

Positively Safe

THE INTERSECTION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE & HIV/AIDS

Collaboration Guide:

Creating & Maintaining Successful Partnerships

Often, those in need of assistance from community agencies or governmental programs present with compound difficulties, such as economic problems, social discrimination or stigma, homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse, unplanned pregnancies, domestic violence/dating violence, physical health problems, emotional or mental health problems, learning difficulties, access to transportation or health services, and more.

Rarely does one program have the capacity to provide specific, inclusive services to meet all the varied needs of each individual. Building community and statewide collaborations is necessary if those in need are to be truly served. Partnerships and collaborations among community-based organizations addressing the issues of domestic violence and/or HIV/AIDS enhance the work of both HIV/AIDS and domestic violence service providers.

What are the benefits of collaboration?

- **Builds your knowledge base.** The more knowledge you possess and resources you are aware of, the more you will be able to help each individual.
- **Results in appropriate referrals.** When you collaborate with other professionals, and understand their programs and services, you are able to make more appropriate referrals, when needed.
- **Holistic approach to meeting every person's needs.** With better and more efficient access to the range of services required, improved quality and consistency of service and greater responsiveness to needs will be achieved.
- **Saves time.** When an individual is referred to the appropriate program and/or service from the beginning, it frees up their time to serve more people. It is a win-win situation for all parties involved.

What is needed for a successful collaboration?

Beginning to collaborate can seem like a daunting task. “Will I have the time?” “What staff should be involved?” “Will this collaboration be successful?” The list of questions goes on. Below are some things to consider as you begin to foster your collaborative partnership(s)”

- **Defining a target community.** We have defined *target community* as individuals who come to either a domestic violence or HIV/AIDS program and appear to be faced with, or are at risk of facing, the intersection of domestic violence and HIV/AIDS.
- **Finding common ground.** A need for both programs to enhance services and develop promising practices which deal with both issues of domestic violence and HIV/AIDS without changing the mission or primary focus of the respective organizations.
 - Find out more about how DV and HIV/AIDS service providers can start to address this intersection by reviewing the **Tip Sheets** in the *Positively Safe Toolkit*.
- **Developing a shared vision.** Within a mutually agreed upon period of planning time and while working together, where would each program like to be with services dealing with the intersection?

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- **Providing cross-learning opportunities.** This may well be the most essential piece in bringing staff, volunteers, and boards of directors into agreement about the necessity of enhancing services. An important part of education is understanding the history, philosophy, counseling modalities, and funding restrictions (including service definitions and laws related to such areas as confidentiality, protection from abuse orders, child abuse reporting, and HIV antibody testing).
- **Sharing decision-making.** While this may seem self-evident, it is necessary to explicitly identify which individuals from each program have the authority to make decisions that may affect one or both agencies and the service participants.
- **Understanding each organization's culture.** Every program has its own culture. This culture affects every aspect of an organization, including staffing decisions, policy and procedures, service populations, community partnerships, educational opportunities, and funding focus.
- **Committing to the long run.** Change will not happen overnight, and once it does and the changes are implemented, an organization needs to commit to sustaining the changes.
 - Use the **Action Plan Guide** and/or the **MOU Template** in the *Positively Safe Toolkit* to solidify this relationship.
- **Being willing to ask for information, resources, skills, and authority.** Take advantage of the expertise in your partner organizations.
- **Supporting each other and giving each other credit.** Let your community know about your partnership and your successes.
- **Being open to and accepting of change and adjustment.** To make your partnership(s) work, all parties must be open to change. Without change and adjustment our work to prevent and end domestic violence and HIV/AIDS will become stagnant.
- **Acknowledging and sharing in risk-taking.** Building a partnership requires risk-taking from each party. Not every risk you take will work out but it will show you what work does and does not work.
- **Trusting each other.** To build a strong partnership you must trust each other. Having open and honest communication and meeting regularly can foster this.
- **Engaging in open, honest, and ethical communication.** Communication and trust go hand-in-hand. The more open that each organization is with each other, the stronger your partnership(s) will be.

Ways to Collaborate

- **Presentations.** HIV/AIDS programs may invite their local domestic violence program to do a presentation on domestic violence and domestic violence programs may invite the HIV/AIDS programs to present on HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention. These presentations could be for both the staff and the service participants at the respective programs.
- **Site Visits.** Program staff could have site visits to gain a better understanding of the services other programs offer so as to offer everyone more informed referrals.
- **Co-presenting or co-training.** Join forces and visit other organizations working on women's issues or health issues, or go to local schools, colleges, and universities together to talk about HIV/AIDS and domestic violence. This will help strengthen your whole community.
- **Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs).** MOUs are helpful ways to outline partnerships and ensure that each program follows through on the actions to which they have committed. An MOU could address such areas as: (1) telephone assistance about an individual, (2) designated staff to provide telephone assistance, (3) referral process to and from each program, (4) a staff person going to the other program to meet a service participant, (5) documentation, and (6) sharing information within confidentiality constraints and with consent to release information.

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- *TIP: Each organization should have a point person who is responsible for maintaining the partnership.*
- Visit the *Positively Safe Toolkit* to access a **MOU Template** for HIV/AIDS and DV service providers.
- **Educational Resources & Materials.** Each program likely already has numerous posters, brochures, and other materials readily available for download or use. Share these materials with each other and post them in visible and noticeable areas at your respective organization.
 - *TIP: Also have condoms openly available and accessible in all programs.*
 - Go to the *Positively Safe Toolkit* to access several educational resources for distribution, such as the **Brochure** or **Poster**.
- **Expand current networks.** Domestic violence organizations that have coordinated response partners could include HIV/AIDS service providers as partners.
 - *TIP: Talk to other programs in your field that have successful partnerships about the steps they take to ensure successful sustained collaboration.*
- **Amend practices & policies.** HIV/AIDS programs could invite DV providers to run a support group for individuals at their program. DV service providers can work with HIV/AIDS program to offer easily accessible or on-site testing, ensuring that it is conducted in a way that protects the confidentiality of the service participants using this service.
- **Mutual support.** Invite each other over for brown bag lunches or to each other's community events. It is easier to pick up the phone and ask someone for advice or assistance when you know them a little better.