

Collaboration and Partnership:

Fatherhood Practitioners and Domestic Violence Advocates
Working Together to serve Women, Men and Families in
Low-Income Communities

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Readiness factors

- Staff and administration see the value of this kind of collaboration, and are prepared to do the interagency situation analysis and possible reassessment necessary to support and further this work
- Recognize the importance of the involvement of men in domestic violence prevention

Readiness (cont)

- Be prepared to deal with mutual skepticism and trepidation. For example early questions around trust will likely be:
 1. can I trust you to be anti-racist?
 2. can I trust you to confront sexism?

Readiness (cont)

- The partnership will likely be more successful if the dv program or coalition has begun working on poverty issues, and have talked with women about their hopes and fears for herself for her previous or current partner, and for their children.
- For fatherhood programs some preparation around talking to men about how they use, perceive or confront violence in their families and communities.

Readiness (cont)

- Fatherhood programs—prepared to more directly incorporate accountability
- Advocates—be prepared to support “compassionate accountability”
- Be prepared to work toward some level of mutual trust
- Forecast and prepare for the possible implications for this collaboration on the population your agency or organization serves

Guiding Principles

- There are well known stereotypes about the people and the organizations who consider themselves “fatherhood services providers”, and “domestic violence advocates”-- recognize and confront the realities on which those stereotypes may be based.

Guiding Principles (cont)

- Cultural competency and cultural appropriateness are vital elements of all social services programs
- The role of men in the families is variously defined within various social, cultural, socio-economic and ethnic communities
- Prevention is essential to the project of ending violence against women

Guiding Principles

- There are significant barriers to the ability of low-income men (particularly men of color) to be productive members of their families and communities.
- Collaboration must articulate and support the values of ending violence against women and encouraging child-well being, supporting responsible father involvement, providing social services for low-income men and women, and supporting healthy family relationships.

Laying the ground work

- Define what the collaboration is about; identify specific principles, articulate responsible success measures
- Recognize and respond to individual and collective organizational capacity issues
- Identify readiness factors pertinent to the individual partnerships and communities.

Laying the Groundwork (cont)

- Decide the essential partners in the collaboration. Make important decisions about the involvement of other organizations such as batterer's intervention programs, sexual abuse organizations, child welfare, etc.
- Work to build personal and mutually respectful relationships with individuals in partnering organizations in order to encourage trust and cooperation.

Laying the Groundwork (cont)

- In any service provision or demonstration project, consider parallel services for men and women participants
- Work out issues of funding and resource allocation
- figure out how current politics might effect the collaborative

Laying the Groundwork (cont)

- Decide what level of trust is necessary for the initial stages, and come to a definite and mutual understanding what that is.
- Talk about how trust might be built and maintained
- Work out what accountability looks like for coalition or partnership members.

Laying the Groundwork (cont)

- Exchange information about each group's needs/concerns/ issues
- Exchange information and education about barriers to personal maintenance and family support for low-income men, women, and survivors in the community

Language and Definitions

- Identify and discuss terms or words that trigger conflict between and among partners and allies.
- Come up with a common language (definitions "domestic violence" "sexual assault," "fatherhood," etc.)
- At least initially, consider using the word "prevention," and be intentional in using that word as distinguished from intervention

Ongoing Communication and Critical Analysis

- Discern points of tension
- Be prepared to talk about dv or father programs more broadly (not just “my program is/is not _____;” “ my program does/does not _____”
- Build in and encourage private conversation time for both “sides”

Communication (cont)

- Discuss the collaborative work within the context of community institutional and agency interventions into families
- Create safe discussion space and provide questions and opportunities that can lead to critical thinking and analysis
- Collaboratively analyze and problem solve with case studies

Communication (cont)

- Look for best practice models of collaboration, cooperation, and intersection
- Listen to participants, community leaders and average families in the community.
- Discuss and discern the possible effect of this collaborative work on individual participants in partnership programs

Safety

- Work collaboratively to prioritize safety for participants, their family members, and their communities
- Recognize some programs that concern themselves with the issues of fathers are not interested in domestic violence prevention
- Discuss and make collective decisions about how, if necessary, assessment, screening, and intervention will be carried out in programs connect with the collaboration.

Lessons Learned



Lessons

- battered women's advocates should not be called on to encourage father involvement in individual situations
- fatherhood programs practitioner should not be called to do the counseling and restorative work of batterer's intervention in any particular situation

- Fatherhood programs, legislation, or policy initiatives benefit from the input of mothers and other women.
- The perspective of mothers and their advocates on cooperative parenting issues is essential to the success of programs designed to re-involve fathers