



interfaith partnership against domestic violence

because no one should have to choose between faith and safety

**Outreach and Training
for Local Faith-Based Organizations
in Your President's Family Justice Center Initiative (PFJCI) Community¹**

As a President's Family Justice Center Initiative (PFJCI) Chaplaincy leader, you want to make your Chaplaincy Services successful by helping as many victims and survivors as possible. At Safe Havens, we believe that the support of the faith-based leaders in your community is one critical key to your success. By referring clients to the PFJCI, faith-based leaders can increase access to PFJCI services. By responding to your referrals, faith-based leaders can expand your capacity to meet the needs of your clients.

In addition, faith-based organizations can strengthen community support for the PFJCI, provide a source of PFJCI volunteers and community connections, and help to bring about long-term change by encouraging healthy relationships and strong families.

This document is a tool that can help you develop outreach and training for the faith-based organizations in your PFJCI community.

INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the U.S. Department of Justice launched a new initiative aimed at centralizing services and support for victims of domestic violence and their children. Named the President's Family Justice Center Initiative (PFJCI), the goal was to increase access to services by instituting a one-stop-shopping approach. At a Family Justice Center (FJC), victims are able to access domestic violence and sexual assault service providers, law enforcement, income support, restraining orders, medical services, legal

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aid, and many other resources that they might need to build safe and secure lives. In 2004, fifteen Family Justice Centers were funded by the U.S. Department of Justice across the United States.

From the beginning, Chaplaincy Services, though not required, were included in the services available at many of the Family Justice Centers. In 2004, Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence was invited by the U.S. Department of Justice to provide Technical Assistance to the Chaplaincy Services at the fifteen PFJCI sites. Safe Havens is a national nonprofit dedicated to strengthening the capacity of diverse faith communities to engage in a coordinated effort to end domestic violence. Safe Havens has worked since 1991 to build bridges among diverse religious communities, law enforcement, and social service agencies, and to provide education, resources, advocacy, and technical support to faith-based organizations in order to improve access to services for all persons affected by domestic violence.

Chaplaincy Services are an important component of the comprehensive PFJCI response to domestic violence because recent studies have shown that faith is a key resource for victims, and is the first place that many victims turn for help.² PFJCI Chaplaincy Services are available to provide support, but only when requested by the Family Justice Center (FJC) client. The Chaplaincy Services available through the FJC are victim-centered and intended to serve the needs of clients of many different faiths as well as clients who do not affiliate with any particular faith. Chaplaincy Services can help clients by listening to the client articulate such issues as suffering, forgiveness, peace in the home, family honor, divorce, and other faith-based issues that may arise as clients consider their next steps. Chaplaincy Services volunteers are trained to be victim-centered, to welcome all clients, to be non-directive, to support the client's right to safety, and to avoid blaming the client for the violence. In addition, Chaplaincy Services

² Horton, Anne L and Judith A. Williamson, *Abuse and Religion: When Praying Isn't Enough*. Lexington, MA: Lexington, 1998, Preface.

volunteers are trained to be active and engaged listeners and encouraged to practice a ministry of presence that affirms the client's need for wholeness, safety, and respect.

Chaplaincy Services cannot provide religious activities, such as religious instruction or prayer, as part of their duties under the government-funded PFJCI program.³ However, Chaplaincy Services volunteers may provide religious counsel or services, at the request of the client, outside of the PFJCI program. For example, if a client requests that you pray with her, you may offer to meet with the client after she has finished her other meetings with PFJCI staff and related activities. Clients may need more specific, faith-based guidance from a clergyperson or faith leader who is a member of a particular faith or denomination. At such times, PFJCI Chaplaincy Services volunteers are encouraged to refer clients to faith leaders within faith-based organizations that surround the FJC. However, it is critical that these referrals be made to clergy and lay leaders who have been trained to respond effectively and safely to domestic violence and in harmony with PFJCI Chaplaincy protocols.

The purpose of this document is to give PFJCI Chaplaincy Services leaders information about outreach and training that can be offered to faith-based organizations in the community surrounding the FJC. In addition to responding to the needs of specific PFJCI clients, these faith-based organizations can be significant sources of referrals to the PFJCI, and may provide volunteer support, resources, and community connections that will contribute to the long-term viability of the PFJCI. Also, faith-based organizations and their leaders can use their powerful public voice and ethical suasion to support a community-wide effort to end domestic violence.

Due to their deep roots in the community, faith-based organizations are well positioned to be important FJC allies in both intervention and prevention of domestic violence. However, the faith-based organizations surrounding and potentially collaborating with the FJC also face many

³ Chaplains may provide religious counsel, instruction, and worship to those who request such services while residing in a domestic violence shelter or transitional housing facility, as they may not feel safe seeking such services outside the facility.

challenges and responsibilities as part of a coherent community-wide response to the crisis of domestic violence.

This document draws on Safe Havens' experience and provides key learnings and best practices that have proven useful in training local faith-based organizations to respond effectively and safely to domestic violence. These learnings and best practices are intended to encourage PFJCI Chaplaincy leaders to provide outreach and training to engage surrounding faith-based organizations in a community-wide response to domestic violence.

STANDING ON THE FRONT LINES: WHY NEIGHBORHOOD FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS ARE CRITICAL PARTNERS IN THE PFJCI'S WORK AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Faith-based organizations in the President's Family Justice Center Initiative (PFJCI) community have a unique and critical role to play in the fight against domestic violence. Here's why.

- Sociologists Anne L. Horton and Judith A. Williamson have commented, "Each year more abuse victims, perpetrators, and family members seek help from clergy and religious leaders than all other helping professionals combined."⁴ Faith-based organizations are gatekeepers to services, and can provide referral information to PFJCI services when victims disclose.
- Faith-based organizations are charged with forming the moral values of a community, and can encourage new understandings about healthy relationships and domestic violence.
- Faith can be a critical resource for victims.
- The religious community often knows families across generations, and may even have regular access to homes. This offers a unique opportunity to provide early preventive education to pre-marital couples, children, and youth about healthy relationships, to work to end abuse in later life, and to proactively connect family members to much-needed services when needed.
- In some rural communities, a faith-based organization may be the only resource within miles of a victim's house. In many refugee and immigrant communities, the faith-based organization of their country of origin may be the only safe place to turn. For victims

⁴ Horton, Anne L and Judith A. Williamson, *Abuse and Religion: When Praying Isn't Enough*. Lexington/D.C. Heath and Co., Lexington, MA 1998, p. xi.

who do not have access to money, the free counseling and advice available through a local congregation may be the only free services that the victim knows about.

- Faith-based organizations offer unique opportunities for early education and intervention because they are at the center of life-cycle events, such as marriages, birth and naming ceremonies, and funerals.

Because they are so deeply embedded in the community, so instrumental in forming public values, so well placed to provide early intervention, prevention, and referrals, and so able to encourage support of the PFJCI, faith-based organizations in your PFJCI community can be critical to the overall success of your PFJCI.

OUTREACH TO FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Many faith-based organizations are increasingly aware of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking as issues that affect the wider community. However, there is no consistent understanding or response. Today, one can find a range of approaches among congregations of any given denomination or faith that may include everything from prioritizing victim safety to prioritizing the sanctity of the relationship and the dominance of the abuser. Indeed, many within the religious community live with this internalized tension as the understanding of roles and responsibilities within intimate relationships changes, and as knowledge of domestic violence increases.

Given this tension between ensuring a victim's safety and strong teachings and precepts to preserve relationships, it is often difficult for the faith community to discern a consistent and appropriate response to domestic violence. As a result, victims may hear a variety of responses that range from purely spiritual solutions ("Go back home and pray harder") to victim blaming ("What did you do to cause him to act like this?") to minimization ("He says he's sorry, so it's time to forgive and forget"). This lack of consistency and understanding is problematic for victims, who need a clear message that the abuse is wrong and not their fault.

In addition, faith-based organizations do not always connect these issues to their own congregants or believe that domestic violence can affect the faithful. In Safe Havens' work with faith-based organizations, one refrain is heard again and again, from congregation after congregation: "domestic violence does not happen here." Overcoming both denial and distancing is important in outreach to faith-based organizations.

One way to overcome denial and distancing is to assert that domestic violence is happening throughout the community and affects all people equally. This assertion can be backed up with national and local statistics, such as the numbers of weekly clients who come to the FJC, or the number of hotline calls made or restraining orders issued weekly or annually in the local community.

Sometimes, clergy believe that domestic violence is simply not happening in their community because they never hear about it. In reality, if victims are not talking about their experiences, it is usually because faith leaders have not created an atmosphere in which it is safe to disclose. In addition to information about the number of active restraining orders or hotline calls in the congregation's town, neighborhood, or police district, clergy can be helped to create an environment in which it is safe for victims to disclose. This may be done by speaking about domestic violence openly, or by mentioning ways in which the congregation's leaders are actively working to learn more about the issue. After the silence surrounding domestic violence has been broken, faith-based leaders often begin to hear the stories of abuse that had been occurring in their congregations all along.

Sometimes, faith-based organizations deny or distance themselves from domestic violence because they don't want their community stigmatized by the issue. This may be particularly true in ethnic, religious minority, or immigrant and refugee communities. One way to overcome this problem is to bring together many different faith-based organizations to learn together about domestic violence. When representatives of many different faiths and traditions are in the room, it is easier to admit that domestic violence affects everyone. Talking about domestic violence no longer subjects any one faith or community to public scrutiny.

Outreach to faith-based organizations is time and labor intensive and must be tailored to suit each individual congregation. Outreach may take the form of phone calls, letters with information about the PFJCI and its Chaplaincy Services, follow up after community education events, site visits, or response to phone inquiries about the FJC's mission and work.

Several techniques may make outreach more effective. Each of these techniques overcomes a specific barrier. For example, one barrier to faith community involvement is the already overcrowded schedules of faith-based leaders. It is helpful to point out how much time will be saved if the congregation adopts a team approach to domestic violence. No longer will clergy and lay leaders who get involved need to answer phone calls in the middle of the night, shelter victims in their own homes, or support victims 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. By connecting victims to the FJC and other community services, faith-based leaders are freed to fulfill their unique role: to listen sympathetically, bear witness to the trauma and abuse, respond to the faith questions, and be a bridge to the FJC and other community resources. Learning that they can respond to domestic violence proactively rather than reactively is often all it takes to get faith-based leaders involved.

An additional barrier to the faith community's involvement is the insularity of some congregations. Sometimes it is difficult to come from "outside" the community and be accepted. To overcome this barrier, FJC Chaplaincy leaders may ask for help from faith-based organizations that are already working with the FJC. They may be able to name other congregations and clergy in the community whom they consider to be good candidates for FJC involvement. The person who provides this information is asked to make an initial phone call that introduces the FJC and describes their own congregation's involvement. After this initial contact, a follow-up phone call from FJC staff or Chaplaincy leaders may be more welcome.

SUPPORTING VICTIM SAFETY AND ENCOURAGING FAITH-BASED INVOLVEMENT IN THE WORK OF THE PFJCI

Training.

PFJCI leadership can improve access to services, better serve the needs of victims and survivors, and support a community-wide response to domestic violence by providing faith-based organizations with PFJCI resources, domestic violence education, and prevention and intervention tools. Benefits of this include the following.

- Faith-based leaders in the PFJCI community are educated about the dynamics of domestic violence, teen dating violence, and abuse in later life.
- Victims in the PFJCI community are more likely to disclose and therefore to be able to access help.
- Faith-based organization leaders have built active relationships with PFJCI service providers to whom they can make referrals and from whom they can get support during situations involving family violence.
- A community-wide response to domestic violence is encouraged that involves faith-based organizations in the wider discussion of public policy issues that directly affect the safety and options of adult and child victims and community support for the PFJCI.

Given the many dangers inherent in domestic violence, it is critical that faith leaders and congregations learn about domestic violence in a profound and thoughtful way, while building a knowledge and skills base that will allow them to partner with PFJCI leaders to address both intervention and prevention within the community. Where possible, it is best to train clergy and lay leaders together so that they can support one another as they seek to institute changes in the way that their congregation responds to domestic violence.

Training is a continuum. Early training may focus on domestic violence as a problem that affects us all, and a deeper understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence and its effects on victims and children. Further training may focus on safety for victims, confidentiality, empathy, non-judgmental listening, and community referrals. Finally, in-depth training helps faith-based leaders go beyond the basics to learn about the unique roles of faith leaders and PFJCI service providers, strategies for victim safety and batterer accountability, the impact on children and youth, issues specific to particular communities, how to make effective referrals to the PFJCI, and the faith questions and dilemmas that may affect all family members.

Where possible, involve faith-based leaders, law enforcement, and domestic violence service providers in the training team. This models the cooperative effort that will be needed to respond to the problem effectively. Throughout outreach and education, bridges are built among faith-based organizations, law enforcement, and PFJCI service providers. Faith-based leaders turn to and refer victims to the PFJCI experts for support, safety planning, and professional expertise. Where appropriate, PFJCI service providers may also refer clients to local faith-based leaders.

Develop Protocols. Chaplaincy Services developed under the PFJCI uphold five protocols: 1) be victim centered, 2) welcome all clients who ask for help, 3) be non-directive, 4) support the survivor's right to safety, and 5) do not blame the victim. It is important to victims that the community response is coherent and consistent. Community faith-based organizations to whom the PFJCI Chaplaincy Services refer may consider adopting similar protocols (see below) or developing their own.

Protocol 1: Be victim centered. Faith-based leaders should put aside their own needs (to always have the answers, or to jump in with the “quick fix”) in order to listen to and be fully present with survivors who disclose. Victims desperately need to be heard. By

validating and bearing witness to the victim's story, faith-based leaders can provide a much-needed "reality check" for victims.

Protocol 2: Welcome victims. Victims need a safe place where they can relate their experiences. Be open to hearing from victims. Give victims the freedom to speak about the ugliness of domestic violence, and to use ugly language that they may not usually use to describe what is happening to them. Welcome a victim's disclosure, assure the victim of confidentiality (except in cases involving of child abuse, elder abuse, or abuse of the disabled), and thank the victim for her confidence and trust in you. Affirm the victim's story, and state that no one deserves abuse and that the victim is not at fault.

Protocol 3: Be non-directive. Abusers constantly tell victims what to do. Sometimes, in the absence of the abuser, victims look to other authority figures to make decisions or tell them what to do. Resist this temptation. Victims are the best judges of what is safe for them. For this reason, faith-based leaders who seek to support victims and survivors should offer options and resources, but must never tell a victim what he or she must do. Rather, those who seek to help should empower the victim to determine for herself the best and safest next step. PFJCI service providers and hotline advocates can help victims with safety planning and lethality assessment and will also support the victim's choices.

Protocol 4: Support the survivor's right to safety. Domestic violence can be deadly. Because it escalates with time, any domestic violence situation could become lethal. For this reason, within the PFJCI community, preserving lives and prioritizing safety must always be the most important considerations. In order to ensure safety, families must sometimes be separated. A victim may ask for a faith-based leader's permission or blessing to seek safety outside the relationship when it is clear that she will not be safe or

whole within it. When this is the case, the faith-based leader may feel conflict with other heartfelt values. However, it is important to remember that the lives of victims and their children are at risk. Their right to safety is paramount and must be preserved.

Because safety is so important, couple's counseling or family counseling should never be undertaken in situations in which domestic violence is known or suspected to have occurred. If the victim chooses not to tell the truth during the couple's counseling session, everyone's time will be wasted. If the victim does tell the truth about the violence, there is serious danger of retaliatory violence after the session. Retaliatory violence can occur even when, during the counseling session, the batterer has been remorseful, contrite, has confessed, has had a religious conversion or change of heart, and is determined never to resort to violence again. Instead of undertaking couples' or family counseling, it is best to refer the batterer to a certified batterers' intervention program and the victim to the PFJCI.

Confidentiality and safety go hand in hand. Faith-based leaders must never confront batterers or disclose the location of victims. Information received in confidence by a faith leader must not be communicated to other members of the congregation. For the sake of the victim's life and wellbeing, all information must be held inviolate. The only exception is when a child, elder, or handicapped person is being abused. This, with the help of PFJCI service providers, should be reported to appropriate authorities.

Protocol 5: Do not blame the victim. Perpetrators of domestic violence constantly blame their victims for the abuse. At the same time, victims of domestic violence often mistakenly take responsibility for the abuse. Faith-based leaders should not blame the victim, no matter how subtly, for the abuse.

Respond to batterers. The PFJCI's do not include services for batterers. However, with the support of PFJCI leadership, faith-based leaders can think carefully about how to respond safely and effectively to batterers in the congregation. No faith-based leader wants to minimize or overlook the needs of a congregant, even if he or she has perpetrated domestic violence. Long-term commitment, hard work, and self-awareness are necessary to change abusive attitudes and behaviors. Faith-based leaders can encourage that commitment, hard work, and self awareness. However, safety for victims and children must always remain the highest priority.

The batterer's need for long-term support and for accountability within the community may not be achievable due to the safety and confidentiality requirements of the victim. Where victim safety has been assured, faith-based organizations can play an important role in giving batterers the support and spiritual strength needed to address and change abusive behaviors. Clergy and lay leaders can strongly encourage batterers to attend certified batterers' intervention programs developed specifically to address abusive behaviors. Faith-based leaders can also follow up to make sure that batterers continue to attend batterers' intervention services sessions. Sociologists Nancy Nason-Clark and Nancy Murphy have found that "more perpetrators complete treatment programs when referred by their churches."⁵

When responding to batterers, it is easy to be manipulated by glib apologies and promises into thinking that a "quick fix" is possible. In addition, both batterers and victims often minimize the violence. Clergy may fall into this trap, and fail to fully appreciate the damaging effects of ongoing abuse on victims and children. Batterers behave very differently in private than in public. Clergy who are not aware of this may appear in court as character witnesses, noting that the batterer is "always charming during services." It is crucial that faith community leaders learn

⁵ Nason-Clark, Nancy and Nancy Murphy, "Celebrating the Graduates: An Exploration into the Nature and Extent of Change in the Lives of Men Who Have Graduated from a Batterers Program," Paper presented to Northwest Family Life Board of Directors, Seattle, WA, 2003.

about the serious, long-term commitment to a batterers' intervention program that is necessary to change abusive behaviors. Faith leaders should condemn family violence and avoid raising a victim's hopes that the batterer will change.

Take a stand. Training for community faith-based leaders that allows them to know enough to collaborate with the PFJCI and to take a public stand against domestic violence is critical.

Silence is widely interpreted as tacit approval of family violence. When faith-based organizations take a stand against domestic violence, victims no longer have to choose between faith and safety.

In the past, faith-based leaders who voiced concern for victims or publicly condemned domestic violence may not have known where to turn for help. They may have tried to respond to the crisis alone, and quickly became overwhelmed and discouraged. With PFJCI training and support, clergy and lay leaders learn how to find the help and support they need from the wider community and take a team approach that empowers and strengthens not only the victim but the community as well.

PARTNERING WITH FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Once a faith-based organization in the PFJCI neighborhood has broken through denial and distancing, established a relationship with PFJCI Chaplaincy Services, and received the training, tools, and resources needed to respond safely, what are some of the things that the faith-based organization can do to partner with the PFJCI? Here are some ideas.

Break the silence. One PFJCI goal is to provide services to everyone in the community who is in need. Faith-based organizations can help by opening the door for victims to get help or to disclose. Often, this requires that the silence surrounding domestic violence is broken within the congregation. This could happen in many ways, including mentioning domestic violence in prayers and newsletter articles, preaching about it from the pulpit, hanging bathroom flyers, providing PFJCI brochures and other literature and resources, and printing hotline numbers and PFJCI referral numbers in every newsletter, bulletin, and weekly service leaflet.

In addition, PFJCI Chaplaincy Services leaders and service providers could visit the congregation to describe services and volunteer opportunities available through the PFJCI. Every time domestic violence is named as something that must be stopped in every community, victims feel more able to come forward for help. Anything that makes it easier for victims to speak out, or to receive information without having to disclose, helps victims get the support they need to seek safety for themselves and their children.

Develop and secure relationships with PFJCI service providers. It is essential that members of faith-based organizations in the PFJCI community develop and secure relationships with PFJCI service providers before there is a crisis that requires response.

Face-to-face meetings with PFJCI service providers lay the groundwork for establishing effective referrals. For a victim, there is a significant difference between being told to “dial 911” and getting a personal referral, such as, “Here is the phone number of Detective Anderson at the PFJCI. He might be able to help you with some other options, like documenting what’s going on at home, pressing criminal charges, or getting a restraining order.” The more detailed and personal the referral, the more likely it is that the victim will make the call.

Prohibit couple’s counseling in cases involving, or suspected to involve, domestic violence. In order to support a victim’s right to safety, couple’s counseling, marriage counseling, marriage enrichment, and mediation should be avoided in cases that involve, or are suspected of involving, domestic violence. If the victim, fearing retaliation, chooses not to tell the truth during the couple’s counseling session, everyone’s time will be wasted. If the victim does tell the truth about the violence, there is serious danger of retaliatory violence after the session. Retaliatory violence can occur even when, during the counseling session, the batterer has been remorseful, contrite, has confessed, has had a religious conversion or change of heart, and is determined never to resort to violence again. Prohibiting couple’s counseling in cases where abuse is known or suspected should be a standard protocol among the faith-based organizations with whom the PFJCI collaborates.

Respond to faith-based crises. Domestic violence is mental, emotional, financial, and psychological, and it is also profoundly spiritual. Faith-based leaders should be encouraged to consider: 1) the resources that their faith offers to victims, and 2) their

faith's responses to questions about divorce, forgiveness, covenant, peace in the home, family honor, male headship, and other issues that are important to victims.

Engage in a coherent community-wide response. For PFJCI clients, it is critical that the response of the wider community be consistent and coherent. For PFJCI clients who may be members of community faith-based organizations, or who may be referred to community faith-based organizations, it is very important that the response of faith-based organizations to domestic violence is consistent with that of the overall PFJCI and the PFJCI Chaplaincy Services. At a minimum, faith-based organizations to whom PFJCI Chaplaincy Services volunteers might refer must be victim-centered, non-directive, support the client's right to safety, and do not blame the victim for the violence. In addition, community faith-based leaders that collaborate with the PFJCI should be active and engaged listeners who affirm the victim's need for wholeness, safety, and respect.

Build congregational standards. It may help faith-based organizations to work with PFJCI service providers and Chaplaincy Services leaders to establish standards that govern how disclosures in the congregation will be handled and how the safety of victims and families will be prioritized. Critical considerations include:

- Who are the key, knowledgeable people who will be the first responders?
- How will they be trained?
- How will they protect the victim's safety and confidentiality?
- Who are legally mandated reporters within the congregation, and how will they be involved?
- How will referrals to the PFJCI and community service providers be made?

- Where will PFJCI and service provider palm cards, brochures, and other referral information be kept?
- How will resources be made available to congregants who do not disclose?
- Who will follow up to continue to provide additional information as needed?
- What resources are available for those mourning the loss of a relationship?

LESSONS LEARNED

Safe Havens staff members have learned many things while working on grassroots, faith-based initiatives to end domestic violence. Some of these lessons are included here.

Scheduling is 90 percent of the battle. The success of efforts to provide domestic violence education and advocacy to faith-based organizations often hinges on something as mundane as scheduling. Faith-based organizations have internal calendars that must be respected. No one can expect broad interfaith participation in a workshop or program that is scheduled on the eve of Ramadan, just before or during the Jewish High Holy Days, or during the week before Christmas or Easter. Likewise, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays may be problematic for many.

Additional scheduling considerations arise when both clergy and laity are involved in an event. Lay leaders' work schedules must be accommodated because not everyone can take days off easily. Given all these considerations, if the aim is to train both clergy and laity in an interfaith setting, it is best to schedule the training during the evening on a day in the middle of a week that does not conflict with religious holidays.

Language is key. One important aspect of community-based work to end domestic violence is building common language. Among themselves, PFJCI service providers may talk about ROs (restraining orders) or PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), or may use many other specialized terms. At the same time, faith-based organizations have their own short-hand ways to refer to organizational structures, traditions, or scriptures that may not be comprehensible to PFJCI service providers.

Long-term training can help to clarify many terms. However, it is important to remember that using buzzwords familiar to only a particular group not only makes basic communications unclear, but also creates a void between a group that is "in" and a group that feels alienated and

left out. By clarifying terms, explaining acronyms, avoiding buzzwords, and always being willing to ask and answer questions, PFJCI service providers and faith-based organizations can build bridges that connect victims to safety.

Permission granted. Language can also be a barrier when victims or survivors approach their faith-based leaders and communities for help.⁶ The language of domestic violence is brutal and ugly. Verbal abuse often involves name-calling of the most profane and hurtful kind. Victims are told repeatedly that they are stupid, fat, lazy, and so on. They are called every possible profane slang term for their gender, race, age, sexual orientation, physical ability, class, or faith. They are threatened with harm in graphic and terrifying terms. Physical abuse often involves heinous crimes and horrifying injuries.

It is extremely difficult for victims and survivors to speak this profane and brutal reality in sacred space and time. Many victims and survivors cannot imagine speaking such terms to the leader of their faith community. The brutal reality of the situation may be minimized simply by the victim's need to "clean up" the language surrounding domestic violence before presenting it to lay leaders or clergy.

Faith-based leaders must give permission for the harsh realities of domestic violence to be spoken. This may happen through a sermon or prayer, during a service, through stories told or heard during meetings or educational sessions, or simply by a clergy or lay leader being willing to meet with a victim or survivor in a coffee shop rather than in the synagogue, temple, church, or mosque.

Be patient. Engaging faith-based organizations to address domestic violence requires a significant level of commitment. PFJCI leaders should not expect that everything will fall in

⁶ Many thanks to Diane Coffey of the Massachusetts Office of Victim Assistance for this important insight.

place overnight. Rather, think in terms of a continuum. A congregation that hosts a PFJCI speaker during the service today may be hosting a domestic violence vigil next year and participating in an in-depth training program the year after that.

Celebrate accomplishments, big and small. All faith-based organizations come to domestic violence from different starting points. While one is putting together a panel of experts to address the adult education class, another has done just as much work just to have domestic violence mentioned in a newsletter or prayer. Both accomplishments should be celebrated. This is not a competition, but a continuum.

Be inclusive no matter what. Wherever possible, include everyone in by providing kosher and vegetarian food and setting aside space for religious observance during training conferences that welcomes all members of the community.

Clergy make a difference. Although clergy are overcommitted to a plethora of important issues and demands, the strong backing of clergy makes a tremendous difference in a faith-based organization's ability to respond. Where possible, train clergy and lay leaders together so that they can support each other as they organize programming and build relationships with PFJCI service providers.

Strong team members make a strong team. It is important that faith-based leaders themselves come from a place of strength as they approach the PFJCI. Survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and/or child abuse have valuable skills, empathy, and a breadth of experience to bring to the team. However, survivors who are on the team should themselves be healed enough to help others. This generally means that the survivor has been out of an abusive relationship for at least a year. The stronger and more collaborative the PFJCI/faith-based organization relationship, the better the congregational response to victims of domestic violence will be.

Take Good Care. Safe Havens encourages faith-based leaders to take a team approach and work with PFJCI service providers. And, perhaps most importantly, to get enough sleep, eat healthy meals, exercise, and stay spiritually connected.

Sometimes, trainees hear stories during trainings that trigger memories of stories and experiences that may hit very close to home. On these occasions, refer trainees to a PFJCI or local clinician who specializes in trauma and recovery. By naming this resource at the beginning of the training, a distinction is drawn between training time and therapy time. The need for expert intervention and support is normalized, and ways to “take good care” are modeled.

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Tips for Faith-Based Organizations: Remembering the Basics

- Domestic violence and sexual assault affect one in three women directly.
- Over four million women are battered every year in the United States. Domestic violence is the largest cause of injury to women, surpassing muggings, rapes, and car accidents combined.
- Domestic violence is not about being “out of control.” It is a pattern of behaviors and actions used to exert control.
- Abusers use whatever means necessary – physical, emotional, sexual, psychological, economic, legal, and religious – to establish and maintain control.
 - Domestic violence occurs in all kinds of relationships and cuts across lines of religion, class, culture, race, occupation, sexual orientation, age, language, country of origin, and physical ability. Batterers can be male or female, and victims can also be male or female. However, according to the U.S. Department of Justice, most domestic violence victims are women.
- There are many reasons why it is difficult for a battered woman to leave a violent relationship. Fear of retaliation and economic insecurity are key obstacles. Other barriers include isolation, feelings of shame, and familial, religious, or cultural pressures to keep the family intact.
- Batterers often see themselves as victims, blaming their partner, alcohol, drugs, anger, stress at work, or a bad childhood for their abusive behavior. In reality, there is no excuse for the violence.
 - The batterer is responsible for the violence.

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Tips for Faith-Based Organizations: The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children and Youth

- Despite mothers' best efforts to shield their children from violence, children witness 68% to 87% of domestic violence incidents. Between 1.5 million and 3 million children witness domestic violence in the U.S. annually.
- Witnessing domestic violence between their parents or caretakers can traumatize children as severely as direct physical abuse.
- Batterers are at higher risk to abuse their children. Studies have found that in 40% to 60% of families where there is domestic violence, there is also child abuse.
- Children of abused mothers are more likely to attempt suicide and to abuse drugs and alcohol.
- Two of the most important factors affecting a child's ability to survive the trauma of witnessing domestic violence are 1) the involvement of a safe adult in the child's life, and 2) the presence of a safe place that serves as a refuge from the violence.

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Tips for Faith-Based Organizations: The Importance of Confidentiality

- It is an essential matter of life and death to keep conversations with and information about the victim absolutely confidential.
- Never talk to a batterer about a victim unless you have the express permission of the victim because the batterer may later retaliate with abusive behavior against the victim.
- Confidentiality should never be used as an excuse to avoid addressing or reporting child or elder abuse or the abuse of a physically disabled person. For help, contact the PFJCI, your local child protective service agency, council on aging, or disability advocate, or call your local domestic violence hotline for options and support. Where possible, involve the non-abusive caretaker in going to authorities to report abuse.
- When victims give you permission to talk with PFJCI or other service providers, you can support their efforts to achieve safety by working with the PFJCI or other service providers.

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Tips for Faith-Based Organizations: The Dangers of Couple’s Counseling and Mediation in Domestic Violence Situations

- When a pattern of control and retribution has been established in a relationship, it is very dangerous to counsel victims and batterers together. Abusers will use anything their victims say to punish and hurt them after the session. Do not put the victim’s safety and life at risk by using this type of counseling when you know or suspect abuse is taking place!
- Couple’s counseling, mediation, conflict management, and marriage enrichment are all built upon a foundational presumption that two people share in an equitable relationship. When abuse is present, this is clearly not the case. Instead, one person is terrorizing the other to maintain power and control. For this reason, couple’s counseling, mediation, conflict management, and marriage enrichment are *inappropriate* for relationships in which there is abuse.
- When batterers ask you to conduct couple’s counseling or mediation, tell them it can only be considered once a demonstrated change in their behavior has occurred, in part by *successfully completing* a state-certified batterers’ intervention program. Do not say that consideration of couple’s counseling or mediation depends on agreement from their partner or this will become another weapon to use against the victim.



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Tips for Faith-Based Organizations: Working with Victims of Domestic Violence

- Domestic violence is a complex problem. You will be able to help the victim more effectively by acknowledging the complexities and helping the victim find resources and making appropriate referrals to the PFJCI and other community services.
- Remember that your role is to provide support, to listen to and validate the story, and to provide various options for getting help. Because you do not have the expertise to help a victim with all the challenges she or he faces, refer victims to the PFJCI and local hotlines.
 - Stick to these four protocols:
 - Be victim-centered.
 - Be non-directive.
 - Prioritize safety and avoid couple's counseling.
 - Do not blame the victim.
- In addition to these protocols, other important aspects of providing effective support to victims and survivors include:
 - * Encourage her to tell her story.
 - * Allow her to express her feelings.
 - * Express your concern for her safety and the safety of her children.
 - * Let her know that help is available.
 - * Reinforce the idea that nobody deserves to be beaten.
 - * Recognize that she may be embarrassed and humiliated about the abuse.
 - * Realize that she may be ambivalent.
 - * Respect the cultural and religious values that may affect her behavior.
 - * Be aware that she may also believe some of the myths about domestic violence.
 - * Remember the effects of isolation and controlling behavior.
 - * Understand that crisis and trauma may affect clear decision making.
 - * Remind her that she is not alone.
 - * Refer her to the PFJCI and community service providers.
- Create a support network for yourself. Develop relationships with PFJCI staff, law enforcement officers, and direct service providers. In addition, develop relationships with staff at child witness to violence programs and batterers' intervention programs. While respecting confidentiality, work with supportive clergy and lay leaders to build support networks among your peers.

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Tips for Faith-Based Organizations: Working with Batterers

- Abuse is a complex problem. Do not try to deal with it alone. Create a healthy model of support. Do not allow the complex dynamics of domestic violence get played out in your relationship with the batterer.
- You do not have the expertise to deal with the complicated behavior of the batterer without assistance from professionals in this field. Do not allow the abuser to isolate you as the victim has been isolated. Refer batterers to state-certified batterers' intervention programs. If the batterer asks you to provide counseling instead, tell him that this is best done by a batterers' intervention program in a group setting by counselors specifically trained for such work. You can meet individually with the batterer to discuss the faith crises involved and to support continued participation in the batterers' intervention program.
- The abuser may minimize the abuse and control that he exerts in the relationship. Never take the abuser's word for whether physical violence exists or has stopped.
- The victim may also minimize the abuse because she feels unsafe, fears that she won't be believed, or is concerned she will be blamed if the whole story is told. (e.g., "If it's that bad, why don't you just leave?"). Respect how much, when, and if the victim is ready to talk about the situation.
- Offer abusers hope that they can change if they truly want to. Participation in state-certified batterers' intervention programs that address power and control issues within relationships can help reduce or stop abusive behavior in people who are motivated.
- Batterers generally only attend state-certified batterers' intervention programs when they are mandated to do so by the courts. Sometimes they "voluntarily" attend programs upon their partner's insistence, but once the partner reduces the pressure to continue (due to some initial changes), the batterer usually discontinues participation.
- Faith-based organizations can play an important role by encouraging "clergy-mandated" or "faith community-mandated" participation in intervention programs.
- Do **not** refer batterers to individual therapy, anger management, conflict management, or compassion-based treatment programs to address their abusive behavior.

- Alcohol and/or drug use can contribute to the severity of abuse and should be carefully considered when assessing lethality. However, substance abuse does not cause domestic violence. A batterer who is also a substance abuser requires **both** alcohol and/or drug treatment **and** a batterers' intervention program.
- Many batterers are contrite after violent episodes and promise to change. Beware of remorse and confessions that are not related to concrete changes in behavior. Without the intervention of a certified batterers' intervention program, real change is unlikely to occur and the abuse will continue to escalate.
- It is the abuser's violence, and not the victim's leaving, that ends the relationship and breaks the marriage covenant. If a victim chooses to leave, do not advise her to stay in or return to the relationship that is endangering her life and the lives of her children.
- Do not advise victims to stay in or return to relationships based solely on a report of the batterer's religious conversion or deepening of faith. The victim's safety and life are at stake.
- State-certified batterers' intervention programs are those that meet standards and guidelines for appropriate service provision established by their state. These guidelines determine the number of weeks and the topics covered.
- Batterers' intervention and anger management are NOT the same.
- Remember that perpetrators of domestic violence establish a pattern of power and control over the victim. It takes time and effort to change this behavioral pattern. That is why some states recommend that a program be approximately 40 weeks in length. A batterer's quick apology, offer to attend counseling with a clergyperson, or promise to re-engage in their religion is often an attempt to manipulate you or the victim. Let the batterer know that they can attend services of worship (if this is safe and they are not violating a restraining order) or come to individual counseling sessions with their clergy but they must also complete the batterers' intervention program.
- Research suggests that batterers who have received support from their clergy are more likely to attend and complete a batterers' intervention program.

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Tips for Faith-Based Organizations: Reaching Out to PFJCI Service Providers

Learn about the PFJCI domestic violence service providers who are both governmental and non-governmental. Examples of governmental service providers include police officers, prosecutors and domestic violence advocates in District Attorney's offices, and court personnel. Examples of non-governmental service providers include community-based programs such as shelters, batterers' intervention programs, and civil legal advocates.

Ask to be invited to community meetings such as domestic violence roundtables. These are important forums for sharing information and resources and a good way to meet key stakeholders in your area.

Acknowledge the myths and barriers that may have prevented domestic violence service providers and faith-based organizations from working together in the past. For example, some PFJCI service providers may fear that faith-based organizations will keep couples together even if one person's life is in jeopardy. Let PFJCI service providers know that your religious community understands that the victim's need for safety may require separation. Let PFJCI service providers know that your faith-based organization wants to keep victims safe.

PFJCI service providers know that the best response to domestic violence is a coordinated community response. This means that everyone works toward the goal of ensuring the safety of victims and their children. They will be happy to include clergy and lay leaders who are trained to respond in accordance with this critical standard. Let them know this is your goal and that you understand the important role you play as someone to whom a victim may turn first and who can offer victims referrals to the PFJCI and other local service providers.

If asked, PFJCI service providers such as police, DA's offices, domestic violence shelters, batterers' intervention programs, and others will send their staff members to provide training to members of your congregation. They know that congregants are often aware of incidences of domestic violence well before they are notified. They will welcome your support.

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