

## Sovereignty & Interdependence Agreement

**Location:** Sisters Sanctuary El Paso, TX 79924 | **Effective Date:** September 1, 2026

### **I. Purpose of the Sisters' Sanctuary**

This home is a high-integrity-trust, interdependent living environment designed specifically for women veterans recovering from MST and PTSD. By signing this agreement, you are choosing to enter a space of mutual respect, compassion, and shared responsibility.

### **II. The Sovereign Rights of the Resident**

- **Privacy:** You have the right to a secure, private room and the right to choose when and how you engage with others.
- **Voice:** You have the right to participate in "Community Circle" meetings to help shape the household's rhythms and resolve conflicts directly.
- **Autonomy:** You are the lead architect of your transition to independent living. Our support network exists to provide tools, not to dictate your path.

### **III. The Commitment to Interdependence**

- **Shared Spaces:** We share a large kitchen and bathrooms (including one ADA-compliant). We agree to maintain these spaces with the same care we give our own rooms.
- **Nutritional Security:** Meals are provided through a USDA-compliant framework. We agree to participate in shared mealtimes when possible to foster a support network.
- **Safety & Sobriety:** To protect the recovery of all sisters in the home, this is a sanctuary free from Alcohol/Illegal Substances/Uninvited Guests.
- **Communication:** We practice "Empathetic Honesty." If a conflict arises, we address it with the intent of healing, not harming.

### **IV. Transition & Lifelong Connection**

Our goal is to methodically prepare you for your own independent home. Even after you move out, you retain **Lifetime Access** to our support network (peer groups, resource navigation, and community events). You are never "discharged"; you simply transition from "Resident" to "Alumna."

### **V. Signatures of Agreement**

**Resident:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sanctuary Director:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. The "Resident Leader" Rotation

This is a powerful clinical tool. It moves residents from a "victim" or "recipient" mindset into a **Leadership/Agency** mindset.

- **The "Handover" Routine:** At 5:00 PM, the daytime staff shall have a formal 10-minute "Sovereignty Handover" with the weekly Resident Leader. This signals the shift from staff-supported to resident-led.
- **Responsibility:** The Leader does not "boss" others; she ensures the **Sovereignty Agreement** is upheld (e.g., the kitchen is clean for breakfast, the doors are secured, and the "Quiet Room" is available).

## 2. The "Quiet Room" for Episodic Situations

This is a trauma-informed inclusion. For survivors of MST/PTSD, "episodes" (flashbacks, hyper-vigilance, or sensory overload) are often exacerbated by the feeling of being "watched" or trapped in a bedroom.

- **The Design:** This room has low-sensory lighting (dimnable), weighted blankets, and perhaps a white-noise machine, etc.
- **Self-Referral:** The rule is that any resident can use the Quiet Room at any time without needing "permission" from the Leader or Staff. It is a **Self-Regulation Station**.

## 3. The 5:00 PM to 9:00 AM Gap

To make "Self-Policing" successful and safe, we will have a **"Safety Infrastructure"** that does not feel like "surveillance":

- **The On-Call "Ghost" Support:** Even if staff is gone, there will be a dedicated 24/7 "Sister-Line" (a cell phone held by a trusted board member or off-site lead) for the Resident Leader to call if a situation exceeds the home's ability to self-police.
- **Conflict Resolution Protocol:** If two sisters have a disagreement at 8:00 PM, the Resident Leader uses a "De-escalation Script" we provide. If it cannot be solved, they agree to "Pause" the issue until 9:00 AM when staff returns.

## The Milestone Map: 12 Months to Independence

This visual guide helps the residents see that the **Self-Policing** at our home is actually "practice" for their own future home.

Phase	Months	Focus	Milestone
I. Sanctuary	1 – 3	<b>Stabilization:</b> Routine, nutrition, and nervous system regulation.	Completion of "Self-Care Plan."
II. Interdependence	4 – 6	<b>Leadership:</b> Taking on the Resident Leader role; peer support.	Leading a "Community Circle" meeting.
III. Strategy	7 – 9	<b>Planning:</b> Mapping out the El Paso housing market and job/benefit goals.	Securing a "Transition Savings" account.
IV. Sovereignty	10 – 12	<b>Launch:</b> Finalizing a lease; setting up their independent support network.	Signing a personal lease & "Alumna Status."

To maintain our high-integrity-trust, self-policing model, the **5:00 PM Handover** shall be a ritual of empowerment, not a "shift change." This checklist ensures the **Resident Leader** has the situational awareness and authority to manage the sanctuary until staff returns at 9:00 AM.

## Resident Leader Handover Checklist

**Location:** Sisters Sanctuary| **Shift:** 5:00 PM – 9:00 AM

### 1. Facility & Safety Securement

- **Perimeter Check:** All exterior doors are locked; window locks are engaged.
- **Kitchen Safety:** Stove/Oven are off; communal fridge is organized for the next meal.
- **ADA Accessibility:** Walkways and common areas are clear of obstructions for residents with mobility needs.
- **Emergency Kit:** Confirm location of the first-aid kit and flashlight (in case of El Paso power surges).

### 2. The "Sovereignty Status" (The Pulse of the Home)

- **Quiet Room Status:** Is the room clean, stocked with sensory tools, and available for episodic use?
- **Nutritional Readiness:** Review the USDA-compliant dinner menu; confirm all ingredients are present.
- **Resident Check-in:** Brief verbal confirmation that all three residents are accounted for (or their ETA if working/at appointments).

### 3. Support & De-escalation Tools

- **The "Sister-Line":** Confirm the off-site staff member's "On-Call" number is active.
- **The "Pause" Protocol:** Reminder that if a conflict arises that cannot be solved via the **Sovereignty Agreement**, it is "Paused" until 9:00 AM unless it is a physical safety emergency.
- **Resident Leader Binder:** Contains the de-escalation scripts and the "And Justice for All" meal count forms.

### Why the "Pause" Protocol is Critical

In an interdependent home for **MST/PTSD survivors**, nighttime can be a high-trigger period.

- **The Rule:** If a resident is "activated," the Leader's job is not to "fix" her, but to offer the **Quiet Room** or the **Sister-Line**.

- **The Boundary:** If an argument breaks out over a chore, the Leader says: *"We are pausing this. It is a Sanctuary rule that we address this with staff at 9:00 AM. Right now, we focus on peace."*

To empower the **Resident Leader**, we use "Passive Safety" instead of "Active Surveillance":

- **Doorbell/Exterior Cameras:** They protect the *perimeter* from outside threats (uninvited guests), which provides true safety without invading the internal sanctuary.
- **Door Sensors:** Instead of a camera in the hallway, use the "Chime" feature on the bedroom doors or the rear exit. This alerts the Resident Leader if a door opens at night without recording a visual of the person.
- **The Quiet Room:** This will be a 100% "No Camera Zone." It must be the one place in the world where they are certain no one is watching.

To maintain our high-integrity-trust model and differentiate ourselves from the large-scale shelters:

- **Remove Indoor Cameras:** Keep the doorbell and any cameras facing the yard/street.
- **Trust the System:** Our **Resident Leader** and our **Sovereignty Agreement** are stronger security tools than interior cameras. We trust them to self-police, so we must trust them with their privacy.

#### **Trust-Based Security:**

- **The "Transparent Perimeter":** Ensure our residents know the **Exterior Doorbell Camera** is there specifically to protect them from *outside* threats (uninvited guests or intruders). This makes the camera their "sentry," not their "monitor."
- **Audio Chime Settings:** We will set up our security system to "Chime Only" for the rear and front doors. This allows the **Resident Leader** to hear if someone enters or leaves the home at night without any video being recorded of the residents themselves.
- **The "Sovereignty of Space":** In your recruitment flyer and intake meeting, we will lead with: *"This is a home, not a facility. We do not film you in your sanctuary. We trust your leadership and your commitment to this sisterhood."*

The **Resident Leader** is now the primary "eyes and ears" of the home from 5:00 PM to 9:00 AM, she will have a clear way to report any maintenance or safety issues that are not emergencies.

This **Sovereignty Log** serves as the official bridge between the **Resident Leader's** overnight leadership and our staff's arrival at 9:00 AM. It provides a high-integrity-trust paper trail that proves our self-policing model is working safely and methodically.

**Sovereignty Log: Morning Transition Report**

**Location:** Sisters Sanctuary | **Date:** [Month/Day/Year]

**Outgoing Resident Leader:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I. Overnight Status (5:00 PM – 9:00 AM)**

- **Safety Check:** All exterior doors and windows remained secured overnight.
- **Resident Accountability:** All 3 sisters were accounted for during the evening hours.
- **Household Harmony:** The evening was  Peaceful /  Had a "Pause" event.
- **Facility Status:** No urgent maintenance or security issues to report.

**II. Nutritional Framework (USDA Compliance)**

- **Dinner Served at:** [Time] | **All 3 Residents present?** [Yes / No]
- **Breakfast Served at:** [Time] | **All 3 Residents present?** [Yes / No]
- **Note:** H1535 Meal Count Form has been updated for these services.

**III. The "Quiet Room" & Support Network**

- **Room Use:** The Quiet Room was [Used / Not Used] for episodic support.
- **Sister-Line:** Was the off-site support line called? [Yes / No]
- **Reason (if yes):** \_\_\_\_\_

**IV. Maintenance & Administrative Items**

*(Non-urgent items for staff to address today: lightbulbs, grocery needs, ADA repairs)*

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**V. The Handover Signature**

*I certify that this sanctuary was managed according to our Sovereignty Agreement overnight.*

**Outgoing Leader Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** 9:00 AM

**Incoming Staff Initial:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Time:** 9:00 AM

**Note: This Log Supports our "Lean Staff" Goal**

1. **Professional Development:** This teaches our residents how to file a "Shift Report," a skill directly transferable to most administrative or security jobs they may seek during their transition to independence.
2. **Audit Defense:** If an inspector ever asks how we ensure safety without cameras or 24/7 staff, this binder is our evidence. It shows a **methodical chain of command** and daily accountability.
3. **Conflict Resolution:** If a "Pause" occurred, this log gives us the "Heads Up" at 9:00 AM so we can address the situation with empathy before the residents start their day.

The **De-escalation Script** empowers the **Resident Leader** to handle 2:00 AM triggers without "policing" her sisters, keeping the environment clinical-grade but sister-led.

### **The Resident Leader's "Sister-Support" Script**

**Purpose:** To provide a calm, predictable response when a resident is "activated" (flashbacks, hyper-vigilance, or nightmares).

#### **Step 1: The Soft Approach (The Safety Check)**

*Leader knocks softly on the door or stands at a respectful distance in the hallway.*

**"Sister [Name], it's [Your Name]. I heard you are awake and I wanted to check in. You are safe. You are in our sanctuary at 79924 Are you grounded in the present moment right now?"**

#### **Step 2: Offering the "Quiet Room" (The Sensory Shift)**

*If the resident is distressed but not in medical danger:*

**"I can see your nervous system is working hard right now. Would you like to move to the Quiet Room? It is ready for you—weighted blankets, low lights, and no one will disturb you there. I can walk with you, or I can give you space to go on your own."**

#### **Step 3: Validating the "Sovereignty Agreement"**

*If the resident is frustrated or loud:*

**"I hear that you're struggling. Remember our agreement: this is a sanctuary for all of us. If we cannot resolve this feeling right now, let us 'Pause.' We can sit in silence in the common area, or you can use the Quiet Room until staff arrives at 9:00 AM."**

#### **Step 4: The "Sister-Line" Option (The Professional Bridge)**

*If the situation feels beyond the Leader's comfort level:*

**"I want to make sure you have the support you need. Should we call the Sister-Line together, or would you like to speak to the on-call support person privately?"**

### **This Script Protects our Program Quality**

- **Neutralizes Power Struggles:** By using "Sister" and "Sanctuary" rather than "Resident" and "Rules," we remove the "warden" dynamic.
- **Predictability:** For PTSD survivors, knowing *exactly* what a person will say during a crisis prevents the "Startle Response" from escalating.

### **Strategic Preparation for September Launch**

- **Role-Play:** During our **August 2026** orientation, spend one afternoon role-playing these three steps.
- **The Binder:** We will print this script on **laminated cardstock** and keep it in the **Resident Leader Binder**.
- **The "Pause" Rule:** Reminder to the Leader: *"Your job is not to be a therapist; your job is to hold the Sanctuary space until 9:00 AM."*

### **Final Strategic Note**

Our "Sister-Support" model is a direct rebuttal to the "Warehouse" approach where residents are often ignored or over-medicated during night-time episodes. We are proving that **empathy and a plan** are more effective than **surveillance and staff**.

The **Staff Morning Debrief** is the final piece of our high-integrity-trust framework. It ensures that when staff arrive at **9:00 AM**, we transition the home from "Resident-Led" back to "Staff-Supported" without breaking the trust established overnight. This 15-minute meeting is our primary tool for "Program Quality Control."

### **9:00 AM Staff Morning Debrief**

**Location:** Sisters Sanctuary | **Date:** [Month/Day/Year]

**Participants:** Director and/or Designated Representative, Outgoing Resident Leader

#### **I. The Handover Review (The "Sovereignty Log")**

- **The Resident Leader Reports:** Any "Pause" events or use of the Quiet Room.
- **The Tone Check:** On a scale of 1–5, how was the "Sanctuary Energy" last night?
- **Administrative Transfer:** Staff initials the **Sovereignty Log** and the **H1535 Meal Count** for the previous evening/breakfast.

#### **II. Clinical & Support Strategy (The "Pause" Resolution)**

*If a "Pause" event occurred or a resident was activated:*

- **The De-escalation Review:** Did the Resident Leader feel supported by the script?
- **The Plan for Today:** Does a specific sister need a 1-on-1 check-in this morning to process a 2:00 AM episode?
- **Boundary Reinforcement:** If a conflict occurred, do we need a "Community Circle" meeting at 10:00 AM to resolve it as a sisterhood?

#### **III. Home & Physical Sanctuary**

- **Maintenance:** Any new issues (leaks, lightbulbs, ADA equipment) found overnight?
- **Nutritional Inventory:** Are we prepared for the USDA-compliant Lunch and Dinner today? (Check the **Grocery List** and **Standardized Recipes**).

#### **IV. The "Independence Metric"**

- **The Leadership Review:** How did the Resident Leader handle her role? (Provide immediate, empowering feedback).

- **Today's Milestone:** What "Independent Living" task is on the schedule for today (e.g., a VA appointment, job search, or life-skills workshop)?

#### **Why This Debrief Protects our Integrity**

- **Transparency:** By including the **Resident Leader** in this debrief, we eliminate the "us vs. them" feeling common in larger agencies. We are treating her as a colleague in the program.
- **Audit-Ready:** If an inspector ever reviews our Sanctuary, these debrief notes prove we have a **methodical, daily oversight system** that fosters independence, which is the ultimate goal.

#### **Strategic Implementation for September 1, 2026**

- **The 15-Minute Rule:** We will keep this debrief short. It is not a long therapy session; it is a **Transition of Care Responsibilities**.
- **The "Sister-Line" Feedback:** If the Resident Leader had to call the off-site line at night, we will use this debrief to refine the process for the next time.