



Working with Faith
Communities to Increase
Safety
for Those Who Experience
Abuse
Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership
Against Domestic Violence and Elder
Abuse



Welcome



Today's Presenters

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Poll: Who is on this call?

- ☐ Child Protection Workers
- ☐ Grant Managers
- ☐ Program Staff/Program Administration
- ☐ Court Personnel/Judges
- ☐ Legal Guardians
- ☐ TTA Providers
- ☐ Lawyers
- ☐ Social Workers/Mental Health Professionals
- ☐ Other

Poll: What are you seeing?

- ☐ Have you worked with faith-based families?
- ☐ Have you partnered with a faith-based organization?
- ☐ What kind of relationships do you have with local clergy or faith communities?

Today's Goals

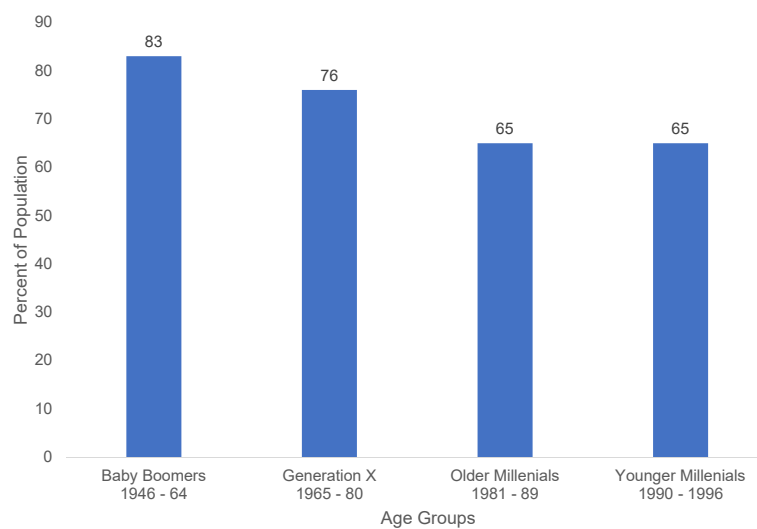
- Explore why faith concerns may be important
- Consider faith as both resource and roadblock
- Discuss roles for faith communities and leaders
- Provide ideas and resources for faith community outreach and training
- Strengthen “no wrong door” approach

About Safe Havens

- Multi-religious nonprofit based in Boston
- Local and national work to help diverse faith communities and domestic and sexual violence advocates collaborate to support faith-based survivors of abuse
- Education, resources, and technical assistance for advocates and faith leaders
- National technical assistance to service providers funded by the Office on Violence Against Women

Why faith might be an important consideration

Many in the U.S. Are Faith-Based



Faith may be vibrant and central

Faith may be particularly vibrant and central in rural, urban, low-income, religious and cultural minority, and immigrant and refugee communities.

In these communities, the faith community may be the only institution available or the only trusted institution.

"What we've realized and recognized is that when we're doing work in underserved populations it brings us to faith-based [communities], and the other way around."

-2017, D/SV advocate

Why faith matters to faith-based families you may be working with



Faith provides guidance and
meaning to many people living in
the U.S.



Faith can be critical to identity,
decision making, and healing.

“During a trauma, victims are five
times more likely to seek the aid of
clergy than any other professional.
Clergy are people they know and
trust.”

Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Annual Report, 2009

Location, Location, Location

Faith Leaders and Community Members...

- know members of congregation well
- know families across generations
- visit in homes and hospitals
- are trusted confidantes and important gatekeepers

Location, Location, Location

Faith Leaders and Community Members...

- speak with moral authority
- can respond when someone who is abusive uses faith as a weapon
- are involved in life events when abuse may increase and/or become more apparent
- are culturally competent/relevant/responsive

Faith Communities Can Be Allies

“We have found that when rabbis and other faith leaders speak out, they can make a big difference”

Wendy Lipshutz, Shalom Bayit of Jewish Family and Career Services,
quoted in Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review, 2009

Faith Communities Can Be Allies

“Connections in the faith community validate and strengthen outreach in the rest of the community.”

Rural domestic and sexual
violence service provider, 2008

“Faith-based communities offer many possibilities for eliminating domestic violence.”

Tricia B. Bent-Goodley,
“Eradicating Domestic Violence in the African American Community,”
Trauma, Violence, & Abuse: A Review Journal,
Vol. 2, No. 4, October 2001, p. 326

Poll

Can you think of a faith leader near you who you might reach out to?

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO

We'll come back to this!

Faith Can Be a Roadblock



Families may face barriers, including:

- Shame, guilt, fear
- Family and cultural constraints
- Community norms
- Language barriers
- Immigration concerns
- Financial difficulties
- Emotional ties
- Religious and scriptural misinterpretations

Without Training and Resources

. . .

- Denial
- Silencing
- Blaming
- Judging
- Unsafe Solutions
- Quick Fixes
- Dead End

Faith Can Also Be a Resource



“Religion,” from Latin “religare,”
to connect, to bind.



Faith can bind a person to:

- Community and traditions
- Language and memories
- History and country of origin
- Identity, including individual, family, clan, tribe, community
- Creator, G-d, Great Spirit, Higher Power, G-ds

In the midst of grief and loss

Faith, religion, or spirituality may provide resources that faith-based people carry with them that no one can take away.

Faith, religion, or spirituality may help people who are faithful grieve the losses.



In the midst of confusion and chaos



Faith, religion, or spirituality may provide the structure that helps people re-orient themselves, find their bearings, stay centered in their values and identity.

In the midst of trauma and fear



Faith, religion, or spirituality may provide the comfort and strength they need to survive the moment and move forward step by step.



Not all people identify with a particular faith or spiritual tradition.

However, everyone needs to be heard and affirmed.

Everyone needs someone to bear witness to the story, someone to accompany them on the journey toward safety, justice, and healing.

Responding to Faith-Affiliated Clients

- Welcome everyone.
- Do not establish any faith as normative.
- Avoid assumptions about faith affiliation.
- Do not suggest or act like everyone is or should be faith-affiliated.
- Listen respectfully. Faith is important to your client.
- You do not have to be an expert on faith AND you do not have to have all the

Your Insights

- What's one way you have seen faith act as a barrier?
- What's one way you have seen faith act as a resource?

Roles for Faith Leaders

- [Earlier] Intervention
- Prevention
- Long-Term Social Chan



“Clergy have a lot of power,
and can have a powerful impact.”

Service provider, 2009

Building a Two-Way Street



“It is profoundly important for faith leaders and domestic violence advocates [community service providers, court personnel, etc.] to cultivate mutual trust and collaboration so that they can respond more effectively to victims’ complex needs.”

Georgia Domestic Violence Fatality Review Annual Report, 2009

Building Community Partnerships

- Start small and leverage existing relationships
- Learn more and get together
 - Listen, listen, listen
 - Identify shared values and goals
 - Build a common language



Building Community Partnerships

- Consider ways to partner: site visits, cross-trainings, cooperation on projects, participation on community task forces or roundtables, Board of Directors.
- Look together at community from victim's point of view, and identify gaps in service, places where cooperation is needed.
- Develop a community-based network of referrals and cross-referrals.

Building Community Partnerships

- Focus on needs of victim as common ground.
- Explain safety issues. Never compromise on safety!
- Ask faith community leaders to help you strengthen your responses by training your staff about faith-based issues that might affect victims.
- Describe your mission and services in detail.

“It is imperative that our synagogues become sanctuaries of peace – that rabbis speak from the pulpit about abuse, that Jewish community leaders and educators create communities where survivors of abuse know that they are not alone.”

Wendy Lipshutz, Shalom Bayit of Jewish Family and Career Services,
Establishing a Jewish Community's Vision for Abuse Response 2009

“Clergy need a wider strategic plan for addressing this in the congregation, not just a one-time training.”

Clergy, 2009

Considering Next Steps

Can you think of at least one way
you can use one of these
strategies to partner with faith
leaders and communities?





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Thank You

