



SAFE HOUSE

P R O J E C T

SAFE HOUSE CERTIFICATION GUIDELINES WITH INDICATORS

Reviewed April 2023

Safe House Certification Overview

Safe House Project's survivor leaders have compiled the best practices in evaluating aftercare programs for trafficking survivors from partners, survivor leaders, and industry experts from all over the country.

The industry-endorsed standards and guidelines aim to validate and improve your management, governance, and operations. Safe House Certification is a pathway to improved operations and enhanced effectiveness of your residential aftercare program. Over time these best practices will turn into normal practice for your organization.

Eligibility for Certification

Safe house organizations eligible for certification are non-profit organizations who operate full-time emergency, long-term, and/or transitional residential programs serving international, undocumented, and domestic survivors of trafficking in the United States. Organizations must be able to provide documentation of all required licenses in their state and their financials. The organization has programming specific to trafficking survivors.

Safe House Certification Guidelines with Indicators

1. Organizational Structure & Compliance

The organization complies with all statues and regulations as mandated by the state or federal government to effectively serve its residents. The organization actively develops quality relationships with partners and seeks community opportunities to benefit its residents.

Guideline	Common Documentation used as Evidence	Common Additional Information Reviewed
The organization has complete, up-to-date policies and procedures that guide its operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policies and Procedures• HR Policy Manual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Narratives• Staff interviews
The organization enforces its written policies and procedures to preserve its mission and deliver high quality residential programs to survivors of trafficking. The organization clearly documents employee and	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policies and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff interviews• Correspondence• Visual inspection during site visit• Employee Memoranda of Understanding, Volunteer forms, other administrative documentation records

volunteer expectations, punishable infractions, consequences.		
The organization communicates to the governing body, staff, or volunteers policies or requirements affecting their roles and responsibilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and Procedures • Staff Handbook • Job descriptions • Operations Manual • Organizational Chart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative • Training completion records • Staff interviews • Volunteer Handbook
The demographics of your staff reflect where you live and the survivors who you serve in your residential programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of Staff Demographics • Documentation of resident demographics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographics of the surrounding region
Programs administered by the organization comply with its policies and requirements as determined by regulators and funders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and Procedures • State license 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit or inspection reports • Narratives • Review of insurance policy
Residential programs meet all applicable state, federal and local codes and standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State license 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit or inspection reports
The organization gains efficiencies by coordinating with other nonprofits, law enforcement, healthcare professionals, etc. The organization creates and maintains relationships with organizations and agencies in the program's community like hospitals, non-government organizations, and government agencies to ensure collaboration and high-quality care for the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOUs with local coordinating partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative • Staff interviews • Leadership interviews

survivors including referrals.		
Volunteers are a valued part of your organization structure, but there are clear policies and procedures for vetting, training, and supporting volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer Handbook • Policies and Procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background check results • Volunteer applications • Volunteer training records
Safety measures are in place to keep residents, staff, and volunteers safe and accountable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and Procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narratives • Staff interviews • Executive Leadership interviews • Safety Log/Incident Reports
Staff and volunteers are appropriately trained.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and Volunteer training plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff interviews • Staff & Volunteer Training Logs
The program has survivor input throughout the development of their program. This can include survivors as board members, mentors, consultants, and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List of Survivors on staff and as advisors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narratives
The organization collects feedback, analyzes data, and improves based on findings to further its mission and goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit Reports • Staff Surveys • Resident Surveys • Community Surveys • Staff Feedback • Resident Feedback • Graduates Feedback
The staffing of a restorative care home should reflect the program's desire to provide holistic therapeutic care to the survivor in a safe, effective, and trauma informed environment. Staff is vetted, trained, and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOUs with collaborating agencies and organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narratives • Letters of Support

supported to facilitate the desired outcome		
Employees sign documents reflecting their understanding of their role and responsibility, safety protocols, and other policies and procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOUs with collaborating agencies and organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narratives • Letters of Support

2. Residential Program & Services

The organization provides access to residential housing and trauma-informed programming, which improves the quality of life for residents. The rights of residents are respected throughout the organization.

The organization integrates diversity and inclusion practices that match the demographics of the survivors they serve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity and Inclusion policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narratives • Demographic statistics of survivors served
The organization recognizes the need to support survivors from all backgrounds, and not exclude residents based on race, religion, socioeconomic class, etc. based on the parameters of those who the organization is equipped to serve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intake assessment • Resident Handbook • Policies and Procedures for residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narratives • Demographic statistics of survivors served
The organization proactively addresses threats to resident well-being, and has disciplinary guidelines to protect everyone in the organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intake assessment • Resident Handbook • Policies and Procedures for residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narratives • Staff interviews
Residential program services are well defined and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident Handbook • Policies and Procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narratives • Staff interviews

<p>transparent. The organization clearly states which services they are able to provide and to whom they are able to provide those services.</p>	<p>for residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Handbook 	
<p>Residents sign all necessary documentation to show their understanding of their care, program confidentiality, and any other relevant aspects of their treatment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intake assessment • Resident Handbook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative • Referral Resource List • Wait List Policy
<p>The organization has a formalized intake process in which the resident and the program can ensure placement is compatible prior to arrival.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intake assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative • Intake Coordinator interviews
<p>The average length of the program appropriately reflects the stage where residents are in the continuum of restorative care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and Procedures • Resident Handbook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Director interview
<p>The organization has a curriculum that is utilized to assist residents in future success and prevent recidivism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and Procedures • Resident Handbook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative
<p>The organization utilizes proper medical, therapeutic care, and curriculum based on its place in the continuum of restorative care. This includes medical treatment for all residents, including mental health.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOUs with program service providers • Resident Schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff interviews • Sample Resident Case Plan

<p>The organization shows a commitment to the physical safety of survivors, including safety from external threats as well as internal threats from residents, staff, and volunteers. Programs should have clear policies and procedures for every emergency situation, including natural disasters, intruders, compromised location, and resident runaways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resident Handbook ● Daily Schedule ● List of Curriculums provided to resident 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff interviews ● Volunteer interviews ● Program Director interview
<p>The organization facilitates healthy family involvement when possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MOUs with program service providers ● Resident Schedule ● Policies and Procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Narrative ● Sample Resident Case Plan
<p>Residential programs for minors provide schooling options for residents that are safe, structured, and carry the minimum risk of retraumatization.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● MOUs with program service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resident Schedule
<p>The organization has clear boundaries for telephone and internet rules according to the program's place in the continuum of care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resident Handbook ● Emergency policies ● Resident Safety Plan ● Policies and Procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Narrative ● Staff interviews ● Program Director interview ● Sample incident report
<p>The organization has clear policies on mediation between residents or residents and staff, conflict resolution, bullying, and boundaries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resident Handbook ● Policies and Procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Narrative ● Sample Resident Case Plan

<p>The organization offers residents leaving their program, by graduation or early exit, resources necessary to meet their basic needs and prevent re-exploitation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Resident Handbook ● Policies and Procedures ● Daily Schedule ● MOUs with education providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Narrative ● Staff interviews ● Program Director interview
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3. Governance & Executive Leadership

The Board of Directors is responsible for adopting and revising policies and the budget, and for providing organizational oversight with the advice of appropriate legal counsel. Board Members represent diverse professional and personal backgrounds enabling them to obtain resources to benefit the organization’s mission. The executive leadership implements the mission, goals and policies of the organization and is responsible for meeting accreditation standards.

<p>Board members are appointed in full compliance with its organizational documents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Articles of Incorporation ● Bylaws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● interviews Board Chair ● Board Member interviews
<p>The Board of Directors conducts its business in full conformance with state and federal legislation, its bylaws, and ethical standards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Board Handbook ● Bylaws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Signed conflict of interest and/or ethics policies
<p>The Board of Directors understands and supports the mission of the organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Board training materials ● Annual report ● Onboarding process for board members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Board Member interviews
<p>The Board of Directors identifies and develops resources to serve the organization’s mission and strategic goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Documents board members must sign ● Board Handbook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CEO/ED interviews
<p>The Board of Directors is involved in the development of plans to address organizational needs, long-term viability and strategic risk taking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Board Handbook ● Sample of board agendas ● Sample of board minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Relevant board meeting agenda
<p>The Board of Directors ensures that executive leadership is</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Board Handbook ● Sample financial reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CEO/ED Review

managing the organization's financials within approved budgets.	given to board	
The Board of Directors evaluates, understands and seeks to address survivor needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Handbook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivor Reference
The Board of Directors assures that policies and procedures are effective and followed by executive leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Handbook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting minutes
The Board of Directors supports the executive leadership to facilitate the success of the organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample Minutes • Board Handbook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO/ED interviews
The Board of Directors ensures the organization has access to knowledgeable and qualified legal counsel.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of Support from legal counsel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO/ED interviews
The Executive Director, CEO, or equivalent liaises with the Board of Directors and communicates frequently with them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Handbook • Sample board meeting schedule for the year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Member interviews
The executive leadership executes their duties professionally, ethically, and with integrity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Description of the CEO/ Executive Director • Roles of Board pertaining to CEO oversight from Board Handbook. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff interviews • Survivor Reference
The executive leadership encourages innovation, engagement and continuous improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample Minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff interviews
The organization encourages and provides opportunities for professional development of employees.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff interviews • Employee Handbook
The Executive Director, CEO, or equivalent is responsible for assuring that the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Description of the CEO/ Executive Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO/ED Review

meets certification standards.		
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4. Financial Management

The organization manages its resources and effectively deploys its assets to fulfill its mission of providing residential housing and services to survivors of trafficking.

The organization has sufficient funds to operate and has appropriate reserves to maintain operations for an additional 3-6 months.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget vs. Actual expenses for last year • Current Monthly financial statement • Budget vs. Actual expenses for this year to date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of Cash Flows • Sustainability Plan
The organization shows fiscal responsibility through approved policies and budgets to further the organization's mission, goals and objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Operating Budget • Last year's budget with actuals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability Plan
The organization operates within its budget, maximizes its resources, evaluates and maintains appropriate percentages of expenses against the total budget.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Vs. Actual Expenses for current year • Budget Vs. Actual expenses for last year • Investment reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of Cash Flows
The organization has an approved audited financials or a 990 that complies with statutory and regulatory requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 990 • If applicable, audited financials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative if good standing with the IRS has ever been revoked
The organization regularly evaluates its financial health and delivers complete and accurate reports to interested stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating Budget statements provided to the board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board minutes • Board member interviews
The organization's financial health and management practices are transparent to the governing body, the IRS, donors, and other interested stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 990 reports or equivalent for the last 5 years (or history of the organization if less than 5 years old) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative

The organization relies on various revenue streams to hedge against unforeseen events that may impact funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating Budget • Investment reports • Revenue Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Director interviews • Development Director interviews
The organization demonstrates strong fiduciary responsibility and sustainability planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Operating Budget • 5 year strategic plan • Audited Financials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board member interviews
The organization must have an operating budget that reflects how all revenue and expenses will be generated in a given year, which includes salaries, benefits, supplies, basic needs, rental or mortgage costs, utilities, repair costs, programmatic costs, etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual operating budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Director interviews • Development Director interviews • Narrative
Organizations should show year over year growth in revenue, program expenses and reserves. *	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgets for last 5 years (or history of organization) • 990 reports or equivalent for last 5 years (or history of organization). 	
Organization shows strategic vision, goal planning and philanthropic giving plans that reflect its commitment to growth or sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Year Plan

* 2020 revenue will not be considered in year over year growth.

5. Specialized Services (if applicable)

The organization clearly outlines policies and procedures for acquiring treatment, implementing proper accommodations, and otherwise implementing best practices for survivors with specialized needs.

The organization possesses the specialized services needed to accommodate the special needs they claim to be able to serve.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOUs with program service providers • Special licenses of staff • Resident Schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative • Program Director interview
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual Inspection during Site Visit
The organization has a clear and swift timeline in which they can procure these services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and Procedures for specialized services • MOUs with program service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master list of partner organizations with contact information • Program Director interview
The organization validates the special needs of the survivor through the appropriate channels.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOUs with program service providers • Policies and Procedures for specialized services • Intake documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Director interview • Narrative
The staff of the organization are appropriately trained on the specificities of providing care to a survivor with those needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and Volunteer training plan • Training Curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training completion records • Staff interviews
Programs who serve pregnant survivors have resources to provide proper prenatal medical care and post-birth planning, such as access to adoption resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOU's with program service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample case plan • Sample referral documents for pre/post natal resources • Sample referral documents for adoption services
Programs who serve pregnant survivors ensure residents can keep their newborn with them post-birth if they choose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and Procedures • Resident Handbook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative • Program Director interview
Programs serving survivors with hearing impairment who require an interpreter must provide access to the interpreter or another mutually agreed upon form of communication at all times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOUs with program service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative • Program Director interview • Visual Inspection during Site Visit
Programs serving visually impaired residents provide resources in large print or braille to ensure residents have access to the same program information and curriculum as other residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and Procedures • Resident Handbook • Copies of modified documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual Inspection during Site Visit
Programs serving residents with special needs that impair their reading ability, including reading comprehension, are provided alternatives to the resident Handbook, curriculum materials,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and Procedures • Resident Handbook • Copies of modified documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual Inspection during Site Visit

etc., in which the information is conveyed appropriately for their specific need.		
Programs that allow or provide service animals, ensure the reputability of the animal's training require the animal be properly vaccinated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and Procedures • Resident Handbook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sample client file
Programs that allow or provide service animals provide reasonable accommodation for care of the animal, including access to veterinary care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and Procedures • Resident Handbook • MOUs with program service providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veterinary care paperwork • Training logs • Program Director interview • Visual inspection during site visit
Programs that serve transgender survivors do so in homes that serve the individual's gender identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies and Procedures • Resident Handbook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative • Visual Inspection during Site Visit