

JUSTICE FOR FAMILIES

Technical Assistance Newsletter



WELCOME

The Justice for Families program represents a wide range of diverse projects and collaborations of courts, civil legal services, domestic violence and sexual assault service providers, supervised visitation and safe exchange agencies, and more. In this edition of the Technical Assistance Bulletin, we are eager to showcase the work and expertise of our partners on the topic of engaging faith-based communities in responses to intimate partner violence. Survivors often seek support and guidance within their faith communities, especially when there is a shared language, culture, and ethnicity. Many coordinated responses focus exclusively on legal system players; however, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking are community issues and require collaboration across multiple systems and a broad base of community-based groups. Awareness of local faith based organizations and communities is a powerful tool in engaging survivors and faith leaders who interact with survivors and who could very well play a first responder role in the disclosure of intimate partner violence.

As always, if you're interested in highlighting your project in the next newsletter, or if you have any further questions about how the Center's training and technical assistance can support your project, please contact us at dvinfo@innovatingjustice.org.

Danielle Pugh, MPA

Director of Judicial Education and Leadership Programs

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Safety and Spirituality in the Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander Community

In promoting holistic approaches to enhancing safety for survivors of intimate partner violence in the Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI) community, it is crucial to consider survivor relationships with both systems and their own communities, particularly the faith communities they turn to for support. Faith communities play a key role in the experiences of survivors and how they are able to seek out safety and healing. As a part of its Resource Center on Gender-Based Violence in Asian & Pacific Islander Communities, [API-GBV](#)[1] partners with several community organizations and leaders on a multi-year faith-based advocacy project entitled the "Safety and Spirituality Project," funded by the US Department of Health and Human Services. Partners included [Korean American Family Services \(KFAM\)](#), [Sikh Family Center](#), as well as consultants working with Taiwanese and Mandarin speaking communities.

Read the interview below to learn more about the work of KFAM, Sikh Family Center, and Ellen and Li-Shun Hong, and how others can engage religious communities to break the cycle of intimate partner violence.

What roles do faith leaders and institutions play in addressing intimate partner violence (IPV) within AANHPI communities? How do they engage with community members on this issue?

Sunhee Kim, KFAM: Faith leaders often have varying views on gender based violence, but one thing we know for sure is that faith communities do provide a safe place for people, and based on the size, can provide resources such as housing and assistance finding employment.

I have also seen faith leaders providing education on healthy relationships and domestic violence, where Korean American Family Services was able to support that programming. An important feature of the Korean immigrant faith community is the built-in trust between the congregants and faith leaders. Some victim-survivors may not know of the various community-based organizations and services available, so I have seen faith leaders playing a significant role as first responders when a member of the community comes forward after experiencing gender-based violence.

Mallika Kaur, Sikh Family Center: For a person navigating trauma, it helps greatly to hear their own language, accent, pronunciations, cultural references, as well as shared spiritual mandates and aspirations.

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Footnotes

[1] The Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence is a national resource center on domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence in Asian and Pacific Islander communities. It serves a national network of advocates, community-based organizations, national and state programs, legal, health, and mental health professionals, researchers, policy advocates and activists from social justice organizations working to eliminate violence against women. It analyzes critical issues through consultation, training and technical assistance, research, and policy advocacy.

Building Safe Communities One Coordinated Community Response and One Congregation At a Time

By Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic
Violence and Elder Abuse

“When we want to do any kind of culturally competent work, we must include faith, because people cannot be separated from their beliefs and traditions.”

**-Dr. Elizabeth Hoorn Peterson,
South African Faith and Family Institute**

Florence Beaulieu was a beloved nurse and mother of four. After 15 years of abuse, she decided to ask her husband to leave the home, and she went to court, spoke with a judge, and received a Restraining Order due to her husband’s threats and violence. Florence was also a deeply faithful Christian woman, and in this time of crisis she turned to her pastor for support. Florence’s pastor, who had had no training in domestic violence, told Florence that she should drop the Restraining Order and invite her husband back home. The pastor said they should pray together, and that this would allow them to continue as a Christian family to raise their children and be true to their faith.

Florence followed her pastor’s advice. She went back to court to drop the Restraining Order, and her husband returned to their home. Tragically, a few days later Florence was murdered by her husband. The judge, court personnel, and advocates may have been surprised by Florence’s decision to drop the Restraining Order. Without understanding the importance of Florence’s faith, they may have felt that her actions made no sense. And, without knowing anything about how often survivors of abuse turn to their faith leaders for help, Florence’s pastor and her congregation may not have been the focus of the local Coordinated Community Response’s (CCR)[1] community education and outreach efforts.

This story could have ended differently if the faith leader had known how to refer Florence to expert advocates in the community, or if the CCR had reached out to local faith leaders with resources and training. About 75% of people living in the U.S. are faith-affiliated in some way. However, these numbers rise in communities of color and among older adults, where barriers to services are high and reporting rates are low.

Also, survivors of abuse are already turning to their faith communities for help. One study of older adults found that, "respondents, especially minorities, often indicated that their ‘first stop’ would be a member of the clergy if they were to discuss their abuse with anyone." [2] Meeting survivors of abuse where they are means building partnerships with faith communities.

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Footnotes

[1] A Coordinated Community Response brings together a diverse group of community partners to develop a shared vision to collectively and consistently address the widespread impact of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking and provide multiple pathways to support, healing, and accountability for families.

[2] Richard Beaulaurier, Laura Seff, and Frederick Newman, “Barriers to Help-Seeking for Older Women Who Experience Intimate Partner Violence: A Descriptive Model,” *Journal of Women and Aging*, Vol. 20(3/4) 2008, p. 240-241.

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And at the time of emotional overwhelm, while managing an overloaded nervous system, small comforts can make a significant difference and allow a survivor to seek out resources they otherwise may not have at all. And at other times, the biggest comfort, the only thing that seems to give stability in an unstable situation, is a faith and spiritual belief that is bigger and beyond the harm and the harm-doer. Thus, it is no surprise that many AANHPI communities seek guidance and support and allyship from their faith centers and faith leaders.

Ellen and Li-Shun Hong, Consultants: It's very common for immigrant Taiwanese and Mandarin speaking congregations to be viewed as a one-stop shop for all their needs as immigrant families acclimate to the United States. When facing severe intimate partner violence situations in a first responder role, faith leaders are often faced with the pressure to involve law enforcement immediately and many have not anticipated the unintended consequences of immigrant families left to deal with law enforcement and the criminal justice system. Families are subjected to processes that are unfamiliar, frightening and experience the trauma of being investigated and as a result, many families left the church and were permanently fractured.

What unique challenges do AANHPI faith communities face when responding to intimate partner violence?

Mallika, Sikh Family Center: Since 9/11, when Sikhs[2] again became targets of deadly racism due to unique cultural and faith identifiers (including turbans, long unshorn hair, beards), the community has organized powerful civil rights organizations and initiatives with resilience and creativity.

But issues of gender-based violence were further forced into the shadows. Many forms of stress and trauma that affect Sikhs of all ages are too often allowed to proliferate unchecked. The problem is pronounced for women facing various forms of violence, within and outside their home. Not engaging "outside" systems can often be a high priority for many survivors, particularly in the context of experiencing both racism and intimate partner violence. Language barriers may also play a role in the way communities perceive and respond to violence. For example, in the first language of many Sikhs, Punjabi, there are few well-known translations for the terms we would like to see associated with sexual violence: control, oppression, hypermasculinity.

Ellen and Li-Shun, Consultants: Many churches have a board, often referred to as elders, and other layers of leadership, who often differ on how to respond to intimate partner violence. Some prefer to not intervene in what they view as a "personal" issue to be handled within the family, while others are inclined to offer support and informal counseling.

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Footnotes

[2] "Sikhism" refers to a faith-community, its membership applies broadly to people who may identify culturally, if not spiritually, as Sikh and reflects a diverse community tied by shared immigration histories, cultural values, and traditions. Because of these unique dynamics, labeling Sikhi as a "religion" alone, as understood in western culture, often falls short in capturing the nuance of the faith and the ways in which people identify with it.

Building Safe Communities

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One benefit of these partnerships could be a better understanding of spiritual abuse and the many ways that religious traditions and faith have been used as weapons against survivors. Spiritual abuse is when faith, religion, or spirituality is misused to control or manipulate and it is an often overlooked but powerful avenue of coercive control. A client may hear “your safety is important” from a court advocate, but may also be hearing, “this is happening because God is punishing you” from their faith community. Culturally responsive and victim-centered services understand faith and its impact on survivors. A second benefit to learning more about the intersection of faith and abuse is knowing more about survivors and their decisions. This may lead to more compassionate responses to survivors and a better understanding of the help they need. We need to build a world in which faith leaders support restraining orders and safety and refer survivors to services. In addition, well trained and resourced faith leaders, in partnership with a batterer’s intervention program, can support accountability when it is safe to do so. From developing an outreach plan to providing resources and education, building partnerships with faith communities can be challenging, but there are resources that can help.

Two effective outreach approaches are 1) “we need your help” and 2) “we can save you some time.” CCRs need faith leaders’ help because faith leaders have their finger on the community’s pulse and have community influence. They can reach many in the community who otherwise may not have known about local services. And, they can use their moral authority to speak out against abuse of all kinds. And CCRs can save faith leaders’ time because they can invite faith leaders to be part of the CCR. This means that faith leaders can provide spiritual and material support to a survivor through difficult times, but they don’t have to be the hotline or know how to build a safety plan.

They can refer the survivor to expert local advocates for those services. In-person outreach is most effective. You can ask faith leaders to join you for a “muffin moment” in town. Find out what they are seeing and what their concerns are. Build ways to stay in touch, and keep the channels of communication open. You can also provide resources and education to support faith leaders as they come alongside the CCR. Safe Havens has a toolkit of helpful resources.

For many faith leaders and their congregations, taking action on domestic violence and other forms of abuse will be new. Encourage them to start with small steps. Help them to see how abuse connects to so many issues (e.g., homelessness), that they may be already addressing. As your partnerships with faith communities grow, you may like to include them in the CCR in a more formal way. Invite them to meetings, events, and trainings (please ensure that these never take place on major religious holidays). However, also be aware that faith leaders are, like you, stretched thin, and it is important to develop multiple pathways of involvement that can accommodate their participation and input. Some communities have found that it is best to update area faith leaders about the CCR discussions through a listserv. For example, some communities have established a faith community liaison who ensures that communications from the CCR are sent out to local faith leaders, and others maintain a listserv to provide regular updates. If there is an interfaith clergy consortium in your area, perhaps a CCR liaison could provide updates at those meetings.

Please visit Safe Havens’ website for more resources and information. We are delighted to work with you to empower faith communities to support survivors. Together, we can build a world in which faith-affiliated survivors like Florence Beaulieu receive support, resources, and referrals from their faith leaders. No matter our faith or culture, we all deserve to be safe.

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When scheduling trainings, we require the entire leadership team to attend so they can be on the same page and make an informed and collective decision moving forward.

Sunhee, KFAM: Similar to other communities, stigma and patriarchal culture pose a challenge to addressing gender-based violence in the Korean immigrant community, which is generally on the conservative side. Some faith leaders when speaking with victim-survivors, will talk about praying and forgiveness, as opposed to addressing the violence that is happening, which places a huge burden on survivors and creates a sense of guilt and inadequacy. Another challenge is that the person causing harm and their families may also be a part of the faith community. A pastor shared with me that during one instance, the person causing harm and their family would frequently call to discuss the situation, making it difficult to focus on the needs of the victim-survivor.

What strategies has your team employed to respond in a culturally responsive manner?

Sunhee, KFAM: To build rapport with the faith community, KFAM prioritizes attending events where we can meet community members and faith leaders, and share about our services and offer our time to collaborate. We also identify the unique needs and challenges of community members, where we can be of service to them. For example, women faith leaders within the church often play a significant role in supporting the community, specifically working with families in crisis. We treat women faith leaders to a two day self-care retreat, allowing them to relax, as well as openly discuss their responsibilities and challenges that they face in their roles. This unique program provides our team with one-on-one time with women faith

leaders, and an opportunity to deliver presentations on intimate partner violence and strategies to respond to community members who approach them for help. Offering a safe, healing space for faith leaders to open up about the stresses and challenges they face in their role has been met with appreciation and enhanced the trust between our organization and the faith community.

Ellen and Li-Shun, Consultants: Li-Shun and I created a curriculum to address safety and spirituality in the AANHPI faith community. Using our academic backgrounds, with both of us holding a Master of Divinity and Li-Shun having a PhD in Family Ministry, as well as being close to this faith tradition ourselves, we developed the curriculum we have used in the past five years to train over thirty churches and seminary classes nationally. There are little to no classes offered in seminaries about gender-based violence that help aspiring clergy understand and respond to these issues. Many immigrant AANHPI churches in states that are not as culturally diverse truly appreciated the training, as there is a lack of in-language resources and trainings on gender-based violence in their local community. We have since expanded our sexual violence module to include recent high-profile cases of sexual abuse in churches.

Mallika, Sikh Family Center: Sikh Family Center provides an innovative, multilingual Helpline, the cornerstone of our intervention program, provides nationwide culturally-specific peer counseling, non-emergency support, and resource referrals for callers in Punjabi and/or English (and at times in Hindi and Urdu). Community-based and mobile advocacy models are at the core of our work, and we prioritize building the leadership capacity of our community members.

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Spirituality and Faith-Based Communities in Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange

By Amrita Hanjrah, Inspire Action for Social Change

Inspire Action for Social Change's technical assistance and training approaches the work of supervised visitation with compassion, love, humility, and transparency. These deeply-held values and attributes are also reflected by many organized faiths, spiritual practices, and other cultural ways of healing. We believe it is essential to engage spiritual and faith-based communities when working with families impacted by intimate partner abuse, particularly those ordered to supervised visitation and exchange.

Parents and children often navigate the post-separation journey in isolation or with supervised visitation as the sole source of support. This is not sustainable, and urgent change is needed. Families and survivors need and deserve options, and both spiritual and faith-based communities can provide a vital support system that can offer resilience, a shared sense of hope, transformation, emotional safety, and practical resources to bring parents and children into healing spaces. This can look like asking families about their spiritual, cultural, and faith-based practices during orientation time and being genuinely curious and authentic about how the center can support these practices. Additionally, developing warm relationships with local spiritual and faith-based communities can result in families self-referring to the center. These partnerships also maintain continued support for families during and after the visitation and exchanges, helping parents and children transition into stable, independent lives.

By partnering and learning with and from spiritual and faith-based communities, supervised visitation programs can ensure their engagement with parents and children is grounded in cultural and spiritual relevance. This collaboration fosters a comprehensive and secure support system that respects and honors the complex realities of families in crisis, making them feel valued and respected. It supports their journey toward safety and stability, acknowledging their unique challenges and strengths and providing a sense of reassurance and confidence.



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We train and mobilize Sikh leaders, sangat or congregants, and community advocates to understand and address the dynamics of family violence, drawing on egalitarian Sikh faith teachings.[3] Some of the faith leaders we have trained at gurdwaras, our faith centers, now know how to follow the central principle: Do No (more) Harm. Our [Family Violence Resource Guide for Gurdwaras](#) details how Gurdwara administrators can proactively challenge harmful attitudes and beliefs about family violence in the community and provide trauma-informed referrals to trained advocates, shelters, and other service providers in a way that is responsive to the community's faith culture.

Why is it important for faith leaders and institutions within AANHPI communities to be involved in addressing intimate partner violence (IPV)?

Mallika, Sikh Family Center: Non-Sikh agencies that interact with Sikhs may be unaware about the Sikh community or even discriminate and fail to serve Sikhs. For example, in another recent conversation while training a crisis center, in a location with a significant population of Sikhs, we heard how their staff did not know if they had ever served Sikhs and asked whether it was the same as "Islamic" or then "Hindu," which it is not. Misidentifying survivors with other racial, ethnic, or religious groups that may not accurately reflect their self-identity is a source of disempowerment and distrust. Additionally, victim-survivors may not seek out anyone but a faith community member and/or leader to discuss their options and are not always afforded a menu of safe options to choose from, all while facing coercion by both by perpetrators as well as the systems that should be responding to their needs.

Sunhee, KFAM: There is a trust already between congregants and community members. It is so important to build trust, and it takes a long time. Between 70-80% of Korean immigrant community attend church regularly, and when faith leaders are well educated and empowered in the topic of gender based violence, they do address it and people listen.

Ellen and Li-Shun, Consultants: Immigrant Taiwanese and Mandarin speaking families often are unfamiliar with American culture, including definitions and laws about gender-based violence. If faith leaders and institutions were better prepared to address intimate partner violence, then survivors in the community would find their churches a resource. Furthermore, when faith leaders choose to address intimate partner violence, they create an environment of openness for the community, acknowledging that yes, intimate partner violence does occur in our AANHPI and Christian communities. Faith leaders set the tone for how intimate partner violence is viewed and discussed, can play a role in dispelling the AANHPI model minority myth, and can create a space that is honest and vulnerable for those experiencing harm in their most intimate relationships.

Footnotes

[3] Starting with the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak Sahib, who advocated for gender justice and esteemed women highly, evident from the Guru's trailblazing compositions in the 15th century). The succeeding nine Sikh Gurus recognized and emphasized the importance of empowering women in all facets of life, from leading services in the congregation to pursuing education, and even joining the battlefield.

Latest Resources From the Center for Justice innovation

New Publication in *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*

New York City implemented a comprehensive citywide approach to people who cause harm, developing multiple programming options for people who cause harm both within and outside of the criminal legal system. This [article](#) outlines these programs and proposes several practice implications for the field.

New Resources from DV RISC

The Domestic Violence Resource for Increasing Safety and Connection (DV RISC) is a national resource center that provides training and technical assistance on intimate partner violence (IPV) risk assessments and models. The DV RISC team released several factsheets, which are organized around key aspects of IPV risk assessment implementation process including: [confidentiality](#), [sustainability](#), [fidelity](#), [trauma-informed](#), [partnerships](#), and [cultural responsiveness](#).

A series of webinars on lethality risk factors highlight the most prevalently researched lethality risk factors that are commonly addressed in intimate partner violence (IPV) risk assessments: [stalking](#), [recent separation](#), [firearms](#), [strangulation](#), [pregnancy abuse](#) and [reproductive coercion](#)

The podcast series focuses on assessing risk with the use of intimate partner violence (IPV) risk assessments in different settings: [APIPs](#), [multidisciplinary models](#), [law enforcement](#), [judicial](#), [pretrial](#), and [family court](#).

Building Multiple Pathways to Healing, Safety, and Accountability to Address Intimate Partner Violence

by Brittany R. Davis, Rebecca Thomforde Hauser, Heaven Berhane, Gene Johnson, Saloni Sethi, Bea Hanson, Devin Deane, and Karolin Betances

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DV RISC

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Clearinghouse

The DV RISC Clearinghouse features a wide variety of resources on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) risk and homicide prevention, and the use of IPV risk assessments. The resources are categorized by foundational learning, risk assessments, professional groups, and intersecting areas. Click on any of the following to learn more.

Foundational Learning

Information and research on the fundamentals of IPV risk assessments and lethality and

Risk Assessments & Models

Information and research on commonly used IPV risk assessments and models.

Professional Groups

Information on risk information sharing and IPV risk assessments used by different professional

Intersections & Interest Areas

Information on how IPV lethality intersects with different community groups and in

[Exit](#)

The Latest From Our TA Partners

Inspire Action for Social Change

Connecting with Families in Supervised Visitation & Safe Exchange Programming: The Practice of Meaningful Engagement & Checking-in Toolkit

A promising practice in the field of supervised visitation and safe exchange work is establishing check-ins, which are intentional times to talk (check-in) with every person who uses program services. Check-ins provide a space for every person using center services to engage with staff and have intentional time with staff that isn't rushed or would require extra steps to set up or be requested. This [resource](#) outlines techniques and examples for staff of supervised visitation and safe exchange programs to employ when checking in with each other and with the families they serve.

Documentation, Record-Keeping, Subpoenas, & Court Engagement Practices: Guidance for Supervised Visitation and Safe Exchange Programs When Serving Families Who Have Experienced Intimate Partner Abuse

This [publication](#) provides information, resources, and support to help providers better navigate documentation, record-keeping, court orders, subpoenas, requests for information, and other legal components of operating a supervised visitation and safe exchange program. It was written in partnership between Inspire and Confidentiality Institute.

Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence

Watch a [panel discussion](#) in celebration of Asian Pacific Heritage Month addressing diversity within Asian/Asian American, Pacific Islander (AAPI) and other communities, and promising community efforts to better assess and manage high risk cases.

Check out API-GBV's [Directory](#) of Domestic and Gender Violence Programs Serving Asians, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, which lists roughly 150 agencies in the U.S. that have culturally-specific programs designed for survivors from Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities. We highly encourage you to utilize this resource to find a local culturally specific agency to partner with on your projects. Join API-GBV's bi-monthly [Bridges Connect Calls](#) for AANHPI advocates, community members, and allies to connect, dialogue, share successes, problem solve, and network.

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