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Please read CFFPP's *Safety and Services: Low-income women of color speak about their communities* and *Enhancing Safety for Women: Communities of color, domestic violence, and social welfare services for low-income men* for more information on low-income communities of color; what victims need and want for themselves, their families, and communities; and social welfare services for low-income men.

Identifying Services – Introduction

Domestic violence advocates frequently encounter the challenge of trying to safety plan and provide services to women who remain in contact with men who have used violence against them. Current responses to domestic and sexual violence are absolutely necessary and must remain available. At the same time, promising practices continue to evolve that promote women's safety and respond to underserved victims, including women who have chosen to stay or who are not yet ready to leave.

This guide and its corresponding paper, *Enhancing Safety for Women: Communities of color, domestic violence, and social welfare services for low-income men*, add to a growing body of work that aims to assist advocates as they develop additional options and new strategies for promoting the safety of low-income women of color who remain in contact with their abusive partners (see the Appendix).

Often, victims from low-income communities of color who are trying to preserve their relationship do not access domestic violence services. If they do, they may ask advocates about social welfare services for their partners as a strategy for increasing their own safety. Some advocates have found that providing victim-centered advocacy entails knowing about local services that address the economic needs of low-income men and, where appropriate, responding to a victim's request by giving her a referral to local services that address his social and economic needs.

In communities where social welfare services for men exist and advocates have learned about the programs or know the providers, such referrals may, in fact, benefit women and increase their safety. This approach is not recommended for every victim;

however, for those who are asking advocates for information about where their partners can voluntarily go to get help finding work, managing debt, navigating the legal system, or simply to be supported as a low-income man of color, such referrals respond to a currently unmet need for victims.

The information in this guide can be useful for advocates who are interested in, curious about, or invited to work with programs that provide social welfare services to low-income men. It provides a framework for identifying and getting to know local programs and “fatherhood” practitioners. Whether it is simply knowing the landscape of services in the community, trying to help fatherhood programs be better equipped to respond to domestic violence, or exploring more reciprocal ways of working together to promote women’s safety, advocates (and the women they serve) will benefit from a greater understanding of community-based fatherhood programs and agencies that provide social welfare services to men.

This guide can help advocates learn more about local services and determine whether an agency or organization could be added to a domestic violence program’s resource and referral list. Just as we recognize that women are the experts in their own lives who benefit from the input, information, and expertise of anti-violence advocates, we also acknowledge that advocates are the experts in their own communities. Therefore, the guide is intended to provide an outline for learning more about agencies, not as a definitive determination of which programs will or will not work for the purposes of promoting women’s safety.

STEP 1: Identifying potential programs

The paper *Enhancing Safety for Women* provides details on social services for men and how such services may increase safety for low-income women of color. These services, often called “fatherhood programs,” are not and do not provide batterer intervention or fathering after violence services. They commonly focus on employment services, although there is wide variety among programs around the country that work with low-income men and an array of services that they provide. It is important for advocates to be able to identify the kinds of programs that respond to what low-income victims are seeking – those that provide voluntary employment, legal, and peer support services to unemployed men in very low-income communities of color.

ABOUT CFFPP

The Center for Family Policy and Practice is a national policy advocacy organization that provides analysis and education on:

- the impact of national and state welfare, fatherhood, and child support policy on low-income parents and their children; and
- domestic violence and safety for members of low-income communities of color.

Our work focuses on low-income communities and individuals who experience poverty as a chronic condition in their lives. This guide is intended to help advocates address an unmet need for domestic violence victims who are low-income women of color. It does not discuss or respond to the economic deprivation that can result from being in or leaving an abusive relationship.

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IMPORTANT NOTE: Many cities have fathers' rights groups or organizations that focus on divorce and men's rights in the family court system. Advocates are often very skilled at identifying these organizations. Such groups are not based in nor do they address the employment or economic needs of low-income communities of color. Their members often have significant resources, unlike the men who run and attend community-based fatherhood programs. While it might be useful for advocates to know about the fathers' rights organizations in their communities, they are not the agencies that serve low-income men of color which might have the potential to positively impact the safety and well-being of low-income victims of color.

Three basic steps for initially identifying programs are described below:

- Ask fellow staff
- Search the internet
- Look at agencies' websites

A great starting point for identifying community-based services for low-income men is to ask internally. Staff at domestic violence programs may already know about local nongovernmental agencies that provide employment services to low-income men and fathers.

Additionally, advocates can search the internet for “fatherhood programs” along with the name of their city. Programs might have names like: Fatherhood Works, Fatherhood Collaboration, Fatherhood Consortium, Father Project, Father Initiative, Father Support Center, etc. These types of programs exist in various communities across the country, however, their numbers are limited. Therefore, beyond this initial internet search, advocates are encouraged to look for community-based agencies whose primary focus is not low-income fathers, but that also provide employment services to men. For example, the Urban League, Goodwill Industries, community centers, and other local organizations often provide holistic program services in low-income communities and may offer specific programs for unemployed men.

After identifying the names of potential programs, advocates can look at agencies' websites to gain greater insight into the kinds of services that are provided. The key service to be looking for is employment. Is it a place men can voluntarily go to receive job search or job placement assistance? An organization's mission statement can also provide a good sense of the agency, and whether, for example, it is based in the community and supports or addresses the basic needs of very low-income men. Fatherhood programs that focus on employment and economic stability may also offer parenting classes or healthy relationship classes. Conversely, organizations that solely provide parenting or relationship services are less likely to address economic needs or be the kind of program that most low-income victims of color are seeking for their partners.

STEP 2: Learning more about programs and services for low-income men

The initial internet search and website review should yield a short list of potential programs. Simply knowing about these programs and the services they provide is, in and of itself, useful. Advocates who are interested in taking another step (beyond knowing the name of local agencies) are encouraged to learn more in general about fatherhood program services, the population they serve, and the challenges they face. The Center for Family Policy and Practice has several publications listed in the Appendix that make good resources for advocates who want to learn more about services for men in low-income communities of color.

With an understanding of fatherhood programs and the importance of their services, advocates will be better equipped to reach out to local programs that serve low-income men. Advocates can email or call the agency or the individual assigned to the fatherhood program and ask if they would be willing to set a time to share information about their services. The following questions can be used to guide the conversation and help advocates learn about the kinds of services the agency provides.

General questions:

- Can you please provide a general overview of your agency's services?
- Where is the agency located? (single site, multiple sites?) What geographic areas or neighborhoods do you serve?
- What are the demographics of the people your agency serves? (age, race/ethnicity, economic status, noncustodial fathers, formerly incarcerated, etc.)
- How do participants come to or find out about your program? (voluntarily, word of mouth, referral from another organization, court mandate, a combination of these, other?)

Case management:

- Do participants go through a formal needs assessment or an intake interview?
- Does your agency provide ongoing case management services? If so, how are they structured or provided?
- Does your agency provide referrals to other organizations? If so, for what types of services?
 - Basic needs (food, housing, transportation)
 - Health care (physical and/or mental health)
 - AODA treatment
 - Employment support
 - Other?

Employment:

- Does your agency provide:
 - Job readiness and/or “soft skills” training
 - Assistance with:
 - Job search
 - Interview skills
 - Applications or resume writing
 - Job skills or certification training (computers, mechanics, other?)
 - Job placement
- Does your agency partner with employers, state/city workforce development agencies, or other community-based agencies in order to connect participants with jobs?
- Does your agency track participants’ progress? (job attainment, job retention, dropping out, etc.)
- Does your agency provide job supports?
- What barriers to obtaining or maintaining employment do participants commonly face?

Education:

- Does your agency provide:
 - Adult basic education
 - GED preparation
 - Computer skills classes
 - ESL classes
 - Other?

Peer support:

- Does your agency provide peer support or other opportunities for participants to meet with and support one another?
- What does this look like? (one time only, ongoing regular meetings, focused topic, etc.)

Healthy relationships/parenting:

- Does your program address either or both of these issues?
- If so, what sort of programming does your agency provide? (curriculum-based classes, workshops, etc.)
- Does your agency provide opportunities for strengthening father-child relationships? (agency or community events, mentorship, etc.)
- Does your agency screen for or address domestic violence in your programming?

Asset building/financial literacy:

- Does your program address either or both of these issues?
- If so, what topics are addressed? (budgeting, reducing debt, repairing credit, savings, EITC, etc.)
- How are the topics addressed? (curriculum-based classes, trainings, drop-in clinics, etc.)
- What barriers do participants have to either financial literacy or building assets?

Conclusion:

These simple steps can help domestic violence programs gain a better understanding of services for low-income men of color in their communities:

- Asking staff if they know of community-based programs that work with low-income men who are seeking employment.
- Conducting an internet search for fatherhood programs in your city.
- Looking at a local program's website for its mission statement and a list of services.
- Learning more about needs and services in low-income communities of color.
- Talking with a local service provider about their program.

Knowing who practitioners are and what they do, or being able to answer a victim's request for information about where her partner can go for help with his employment search may be the extent of what is useful or needed in any given community. Or, it may mark the beginning of a longer process of learning about and exploring ways of working together to promote women's safety.

Appendix: Additional resources

This short guide adds to a growing body of work that specifically addresses the needs and circumstances of domestic violence victims from low-income communities of color. The following resources can assist domestic violence programs that are considering expanding the range of safety planning services available to victims.

- *Advocacy Beyond Leaving: Helping Battered Women in Contact with Current or Former Partners, A Guide for Domestic Violence Advocates* by Jill Davies is invaluable for developing and providing victim-centered advocacy.

Available at: www.vaw.umn.edu/documents/advocacybeyondleaving/advocacybeyondleaving.pdf

For more information and/or technical assistance on domestic violence and services for low-income communities of color, please contact the Center for Family Policy and Practice.

- *Safety and Services: Women of color speak about their communities* by Jacquelyn Boggess and Jill Groblewski discusses the results of listening sessions with advocates and low-income women of color who are victims and survivors. It highlights that in addition to increasing safety, victims would simultaneously like to see services that respond to economic security and need for all members of low-income communities – including men.
- *Enhancing Safety for Women: Communities of color, domestic violence, and social welfare services for men* by Jill Groblewski explores shared needs in low-income communities and provides important background information for advocates on community-based “fatherhood programs.”
- *Enhancing Safety: A readiness assessment tool for domestic violence advocates* provides a tool to help determine readiness to create a process for responding to victims who are low-income women of color and who are asking for social welfare services for their partners.
- *The Partnership and Collaboration Guidebook: Fatherhood Practitioners and Advocates Against Domestic Violence Working Together to Serve Women, Men, and Families* by Jacquelyn Boggess and Marguerite Roulet can further advance advocates’ understanding of fatherhood programs and provides guidance for thinking about working with programs that provide social welfare services to men.

CFFPP publications are available at:
www.cffpp.org/pubdomviol.html



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