Honoring Survivors’ Spiritual Needs: Supporting Jewish, Catholic, and Muslim Survivors of Domestic Violence

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Disclaimer

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Why Does Faith Matter?

• It’s a lens through which people interpret what happens in their lives
• It’s a lens through which people make meaning of their lives
• It’s a source of identity
• It’s a source of community
Objectives

- Understand how faith can be a resource or a barrier to hope, help & healing
- Gain insight into faith-specific understandings to support survivors for whom faith is critical to identity and/or decision-making
- Become aware of best practices and resources for engaging faith leaders as allies
- Begin to strategize how to engage faith leaders as allies
What are your first thoughts when someone says the words, “Jew or Jewish”? 
### Jewish Community in the United States

#### Community structures
- 3,000 synagogues
- Community based federations and Jewish Family Services
- Schools, summer camps, national youth movements

#### Denominational Preference
- Orthodox: 10%
- Conservative: 26%
- Reform: 35%
- Just Jewish: 25%

Sources: National Jewish Data 2000-01 - www.jewishdatabank.org; https://www.pewforum.org/2013/10/01/jewish-american-beliefs-attitudes-culture-survey/
Jewish Community in the United States

• Religious laws guide daily living - food, prayer, marital relations, & Sabbath and holiday observance.

• The synagogue is the house of worship.

• Rabbis are the spiritual leaders. Traditionally, only men were rabbis.

• The Torah (5 books of Moses, Old Testament) is the book of Divine Law.

• The Talmud contains the legal discussions interpreting the Torah.
What are your first thoughts when someone says the words, “Catholic” or “Christian”? 
Christians in the United States

71% of the U.S. population identifies as Christian.

Denominations

• Catholic 20.8%

• Protestants 49.9%
  Evangelical Protestant 25.4%
  Mainline Protestant 14.7%
  Historically Black Protestant 6.5%
  Mormon, Orthodox Christian, Jehovah’s Witness, Other: 3.3
Christian Community in the United States

Christians are united in these Basic Beliefs:

• One God in Three Divine Persons: God the Father, Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit.

• God became a human being in Jesus of Nazareth, who preached a message of mercy and love, was executed, rose from death, and ascended into heaven.

• God's Word is found in the Bible, made up of the Hebrew Scriptures, Gospels, and Letters of the early Apostles.

• Christians vary in their organizational structures and understanding of church authority.
Christianity in the United States

Importance of Religion in the lives of Christians:

- Very 68%
- Somewhat 25%

Marital Status among Christians

- Married 52%
- Divorced/Separated 14%
- Never Married 21%

What are your first thoughts when someone says the words, “Muslim” and or “Islam”? 
Muslim Community in the United States

- About 1-2% of total US population (Pew Research Center)
- Most diverse faith group in US (Gallup, Muslim West Facts Project)
- Largest groups are South Asian & Arab immigrants & African Americans (Pew, 2017)
- 75% are immigrant or children of immigrants
- 82% are American citizens
- Growing number of White, Latino & Caribbean converts. Fastest growing religious group in the world (Pew, 2017)
Islam in the United States

• Muslims (literally “one who submits” [to God]) are followers of the religion of Islam

• Muslims believe in all prophets of Judaism & Christianity (Abrahamic tradition)

• Muslims believe in One God (Arabic name is Allah), & the last prophet is Muhammad (571-632 AD)

• The Qur’an (divine book) describes women & men as “partners” (9:72) and “garments for one another” (2:187), and identifies mutual love & mercy as the foundations of marriage with the goal of tranquility (30:21).
Q. What are unique ways that people of faith experience domestic violence?
Ways DV Presents for Survivors in Faith Communities

- Manipulation using religious texts out of contexts
- Misusing religious values like patience and forgiveness to pressure a survivor to stay in the relationship
- Controlling or interfering with survivor’s religious practices or access to knowledge/education
- Using divorce laws as a control tactic (Jewish *get*; Catholics “annulment”; Muslim *talaq*)
Q. What are barriers that prevent people of faith from seeking services?
Societal Barriers

- Patriarchy
- Community and family pressure
- Immigration Issues
- Islamaphobia
- Systemic Racism
Individual Barriers

- Abuser is well respected/well connected in the faith community
- Misunderstanding of religious texts
- Stigma of seeking services
- Fear of losing custody of children
- Socioeconomic status
- Feelings of shame
- Fear of losing Faith Community
Q. What are ways to support DV survivors of faith?
Solutions for Advocates

- Ask the survivor how you can help with spiritual concerns
- Work within survivor’s worldview rather than imposing external values
- Use language & values that are familiar to survivor
- Allow survivor to determine goals (e.g. stay, leave, separate, divorce)
Poll Question: Have you ever worked with a Faith Leader?
Outreach to Faith Leaders

• Recognize that partnering adds credibility and increases access

• Know which faiths are represented in your community

• Identify local champions to make introductions

• Visit faith leaders & discuss the problem of domestic violence

• Offer training and resources

• Arrange a DV faith-specific program and invite faith leader to answer religious questions
Summary

• Faith leaders have been organized on issue since at least 1975

• Interfaith Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (group of 40) A four part series to discuss how racism and misogyny impacts survivors’ ability to seek safety and justice, Register here: [www.interfaithagainstdv.org/events](http://www.interfaithagainstdv.org/events)

• Clergy Task Force on Domestic Abuse in the Jewish Community

• National Catholic DVAM Partners Committee

• National Imam trainings - Peaceful Families Project

• HEART - national organization offers trainings and programs to respond to sexual violence in the Muslim community
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Questions and Answers
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DVAM National Call for Unity 2020

October 1, 2020 at 3:00pm ET

Join us as we come together in solidarity with survivors, advocates, and partners from national, state and community-based organizations.
The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (www.nrcdv.org) provides a wide range of free, comprehensive, and individualized technical assistance, training, and specialized resource materials. Access our publications online at VAWnet.org.