



Best Practices in Supporting Survivors of Domestic Violence in Refugee Communities Resettled in Pennsylvania

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Presentation Objectives:

- Describe the program model implemented at SEAMAAC to address domestic violence in refugee communities
- Describe the process that informed how this program model was designed, what works well, and what additional services are needed to further address family needs
- Provide suggestions for how all refugee serving organizations can develop skill sets to support clients experiencing domestic violence



Part 1: SEAMAAC's Safe Families Program



Program Goals:

- Increase the leadership capacity of immigrant and refugee staff and community leaders to support community members experiencing domestic violence
- Raise awareness and engagement around domestic violence in the community
- Decrease structural barriers that make it difficult for refugees to access resources
- Increase culturally and linguistically appropriate support for survivors



Increase Leadership Capacity

- Women's Leadership Group
- Staff Completion of Philadelphia's 45 Hour Domestic Violence Training
- Staff, Volunteer and Community Leader completion of Domestic Violence for Professionals and Teen Dating Violence Trainings
- Monthly staff cross-mentorship meetings in partnership with a local domestic violence organization
- Including domestic violence as a topic of discussion during interviews and onboarding for new staff and board members
- Weekly staff supervision
- Workshops with Community Leaders
- Case collaboration with Community Leaders and Partner Organizations
- Active participation in Shared Safety Coordinated Council



Raise Awareness and Engagement

- Screening questions during intake and case management sessions
- In-language Community workshops on a variety of topics: domestic violence (definition, types, cycles, resources), healthy families, communication, conflict resolution, stress reduction (holding yoga and mindfulness groups), coping skills, mindfulness, communication, debunking myths of DV, etc.
- Outreach through word of mouth, partnership, flyers, and language-specific newspapers
- Goal = this is a topic that is safe to talk to us about. We are here to listen and help.



Decrease Structural Barriers

Addressing the Gap: Domestic Violence Organizations often lack language and cultural understanding and practices to fully support refugees in their services. Refugee Serving Organization often lack the intensive training and capacity to fully address domestic violence with the refugee families they serve.

Barriers Faced in this Gap:

- Language Barriers (knowledge of resources, navigating to resources, communicating with staff, communicating with systems, completing and understanding forms and procedures)
- Disconnected from (English and Spanish speaking) domestic violence services
- Navigating Systems: Attorneys, Court, Hospitals, Shelters, Police, Landlords, Employment, Child Care, Public Benefits, School, mental health services etc.
- Fear or reluctance to contact police
- Immigration Status Fears
- Stigma around mental health or counseling services
- Pressure and expectations from Religion, Community, Culture, and Family
- Domestic violence is not illegal in many of the countries of origin



Increase Support for Refugee Survivors

- Intensive support with referrals to domestic violence organizations for resources and shelter access
- Case Management and Navigation through resources and systems:
 - Legal, court, police, medical, mental health, shelter/housing, employment, public benefits, child care, school enrollment
- Emotional Support
- Safety and Options Planning
- Linguistic Support
- Cultural Competency Support



Referral Process

- Case Workers are available who speak Mandarin, Indonesian, Nepali, Burmese, Chin, Karen, Vietnamese, Lao, and Hmong
- SEAMAAC has telephonic interpretation
- Referrals by Professionals can be made to Jingyao Yu at jyu@seamaac.org or 215-467-0690 x 135
- SEAMAAC can not accommodate all referrals due to limitations in our staff capacity, geographic reach, and ability to provide in-depth language and cultural support outside of targeted language groups. We often work with professionals making referrals to strategize best practices to support individuals experiencing domestic violence. We provide mentorship to domestic violence organizations to provide more linguistically and culturally appropriate services to diverse client populations within their geographic regions.



Part 2: Process that Informed Program Model



Community Needs Assessment

- Increase in survivors coming to SEAMAAC for support with domestic violence
- Limited capacity to provide in-depth support at SEAMAAC, and barriers when referring to domestic violence organizations
- In 2011, SEAMAAC conducted an in-depth needs assessment of DV in Philadelphia's Asian immigrant communities.
- An MPH Intern from Drexel University led this year long needs assessment as a field practicum
- Included: literature review, examining projects that address DV in Asian communities around the United States, and conducting 8 focus groups of members from Philadelphia's Asian communities
- Separate focus groups were held for men and women, and conducted in English with interpretation into Vietnamese, Laotian, Mandarin, Cambodian, Indonesian, and Burmese
- A final focus group was held with staff from Philadelphia's Domestic Violence Organizations



Part 3: Tips for Refugee serving organizations to support clients experiencing domestic violence





Internal Organizational Commitment to Addressing Domestic Violence

- Integrating domestic violence awareness into the organizational culture
- Organizational culture of learning and growth around this complex issue
- Commitment to fundraising
- Support staff and board who are survivors of domestic violence
- Ensure Staff and Board Members receive training on Domestic Violence
- Identify and transform structures within the organization that perpetuate all forms of violence and oppression

Internal Organizational Commitment to Addressing Domestic Violence

- Develop internal procedures to screen and address domestic violence
- Create opportunities for safe, confidential, and private client meetings
- Create a supervision structure that allows space for staff to process
- Identify limitations in addressing domestic violence, and knowing how and where to refer
- Support staff to develop their own self care
- Identify the boundaries of where your organization's role in service provision lies, and where service provision transforms to referrals and pushing domestic violence organizations and other systems to decrease barriers for refugee families



Developing Partnerships with Local Domestic Violence Organizations

- Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV)
<http://www.pcadv.org/Find-Help/>
- Every county in Pennsylvania has free and confidential domestic violence services (Printable list:
http://pubs.pcadv.net/website_Planning/WEB_TO_EDIT/FIND%20HELP/130401PrintableDVPrograms.pdf)
- Primary Services: Confidential 24/7 Hotlines, Shelter (24-Hour Emergency Room, Safe Homes, Transitional Housing), Counseling (empowerment, options, safety planning, support groups), Advocacy (legal, medical, children's, accompaniment), and Economic Support (job training, employment opportunities, cash assistance/public benefits and resource navigation)

Developing Partnerships with Local Domestic Violence Organizations

- Increase the awareness of local domestic violence organizations staff and board of the needs faced by your refugee families
- Advocate that increased support of immigrant and refugee families experiencing domestic violence become a strategic direction of the organization
- Increase awareness of where families are facing structural barriers (for example: outreach, language access, trust/connection, services that are not taking cultural nuances into consideration, etc.)

Developing Strong Partnerships with Local Domestic Violence Organizations

- Develop appropriate ways to partner to fill this gap that are within funding, capacity, and training/skill limitations
- Determine a point person(s) at the domestic violence organization(s) that you can reach out to when a family is having trouble with their services
- Ensure that refugee service organizations are not simply used as interpreters but are acknowledged and compensated as key cultural and linguistic brokers and leaders
- Apply continuous pressure to be at statewide tables where decisions on priorities and funding allocations for domestic violence services are made



Additional Suggestions, Feedback, and Questions

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