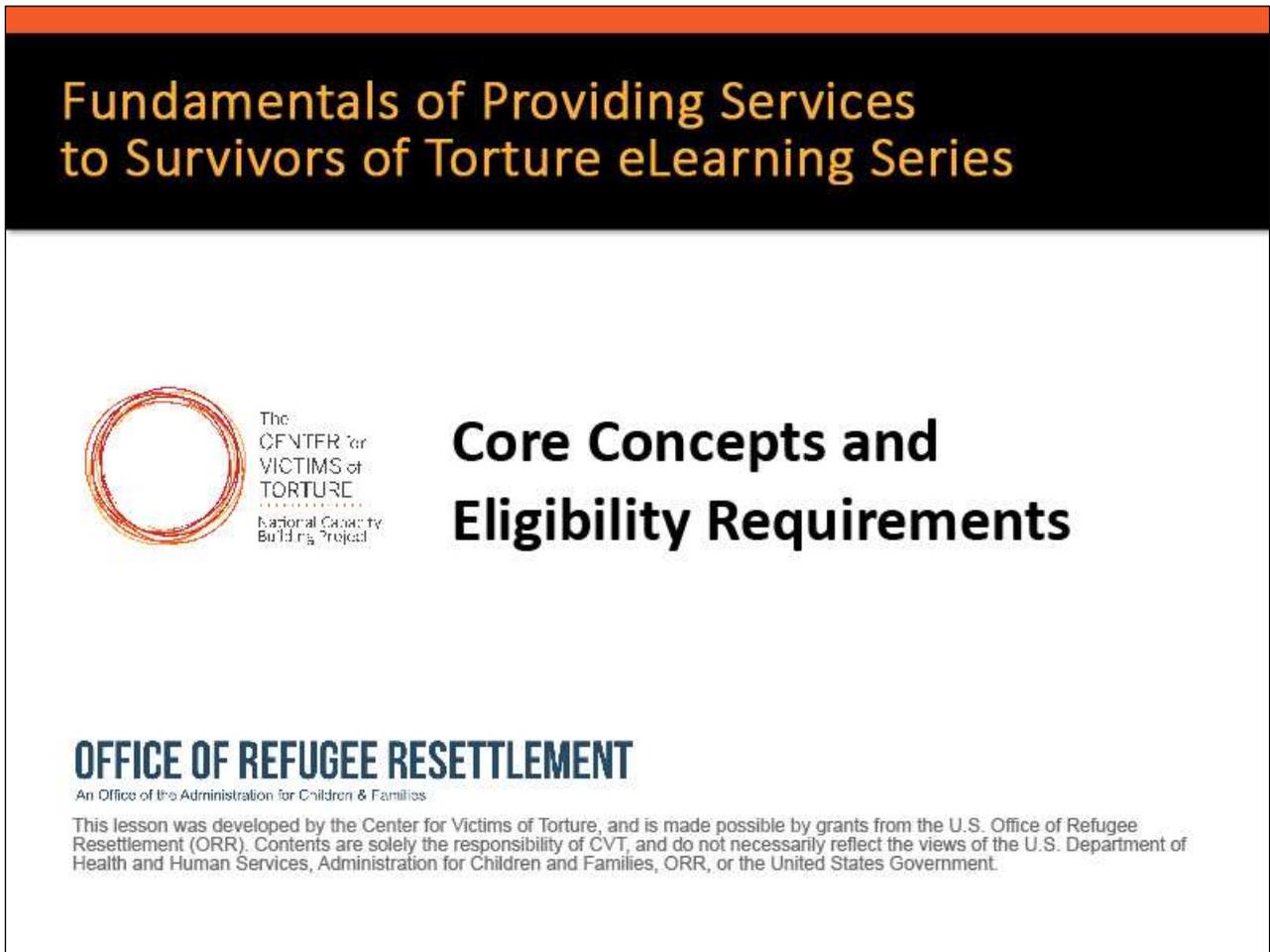


# Core Concepts



**Fundamentals of Providing Services to Survivors of Torture eLearning Series**



The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE  
.....  
National Capacity  
Building Project

## Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements

**OFFICE OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT**  
An Office of the Administration for Children & Families

This lesson was developed by the Center for Victims of Torture, and is made possible by grants from the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). Contents are solely the responsibility of CVT, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, ORR, or the United States Government.

Welcome to the Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements unit in the Fundamentals of Providing Services to Survivors of Torture eLearning Series.



When you know my story,  
when you know my pain,  
when you know my strength,  
you can help me know my healing.

↓

Throughout the training,  
Click the **Play**  button below to move to  
the next slide.

[No narration; instrumental music only.]





Hello. I'm David Gangsei. In this lesson, we'll be focusing on some core concepts to guide our provision of services to torture survivors.

In this module, we'll examine two fundamental areas: first, understanding what torture is and the eligibility guidelines that torture survivor programs work with, and second, understanding the importance of using a holistic integrated service model in program structure.





The CENTER for VICTIMS of TORTURE  
National Capacity Building Project

Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors  
Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements

Terror to Healing, Part 1  
from HealTorture

What is Torture?  
**FROM TERROR TO HEALING**

Loading ...

30:53

Watch From Terror to Healing, Part 1 for the first 8:25 minutes. Click the play button on the video to start. Stop watching video at the slide that says: **Methods and Symptoms of Torture.**

When you are done, click Continue

Continue

To set a framework for our exploration of core concepts, the video you are about to watch will share a broad overview of torture and its place in the contemporary world. The video was made some years at the Center for Victims of Torture in Minnesota. In it, you'll hear Dr. James Jaranson present the definition of torture established by the United Nations.





The slide is titled "Torture" and is part of a presentation by "The CENTER for VICTIMS of TORTURE National Capacity Building Project". The slide content is as follows:

**Torture**

UN Logo (United Nations)

US Flag (United States)

US Law  
18 U.S.C 2340(1):

- What was done to the individual?
- By whom?
- Under what circumstances?

In the video you just watched you heard the definition of torture established by the United Nations. United States law has its own definition of torture, and that definition sets the framework for determining who's eligible for services to torture survivors funded by Office of Refugee Resettlement. To avoid confusion, I should make clear that some organizations, possibly including your own, in addition to serving torture survivors, have programs serving other client groups. Examples could be victims of human trafficking or survivors of war trauma. Those services are funded by sources other than the ORR torture survivor program. Now let's look at that definition of torture in US law in some detail. In the process, we'll also have the opportunity to think more deeply about the nature of the abuses that survivors we serve have endured. Basically, US law includes three elements in defining torture – what was done to the individual, by whom, and under what circumstances.






The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE  
National Capacity  
Building Project
Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors  
Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements

## What is Torture?

**US Law:**

What was done to the individual?

By whom?

Under what circumstances?

**US Legal Definition:**

An act...

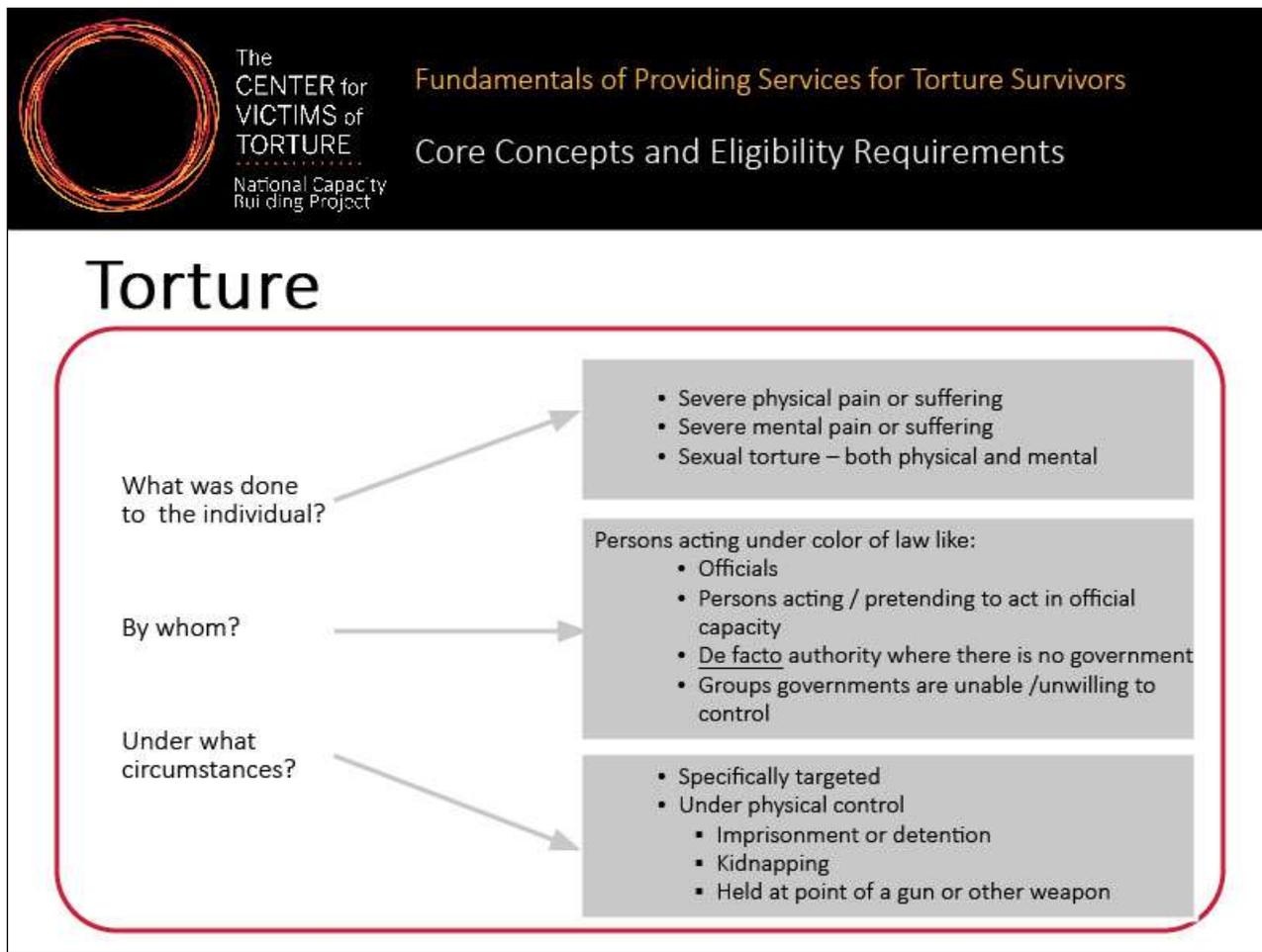
- committed by a person acting under the color of law
- specifically intended to inflict **severe physical/mental pain or suffering** (other than pain/suffering incidental to lawful sanctions)
- upon another person
- within his custody/physical control

Prolonged mental harm caused by or resulting from...

- a) The intentional or threatened infliction of severe physical pain or suffering,
- b) The use or threatened use of mind-altering substances or other procedures calculated to profoundly disrupt the senses or the personality,
- c) The threat of imminent death,
- d) The threat that another person will imminently be subjected to one or more of these same abuses.

Here are the elements in more detail. US law states that “torture” means an act committed by a person acting under the color of law, which means in some official capacity, specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering upon another person within his custody or physical control. The law specifically defines severe mental pain or suffering as prolonged mental harm caused by or resulting from: the intentional or threatened infliction of severe physical pain or suffering, the use or threatened use of mind-altering substances or other procedures calculated to profoundly disrupt the senses or the personality, the threat of imminent death, the threat that another person will imminently be subjected one of more of these same abuses. The law excludes pain or suffering occurring in the context of legal punishment for criminal acts.





So, what does the law mean by severe physical and mental pain or suffering? And what does this mean in the concrete experience of survivors?

The most common form of physical torture is beating - with fists, boots, rifle butts, clubs or other objects. Other physical methods include electric shocks, burning, and the submersion of the head, as well as deprivation of, for example, food, water, light, hygiene, sleep. Or overstimulation, as for example, noise, light, cold, heat, crowding, water, insects, rats.

The most common form of mental torture is threats, including threats of death, mock executions, and threats of death or torture to loved ones and associates; some survivors say that their worst experience was being forced to hear, watch or participate in the torture of others. Note that the law specifies that regarding mental torture, the defining factor is the occurrence of prolonged mental harm. In other words, how the torture caused and continues to cause, severe mental pain or suffering in the victim.

Note also that the law recognizes that inflicting physical pain or suffering, can and does, produce mental pain or suffering. We also know that extreme mental suffering, produces physical damage. So many forms of torture will encompass both dimensions. Sexual torture is an example of that reality, since it takes both



physical form, including rape of both women and men, and mental form, including sexual humiliation and threats, and it causes both severe physical and mental suffering. US law specifically identifies rape as a form of torture when it's committed under circumstances that meet the definition.

You can see that the "what was done?" element of torture includes violence that could and does occur in many situations, including child abuse, domestic violence, human trafficking and criminal assault.

Qualifying an act as torture, under this US law, requires the involvement of government or official authority in committing or condoning the torture act. Here are some examples that demonstrate this condition:

A woman activist in East Africa organized in her village to prevent the forced recruitment of young boys as child soldiers into the military. She was abducted by government troops, detained in a forest encampment and tortured.

A lesbian woman in Eastern Europe was detained by police, imprisoned without charge, beaten, raped and forced to do heavy labor for six months. She nearly died.

A group of indigenous young Guatemalan men were picked off a bus by government security forces. They were held in a clandestine prison for four days and tortured, to terrorize and demoralize their whole community.

There are also situations where there's no formal government, or a weak government, and armed groups may be the de facto rulers of a region or a country. For example, some Sunni, Shiite, Kurdish, and Christian Iraqis, have been targeted and tortured by militias operating in the country in the post-2003 period.

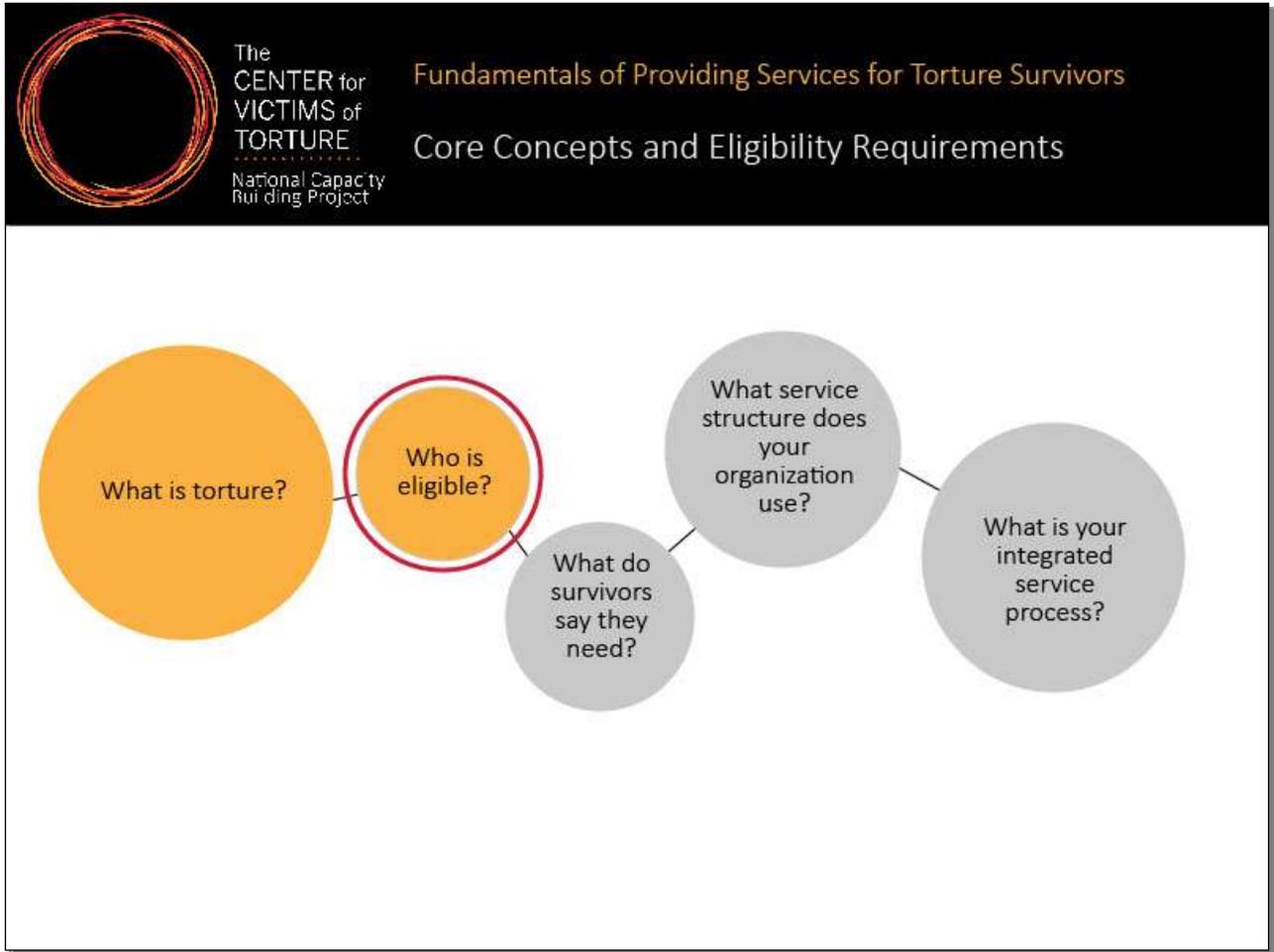
In Somalia, after the government collapsed in 1991, minority clan members have been targeted for kidnapping, rape, torture and murder by armed majority clans acting as a de facto government.

Then there are civil war situations, where the government may be unwilling or unable to control guerrilla forces or paramilitary organizations that persecute the civilian population.

Here's another example: a union organizer in South America refused to support the guerrilla movement that was fighting the government. As punishment, his wife was raped in their home in front of their children by members of the guerrillas.

Finally, the US definition of torture requires that the act of torture be specifically intended to inflict severe pain or suffering on the targeted individual and that the victim is under the physical control of the perpetrator. The examples we've just considered demonstrate this criterion. This distinguishes torture from acts of war or mass violence where the victims may be wounded, for example, by a bombing or caught in a crossfire, but are not individually targeted.





Next, we will briefly look at the eligibility guidelines that torture survivor programs work with.





The slide features a black header with the logo of The Center for Victims of Torture (a circular orange and red pattern) on the left. To the right of the logo, the text reads: "The CENTER for VICTIMS of TORTURE" and "National Capacity Building Project". Further right, the title "Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors" is displayed in orange, followed by "Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements" in white. The main content area is white with a large red rounded rectangle containing the question "Who is eligible for services?". Below this, a grey rounded rectangle contains a bulleted list of three points. To the right of the list, a red arrow points to a grey callout box with a folded corner, containing the text "Click to open eligibility requirements in a new tab."

The CENTER for VICTIMS of TORTURE  
National Capacity Building Project

Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors  
Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements

## Who is eligible for services?

- ORR has developed written guidelines to aid in determining eligibility
- You should become familiar with these guidelines
- Your organization should have a formal process for eligibility decisions.

Click to open eligibility requirements in a new tab.

Although the definition of torture may seem clear, applying that definition to particular individuals and situations can be complex. To help in determining eligibility, ORR has developed written guidelines elaborating the elements of the law. If you're involved in making eligibility decisions in your organization, you'll want to become fully familiar with this guide. Even with that assistance, it's sometimes challenging to decide whether a given set of circumstances fits the definition of torture. That's why we recommend that organizations have a formal process for eligibility determinations, and document that process in the chart. Even if you're not involved in eligibility decisions at your organization, it's good to know what the process is.





The screenshot shows a video player interface. At the top left is the logo for 'The CENTER for VICTIMS of TORTURE National Capacity Building Project'. The main title is 'Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements'. The video title is 'Terror to Healing, Part 2 from HealTorture'. The video player shows the title 'FROM TERROR TO HEALING' and a progress bar at 27:33. To the right of the video player is a 'Journaling Exercise' section with two questions: '1 What do these survivors say they need from providers?' and '2 What emotional responses do you have as you watch/listen?'. Below the questions is a 'Continue' button.

Now let's consider the elements and definition of torture in the context of people's lives. In the video segment you're about to play, two survivors will share, in their own words, what they suffered, how it affected them, and the nature of their experiences with the healthcare system in the US. As you listen to them, note how their experiences meet the definition of torture that we've been describing. What was done, by whom, under what circumstances? But more than that, listen to the human stories being told. Listen to their traumas and struggles, their values and goals, their resiliency and innate capacity to heal.

Finally, here are two questions you'll be asked to reflect on in your journal after the video:

First, what do these survivors say they need from providers? And second, paying attention to your own experience, what emotional responses do you notice in yourself as you watch the video? This question introduces the topic of self-care for providers that you'll be hearing more about later on in the course.





The CENTER for VICTIMS of TORTURE  
National Capacity Building Project

Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors  
Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements

You've heard from these survivors about their torture experience and its effects.

As we will see, the impact of torture goes well beyond the torture experience itself.

To understand how, let's now go to another reading from *Healing the Hurt*, pages 20- 24.

Click to open *Healing the Hurt* p. 20-24 in a new tab.

You've heard from these survivors about their torture experience and its effects. As we will see, the impact of torture goes well beyond the torture experience itself. To understand how, let's now go to another reading. Click on the button on your screen to do that. *Healing the Hurt*, pp 20 – 24.





The slide is titled "Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors" and "Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements". It features a flowchart with five orange circles connected by lines. The circles contain the following text: "What is torture?", "Who is eligible?", "What do survivors say they need?", "What service structure does your organization use?", and "What is your integrated service process?". The last three circles are highlighted with a red border. Below the circles are three callout boxes with instructions: "Click to open Core Concepts in Service Provisions in a new tab.", "Click to open Transcending Violence in a new tab.", and "Click to read Healing the Hurt p. 26-30, in a new tab." The slide also includes the logo for "The CENTER for VICTIMS of TORTURE National Capacity Building Project" in the top left corner.

We've talked about eligibility for services at torture survivor programs, and we've delved into the experiences that bring survivors to our doors. Now we'll consider the torture survivor programs themselves and how they create an effective integrated service process. How are they structured? With what core services principles? To get started, we'll turn to some more readings. To continue, click on the button on your screen and read the three selections.







The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE  
National Capacity  
Building Project

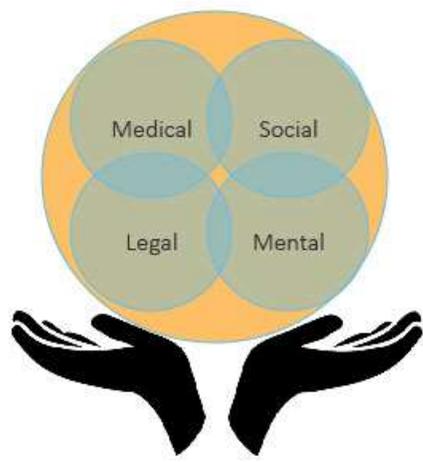
Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors

Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements

## How does a program meet the needs of torture survivors?

**Organizational Structures and Models**

- Programs should coordinate their work with each other in a holistic, multidisciplinary approach
- Recognize survivor's resources:
  - Personal
  - Interpersonal
  - Community
  - Cultural
  - Spiritual
  - Indigenous healing
  - Resilience



**Services Organized in 4 Main Areas**

So how does a program meet the needs of torture survivor? What has to be considered? First let's discuss organizational structures and models.

Typically, services at torture survivor programs are organized in four main areas – legal, medical, mental health and social service. While each of the four service areas has its particular focus and expertise, we'll repeatedly emphasize the need for all providers to be aware of the services available in the other areas, and to coordinate their work with each other in a holistic multidisciplinary approach. Further, effective service providers recognize the importance of personal, interpersonal, community, cultural and spiritual resources the survivor brings to the situation. Many survivors report, for example, that their religious faith or spiritual beliefs were among the greatest resources in surviving their traumas. Although centers typically don't have a formal spiritual services section, attention to this aspect of healing is essential in a holistic approach.





**The CENTER for VICTIMS of TORTURE**  
National Capacity Building Project

**Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors**  
**Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements**

**Models**

- University affiliated
- Hospital affiliated
- Embedded in human service organization
- Free-standing non-profit organization

**Staffing Patterns & Service Delivery**

- In house
- In affiliated hospitals or parent organizations
- Through referred, contracted, or pro bono services in community

**? Where is your organization?**

To provide services, torture survivor programs in the U.S. utilize a variety of models. Think about which type yours is. Some are affiliated with universities. Some are affiliated with hospitals. Some are one program embedded within a larger organization with a broader mission. And some are free-standing non-profit organizations. Each program has its particular history which determines its structure and location, and each model has implications for how the program functions.

Programs also vary in the selection of services offered and in the methods used to provide those services. Options include services offered in-house by staff of the organization, services provided through the affiliated institutions or parent organizations where those exist, and services provided by partner organizations and individuals in the community, which may be provided at no or low cost. Typically, programs use a combination of these approaches in a collaborative network of service providers that leverages resources most effectively.

Whatever the structure and service plan of your organization, there are basic principles that we consider fundamental. Some we have already introduced and let's review them now.





Knowing what torture is, who's eligible for services, understanding survivor needs, and knowing your organization's service structure, are four basic concepts to consider when providing services for torture survivors.





The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE  
National Capacity  
Building Project

## Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors

### Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements

#### CORE PROVISIONS

- Use survivor-centered focus that includes children and family
- Use holistic integrated service model
- Focus on strengths/resilience/healing
- Recognize and use the power of healing relationships
- Be attentive to cultural, spiritual and linguistic dimensions of experience
- Be attentive to best, promising and emerging practices
- Ensure self-care for providers

What is your  
integrated  
service process?





The slide features a black header with the logo of The Center for Victims of Torture National Capacity Building Project on the left. The title 'Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors' and subtitle 'Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements' are in the center. Below the header is a large grey rounded rectangle containing two columns of text: 'Words of survivor Orlando Tizon' and 'Words of psychiatrist Dr. Richard Mollica'. To the right of this rectangle is an orange circle containing the question 'What is your integrated service process?'.

**The CENTER for VICTIMS of TORTURE**  
National Capacity Building Project

**Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors**  
**Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements**

Words of survivor Orlando Tizon:  
“[Survivors] have the capacity to heal themselves and only they, in the end, can decide to take the necessary steps to heal themselves”.

Words of psychiatrist Dr. Richard Mollica:  
“At the core of the psychological dimension of self-healing is the will to survive and recover. The individual makes a decision to do whatever needs to be done”.

What is your integrated service process?

Then we need a defined program of care, built around the survivor’s needs, resources and preferences. Recall the words of survivor Orlando Tizon: “[Survivors] have the capacity to heal themselves and only they, in the end, can decide to take the necessary steps to heal themselves”. In the words of psychiatrist Richard Mollica: “At the core of the psychological dimension of self-healing is the will to survive and recover. The individual makes a decision to do whatever needs to be done.”





The CENTER for VICTIMS of TORTURE  
National Capacity Building Project

Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors  
Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements

Services should be available as options:

- Acupuncture
- Engagement in life through work and education
- English language classes
- Psychotherapist
- Involvement with family, community or spiritual practice
- Basic needs and establishing stability
- Understand the importance of engagement

What is your integrated service process?

One practical implication of this perspective is that services should be available as a kind of menu, from which survivors play a leading role in selecting what they need and want, with consultation and support from staff. As an example, some survivors enthusiastically benefit from acupuncture for treatment of pain and physical injury. Others want nothing to do with needles. Some readily engage with a psychotherapist. Some prefer to focus on basic needs and establishing stability. Others do both. For some, the greatest healing comes from engagement in life through work, education, involvement with family and community or spiritual practice. Your role as care providers is to understand the importance of that engagement and support torture survivors to make it happen. As just one example, English language classes can significantly strengthen self-esteem and mental health.





The slide content is as follows:

**The CENTER for VICTIMS of TORTURE**  
National Capacity Building Project

**Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors**  
**Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements**

- Survivors have already demonstrated strength and resourcefulness when we meet them.
- Survivors deserve our respect and assistance
- We create space for survivors to heal
- We provide expertise and resources
- We recognize, and help survivors to recognize their strengths
- Together we build an external environment of safety and stability
- Together we build an internal environment of trust and self-worth.
- During process we help survivors shift to where torture is one chapter of their life rather than the chapter that obliterates all others.

What is your integrated service process?

Always remember that torture survivors are just that – survivors. By the time we meet them they have already demonstrated strength and resourcefulness. As one writer has put it, “Refugees present perhaps the maximum example of the human capacity to survive despite the greatest losses and assaults on human identity and dignity. They deserve our respect as well as our assistance.” We help create space for them to heal. We provide expertise and resources to facilitate that process. We recognize, and help survivors to recognize, their own strengths. This means working together to build an external environment of safety and stability and an internal environment of trust and self-worth. In the process, survivors can shift to where torture is one chapter in a life, rather than the chapter that obliterates all others.

Consider these examples: With the support of a multidisciplinary treatment team that included a primary care physician, a psychiatrist, a mental health counselor, a case manager and an immigration attorney, the woman activist whom we described earlier, combating the forced recruitment of child soldiers, overcame a suicidal depression, won her case for asylum, got a job and located her children through the Red Cross. She sent money home to Africa for their schooling until they were able to reunite in the US. Another survivor, an advocate for women’s rights who was tortured in Afghanistan, became a leader in an agency supporting victims of domestic violence in her adopted American city. And dozens of survivors from all over the world





have joined together in TASSC, International, the Torture Abolition and Survivors Support Coalition where they support each other and organize to eliminate torture.





The CENTER for VICTIMS of TORTURE  
National Capacity Building Project

Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors  
Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements

- 1 Because torture is an interpersonal trauma, the healing process must also be interpersonal.
- 2 Consider the importance of self-care for providers.

What is your integrated service process?

Finally, consider these two notes: first, because torture is an interpersonal trauma, the healing process must also be interpersonal. Connection to other people creates room to reengage with life. The relationships at the torture survivor program can play a powerful role in that dynamic because they are consciously attuned to this healing possibility. We need to be aware that every interaction with a survivor can contribute to healing. An attitude of respect helps heal the wound of humiliation. Taking the survivor's emotional and physical comfort seriously helps heal the wound of degradation. Information about services and how they will be provided, reliability regarding appointment times, and consistent follow-through, help to heal the wound of mistrust. Careful attentive listening demonstrates that fellow human beings do care about the survivors' suffering and are able to help survivors connect with their inner resources and capacities for healing.

Second, to develop your awareness of the importance of self-care for providers, we encourage you to pay attention to your own emotional state as you engage with the course material. It's well known that exposure to the reality of torture and its effects can generate intense, painful emotions. On the other hand, exposure to the resilience of survivors can be inspiring. Conscious attention to self-care through balance in life and though interpersonal support, helps us as providers to maintain our own health and our ability to stay connected to survivors and their healing process.





The CENTER for VICTIMS of TORTURE  
National Capacity Building Project

Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors  
Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements

To understand how these principles of care apply in practice, let's go to a final reading, which is an interview with a survivor talking about her experience as a torture survivor.

Click to open final reading in a new tab.

We have heard from these survivors about their torture experience and its effects. As we will see, the impact of torture goes well beyond the torture experience itself. To see how these principles of care apply in practice, we have included a reading of an interview with a survivor talking about her experience as a torture survivor. Please go to the next slide to listen to it in its entirety. You can also click the document icon to open the interview in a new browser tab.





The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE  
National Capacity  
Building Project

Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors  
Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements

## Malia D.

### A Survivor Tells of Her Healing

Malia D. is a 39-year old woman from East Africa. She has a Masters Degree in public health and had worked in the area of reproductive health and family planning. In 2000, she was detained by government security officers and accused of membership in an outlawed political organization. She says a relative may have been a member of this organization, but that she herself was not. Nevertheless, she was detained for 27 days, interrogated and tortured extensively. Torture included electric shocks to the soles of her feet, beatings, sexual threats and assault, having icy water thrown on her and being left in wet clothes in a very cold room, and repeated threats of death. She was released after being forced to sign a false confession and a promise to refrain from political activity.

Upon release, she was hospitalized for 2 weeks, during which time she was afraid to tell what had really happened to her for fear that the doctors were setting a trap designed to catch her reporting government torture. The torturers told her she'd be killed if she talked.

[Audio of reading of interview with Malia D.]






The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE  
National Capacity  
Building Project
Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors  
Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements

**Final thoughts**

- It's essential to attend resources from culture, language, and spirituality
  - Including connecting with local ethnic, spiritual, and other community organizations to the degree that survivor is comfortable
- Working effectively with interpreters
- Learning information about the survivor's country, its history and culture, and the survivor's particular place in that country and culture
- Being respectful, curious, and willing to be taught by the survivor
- Attending to the evolving knowledge regarding best, promising, and emerging practices in our field

Resources available after the assessment

We've nearly completed this lesson. Now let's consider some final thoughts.

It's essential to attend to resources from culture, language and spirituality. For now, we'll note that this includes connecting with local, ethnic, spiritual and other community organizations to the degree that the survivor is comfortable with these; working effectively with interpreters; learning information about the survivor's country, its history and culture, and about the survivor's particular place in that country and culture. And, of course, our attitude of respect, curiosity, and willingness to be taught by the survivor, is essential.

Lastly, we encourage you on an ongoing basis to attend to the evolving knowledge regarding best, promising, and emerging practices in our field.

Thank you for your time. We hope you have found this Fundamentals course useful in your journey as a healing provider of torture victims. We also have provided you with additional information and resources, which you will be brought to after you complete the assessment and click the "Continue" button. Thank you!





The  
CENTER for  
VICTIMS of  
TORTURE  
National Capacity  
Building Project

Fundamentals of Providing Services for Torture Survivors  
Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements

**Congratulations on completing the Core Concepts and Eligibility Requirements lesson!**

Following is a short assessment

- 5 questions
- Score >80% to earn Certificate of Completion
- Take the quiz as many times as you need to pass
- Certificate will be emailed to you within 7 business days
- Take as much time as you need
- Good luck!

[Begin Assessment](#)

