

## Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider Network Meeting Minutes May 14, 2019

Present: Christina McGovney (RH), Olga Parker (Modus Vivendi), Kari Page (DCJ), Christine Constant (Inner Work PDX), Linda Castaneda (Castaneda Counseling), Guruseva Mason (Safety First), Nanci Jarrard (VOA Home Free), Jacquie Pancoast (Central City Concern), Phil Broyles (Teras Interventions)

Minutes by Jessica Harvey

### Discussion Topic: Working with Muslim Clients

When working with Muslim clients, it is important to understand their religious beliefs and that the traditions they have can be influenced by where they were raised. If the client does not believe that you understand, they will be less willing to open up or listen to what you have to say. Approximately 10% of domestic violence is perpetrated in the Muslim community. Within the Muslim community, 4 out of 5 homes have some form of domestic violence.

Women who immigrate from countries such as Kazakhstan, may not only have a language barrier, but are also entrenched in certain traditional Muslim beliefs that would be considered domestically violent in the United States. Many women are not aware of their rights in the United States and might need to be educated. Some men will pay a “bride price” for their wives, so women will be seen as property more than a person. In some rural areas, women will be kidnapped by a man who wants to be with them and if she has spent time with him alone then she will be unable to marry anybody else. Women are expected to move in with their husbands and serve all others in the home. There can be many families living in one home. It may also be challenging to keep them engaged in services because they typically need their husband’s permission to attend appointments; therefore, seed planting about women’s rights is vital. They may also be lying about what type of appointments they are having in order to receive permission to attend, so be aware of privacy and confidentiality concerns. Women also must have a male escort when visiting friends. There are not many opportunities for her to discuss any concerns she has privately. According to the Quran, women should not discuss bad things that occur in the home to outside people and can be shamed by the community for discussing it. Women might also view abuse as a spiritual test or as punishment for past sins, as discussed in the Quran. The mother of the husband may live in the home and she has some amount of power as the eldest woman. This power can be used to suppress the other women in the home, and she can end up supporting the abusive spouse. There are many barriers to women getting a divorce: economic reliance on husband, multiple children, little to no community support, no place to go, worries about seeking services in the US due to Islamophobia. If a man is dishonored, then the family is dishonored. This can contribute to victim blaming of women in abusive relationships who speak out about it.

One way to address abusive behavior is to discuss how the Quran prohibits all forms of oppression and injustice. However, people will interpret any religious text in a way that suits them, so it might not be fruitful to get into the details of what certain texts mean. It may also be helpful to discuss healthy ways for a husband to address his wife's behaviors. Group facilitators and other treatment providers should do their best to adapt the treatment to the client. Female facilitators may have struggles with reaching male Muslim clients. Facilitators can also discuss how certain behaviors affect the perpetrator, his wife, his children, and his family instead of the problems within the culture. Facilitators can ask questions like, "How would you feel if your daughter was treated that way?" Teach and practice skills about healthy conflict resolution. Focus on the discrepancies between what they say and what they do. To address the language barrier, speak on their level and empower them to ask questions about words and concepts. Encourage them to learn from each other. Make clear the rules of the program and what they need to do in order to complete the program. Look for culturally specific programs and resources in their community.

The Muslim community is a small community. Men and women may be wary about sharing personal information so that others in the community will not find out about their personal lives. There is also a limited number of interpreters and the interpreters are sometimes part of the community. They can contribute to the belief systems and interpret in a way that is not in line with abuse intervention or victim advocacy.

Cultural humility and cultural competence are imperative when working with the Muslim community. Be wary of listening for what you want or are expecting to hear instead of what the client is actually saying. The religion is not as important as the behavior itself. Even men who are not of the Muslim faith but grow up in countries or communities where the traditions are upheld are still influenced by the culture. Keep in mind the differences in thinking for collective v independent cultural perspectives. The clients need to know that their treatment providers are not judging their culture.

Side topic: Many small and culturally specific programs are encountering problems with the new review process. They have small offices where they already work full time and do not have the time nor the ability to meet some of the requirements. There is significant concern that the already small amount of culturally specific programs will diminish still. Some have found that creating new policies and procedures has been helpful. There are also concerns about the integrity and accountability of the review process.