

Strategies for Building Relationships with Faith Communities Based on lessons learned from DVAFCL teams in California

Make personal contact with religious leaders

- Personal conversations work better than sending out letters.
- Try to find at least one religious leader or lay person from within the congregation who can be your ally. If you are a member of a faith community, talk with your own leaders about the issue.
- Recognize that domestic violence is one of many social and faith issues the faith leader may be dealing with.
- Be as clear and succinct as possible about what you would like them to do – for example, call three other pastors to come to a breakfast or meeting to watch a video and talk about domestic violence in the community.
- Offer a concrete proposal to present a workshop, deliver a message, or help create a program at the church/temple/mosque or spiritual gathering place.
- Appeal to their self-interest – that you and others can help them build their skill base in serving the needs of their community.

Meet religious leaders where they are

- Recognize that many religious leaders have not had training on domestic violence – at the same time, they do not want to feel ignorant, shamed or inadequate for not knowing much about this problem.
- Acknowledge the positive things that faith leaders are doing already and the strengths they bring to the situation (i.e. that they have the trust of their members and can play an important role in raising awareness and promoting safety for families).
- Be respectful of faith leaders' religious beliefs – focus on underlying shared values of safety, respect, compassion and trust. But also be aware of the need for accountability (from the community as well as the batterer).

Present yourself as a resource

- Offer information about domestic violence that is relevant to faith leaders' level of knowledge and experience.
- Videos such as “Broken Vows” or “Religion and Newsweekly” as well as “What Every Congregation Needs to Know About Domestic Violence” may be helpful. Check out the resources at FaithTrust Institute: www.faithtrustinstitute.org
- Religious and lay leaders may not be aware of the services that are available to victims, children and batterers. Provide brochures to put at the place of worship; offer to make a presentation to the congregation or provide a workshop for lay staff at the church/temple/mosque or other place of worship.
- Prepare a list of local resources and phone numbers that faith leaders can call for help in situations of domestic violence.



TRANSFORMING
COMMUNITIES

Tel: 415-457-2464 * Fax: 415-457-6457 * Email: info@transformcommunities.org

Transforming Communities:
Technical Assistance, Training and Resource Center (TC-TAT)
734 A Street, San Rafael, CA 94901

Be aware of cultural and linguistic issues

- If you are not a member of a particular community you are reaching out to, make sure to build relationships first with a few key people in that community. Ask questions about what cultural issues are relevant in that community. Try to support those people to take on leadership roles in the effort.
- Provide support (including financial) to translate materials.

Move toward joint strategic action

- Trust comes through an experience of doing things together
- Present steps for doing a joint action plan – provides a structure for concrete activities toward a common goal.
- People have different skills – some are great networkers, some are salespeople, some are good at strategic planning or facilitating – everyone brings a strength to the action process.
- Provide financial resources or other benefits (good food!) if possible.

Recognize that this is a long-term process

- Building lasting relationships with faith communities takes time and effort
- You will be challenged along the way to examine your own belief systems – we can't assume that there's only one belief system.
- Remember to celebrate your accomplishments along the way – every seed planted and watered makes a difference.

