

The Tri-County Alliance Against Domestic Violence

Reaching out to Victims of Domestic Violence through faith communities

I. Introduction

- a. In the fall of 2009, Charleston County received a grant from the Office on Violence Against Women, Department of Justice to develop a “Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Violence.” The grant is managed by the 9th Circuit Solicitor’s Office. The dual goals of the project are to increase victim safety while also increasing offender accountability. One of the four main objectives of the grant was to address gaps in community resources for victims of domestic violence. Furthermore, the CCRDV grant proposal outlined activities to address the gap of reaching out to the faith community.

Increase victim safety by . . . identifying gaps in the community’s response to domestic violence victims and mobilizing community resources to fill those gaps.

- b. *Identify access points in the community where victims would be more likely to go and train up to 20 volunteer lay advocates at these locations.*
 - i. *Access points could include: faith communities, culturally based assistance centers, or community centers.*
 - ii. *Community partners along with experts in domestic violence will train lay advocates to appropriately respond to victims of domestic violence.*

II. Problem statement

- a. Historical problem of inviting faith communities to a “come all” event
- b. Statistics
- c. Why is the problem important for this community?
 - i. Faith Communities are a place victims go for comfort and solace
 - ii. This may be the one place outside the home the victim is allowed to go and interact with others. This may be her only chance for escape.
 - iii. Some perpetrators of domestic violence hide behind the scriptures to justify or validate their abuse.
- d. Unique challenges of reaching out to faith communities
 - i. Faith Communities are extremely diverse
 1. Some faith communities are pastor driven
 2. Some faith communities lead from the body
 3. Some faith communities have specific ministries to address social issues

4. Some faith communities are competitive with other faith communities for resources
5. Some faith communities will not participate in ecumenical gatherings with other faith communities
- ii. Many faith communities believe they can solve all problems within their congregation
 1. This may include couples counseling which in a power and control relationship can be very dangerous
 2. This may include confronting the abuser thus putting the victim at further risk
 3. This may result in the victim refusing to come forward in the future
 4. This could create a safety problem for the victim and children in the home
- iii. Both the perpetrator and the victim often go to the same faith community. A victim may reveal the abuse in confidence and if the matter becomes public, the victim may feel judged or rejected by the pastor, the congregation and even by God.
- e. Survey conducted to assess the needs of local faith communities to reach out to victims of domestic violence [**Attachment ____ “Survey”**]
 - i. Assessed current resources in place
 - ii. Assessed what they thought would help in the area of domestic violence
 - iii. Prioritized some of the basic needs

III. Faith Roundtable for the Charleston County Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Violence – Goals and Objectives

- a. Goal: To provide a resource for faith communities in the Tri-county area so that they can respond in a consistent and responsible manner to instances of Domestic Violence.
 - Objective 1. To provide responsible and appropriate referrals for Domestic Violence.
 - Objective 2. To maximize the safety of victims who seek assistance from faith leaders.
 - Objective 3. To educate faith leaders and congregations about the effects of Domestic Violence on adults.
 - Objective 4. To educate faith leaders and congregations about the effects of Domestic Violence on children.
 - Objective 5. To provide resources for faith communities to help them help victims of domestic violence in their communities. To assist in building

the capacity of faith communities so they can develop their own consistent, responsible response to Domestic Violence.

Objective 6. To change attitudes about how faith communities view abuse and point out that there is more than one way to inflict abuse. To recognize the problem of abusive scriptural interpretations.

Objective 7. To make faith communities CCRDV access points and a welcoming place for victims. Enable these communities with the education and skills needed to respond and refer victims of Domestic Violence. Create a network of access points.

Objective 8. Provide resources and information concerning the mandatory reporting of children who are victims/witnesses to Domestic Violence.

- IV. Working through a community collaboration
 - a. Community collaborations have credibility because they are the voice of the community
 - b. Many members of community collaborations are also members of faith communities or have relationships with others who may have positions of authority in faith communities
- V. Developing and utilizing community work groups
 - a. Work group to develop a curriculum
 - i. Several members of the community collaboration developed the curriculum
 - ii. The curriculum was developed using a variety of sources
 - b. Work group for Outreach
 - i. Organizational structure – The Committee drafted a document setting up the basic organizational structure of the “Tri County Alliance Against Domestic Violence” to include:
 1. Name, purpose and location
 2. Goals and Objectives
 3. Membership
 4. Governance
 - ii. Minimum standards [**Attachment ____ Minimum Standards**] The Committee drafted minimum standards for faith communities
 1. Faith communities should commit to these minimum standards to be members of the “Alliance”
 2. Faith communities should commit to these minimum standards to ensure safety for victims of domestic violence in their congregation as well as their children

3. Faith communities who commit to uphold these minimum standards can be potential referral sources for victims of domestic violence as “access points” in the community

iii. Pastor’s Pitch [**Attachment ___ “Pastor’s Pitch”**]

For those faith communities that operate from the top down, it may be important to meet with the pastor first in order to get his/her blessing to become a part of the initiative. Therefore, we have developed what we have termed the “Pastor’s Pitch” which is a 5-10 minute introduction to the “Alliance” and the project in general.

Screening Tool [**Attachment ___ “Screening Tool”**]

1. Provides the presenter(s) with and understanding of the needs and the capacity of the requesting faith community
2. Allows the presenter(s) to gauge technical needs
3. Allows the presenter(s) to customize the presentation to address any cultural, language, religious customs or other needs of the audience

VI. Presentation [**Attachment ___ “Reaching out to Faith Communities 2 hour power point presentation”**] [**Attachment ___ Appendix/Resources**]
[**Attachment ___ Speaker’s guide**]

- a. Content
 - i. Introduction
 - ii. Video
 - iii. Exercise
 - iv. Domestic violence 101
 - v. Survivor stories related to their experience with the faith community
 - vi. Action plans for faith communities
- b. Environmental & Victim support considerations
 - i. Is the location, set up and gathering conducive to the topic?
 - ii. If victims come forward will there be a means of support, help and referral
- c. Faith considerations
 - i. If the gathering is ecumenical, have other faiths traditions been considered or honored?
 - ii. If the gathering is faith specific, are there faith specific issues that should be considered?
- d. Cultural considerations
 - i. If the gathering is ecumenical, how should faith customs be observed?
 - ii. If the gathering is faith specific, what cultural traditions should be observed?

- VII. Online Toolkit as connector that provides a connecting point for the community
[Attachment ____ “URL for online toolkit”]
- a. One focus point for faith leaders to address domestic violence
 - b. Community referral information
 - c. Resources for faith communities
 - d. A forum for the exchange of information and ideas
- VIII. Faith Community Alliance Against Domestic Violence [Attachment ____
“Organizational document”]
- a. Alliance structure
 - b. Membership
 - i. Standards
 - ii. Collaboration
 - iii. Capacity building
 - c. Leadership group
 - d. Online toolkit
 - e. Ongoing education and training
 - f. Faith Communities as Safe Access points for victims and survivors
 - g. Action plans
 - h. Evaluation
 - i. Outcomes