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SPIRITUALITY AND VICTIM SERVICES

A Collaborative Response to Crime Victims in Urban Areas

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NASHVILLE, TN**

**THE SIDRAN INSTITUTE, BALTIMORE, MD
THE ST. PAUL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, ST. PAUL, MN
STAND! AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, RICHMOND, CA**

**IN COOPERATION WITH THE MARYLAND CRIME VICTIMS'
RESOURCE CENTER, INC.**

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The trauma of crime can undermine a victim's faith in natural or divine order, casting them into spiritual as well as physical, emotional, and financial crisis.

Victims and their families often turn to their faith community for solace and support. When their needs are not met, they may suffer an additional crisis of faith.

They also may find that crime victim assistance agencies and service providers are not skilled at addressing their spiritual needs, especially if their faith differs from that of the service provider.

Here is one family's experience:

Our lives were centered around our faith, family and friends before our oldest daughter, Stephanie, was kidnapped, raped and murdered just as she was ready to graduate from college. My husband and I were totally devastated, and Stephanie's four siblings, ranging in age from 18 to 10, were confused, angry and scared.

Our faith community and many others opened their arms to us immediately after Stephanie's death and funeral, but that soon changed. As we struggled to make sense of this cruel and senseless tragedy and prepare for the trials of the two men who killed her, we began to realize that our faith community did not know how to help. While it did not intend to harm, both its absence and misunderstanding hurt. Some simply couldn't tolerate the depth of our despair. Others wanted us to prematurely focus on forgiveness. It seemed that no one could relate to our faith crisis.

Roberta Roper

Spirituality and Victim Services

The Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc. has been awarded a Collaborative Response to Crime Victims in Urban Areas grant by the Office for Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice. Through this grant, five urban sites were competitively selected from a field of 55 applicants to successfully link victim assistance programs and faith communities.

Adapted from Sidran Institute's *Risking Connection* framework™, the four core principles that guide the *Spirituality and Victim Services* Project are **Respect, Information, Connection, and Hope**.

Respect

The United States enjoys the most diverse collection of believers in the world, many of whom live in the inner city. In addition to the more common faiths of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, we find Buddhism, Hinduism, Native American religions and many others. This project does not promote any single faith. It draws on the strengths of each faith to assure that all crime victims are treated with spiritual sensitivity. Respect goes beyond religious tolerance. It reflects a willingness to set aside preconceptions and appreciate the value of others' points of view, positions, talents, and roles in the community. Respect fosters genuine understanding and collaboration. This project centers around bringing people and services together.

Information

A research project conducted in 2000 determined that 83% of the respondents believe spiritual and religious beliefs are closely related to mental and emotional health. Other studies indicate people who are connected to a faith community are more likely to turn to their clergy than to secular service providers for help. Yet most clergy members say they are uneducated in ministering to victims of crime. Secular agency providers may be even less likely to know how to offer spiritually sensitive services. Whether crime victims approach their faith leader or a service agency, their

physical, informational, emotional, and spiritual needs will be sensitively addressed. Understanding the effects of victimization and trauma is a key component of a victim's movement toward healing. Recognizing that this exchange of information is crucial for victims, providers, and the community, education is a common thread throughout the project's activities.

Connection

Some victims are distrustful of public service agencies and faith communities. Others gravitate to one but not the other. Some clergy doubt the effectiveness of service agencies. And service providers may fear the faith community will minimize the complexities of victimization. In addition, because of the interpersonal nature of criminal victimization, many victims feel unsafe and unwilling to trust relationships. They report feeling disconnected and isolated in many ways, and at times even blamed or shamed for their victimization. At the very time they most need the support of others, support may be unavailable, insufficient, or misdirected. This project acknowledges that honest collaboration between the leaders of faith communities, victim service communities, and crime victims must exist before meaningful and trustworthy connections can develop.

The Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc. staff and consultants will assist the five sites in assessing the needs of victims, faith communities, and the victim assistance agencies and will help identify key stakeholders in making these connections work. They also will help the sites build meaningful relationships and develop missions, goals, and objectives for the three years of the project in an effort to assure the continuation of the collaboration after the grant period ends.

Hope

Hope is essential. The staff and consultants with the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc. will offer guidance, support, and resources to assure that those on the front lines, at each site, will keep the faith and maintain hope victims to get better and reconnect through enhanced services for victims of crime in their communities.

Challenges

Building and sustaining partnerships is difficult. Successful partnerships require ongoing and intense commitment from every person participating, not just those who attend the meetings. A high level of reflection and self-examination is required of every individual in the process.

It takes time to develop the broad array of knowledge, skills, and resources required to understand criminal victimization and its influence on spirituality. Successful partnerships that address complex social problems and sustain themselves into the future are the exception rather than the rule. Establishing leadership within the community, defining roles, and addressing the administrative, budgetary and structural challenges of this grant will be as challenging as achieving the actual goals of the project.

In *Pathways to Collaboration: A Knowledge Building Work Group*, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation identified three areas of primary importance to the collaborative process. They include:

- *Empower individuals* by getting them directly and actively involved in addressing problems;
- *Create bridging social ties* that bring people together across society's dividing lines. Build trust and a sense of community, and enable people to provide each other with various kinds of support; and
- *Create synergy*, the exciting breakthroughs in thinking and action that are produced by combining the knowledge, skills, and resources of a diverse group of participants.

The foundation determined that partnerships experience frustration and lack effectiveness when individuals are unable to collaborate. To avoid these frustrations, they suggest:

- The project team includes a broad and diverse array of people and organizations affected by the problem, especially those most affected (in this case, crime victims).

- The process is organized and administered by diverse participants rather than a single charismatic leader or lead agency.
- The participants have equal and balanced authority in all phases of project development.
- The process promotes ongoing, meaningful dialogue that enables people from different backgrounds to talk with, learn from, and work with each other over an extended period of time.

A project called *Victim Services 2000* in Denver, CO also offers suggestions for successful collaborations from its experiences with community-based victim advocacy programs. Participants point out that leaders or "gatekeepers" in neighborhoods and communities must be identified and involved from the beginning of the process. These leaders may not be the official or recognized community leaders or the traditional victim services agency heads. They are more likely to be volunteers who are known and trusted in their communities. They may work with faith groups, human services agencies, businesses, and community organizations. They often know how victims are inadequately served, what resources are available in their community and have invaluable ideas about how system and community based non-profits may successfully partner with their communities.

Sites may find, as did the Victim Services 2000 project and other research projects, that inner-city victims express a high degree of mistrust for system and community-based nonprofit agencies, and may be unaware of the services that are available to them. Victims may identify their needs as services delivered in their language, in a spiritually and culturally sensitive manner, and in their own community. Victims must define their most pressing needs and be heard. The project staff and committees then must design solutions for the specific needs of the victims, again always with the victim's input.

Goals and Objectives

Year I (Oct. 1, 2002 thru Sept. 30, 2003)

The Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc. will:

- Develop a competitive process to award Year I grants of \$160,000 to five agencies in urban areas and consult with the Office for Victims of Crime (OVC), which will select the sites.
- Conduct a literature review of faith-based collaborations.
- Work with the sites to identify all agencies and faith groups in the target areas.
- Provide a Needs Assessment Tool and Strategy for the sites to determine victim-related strengths, needs, and service gaps in their communities.
- Help the sites prepare for Collaboration and Strategic Planning in their communities.
- Offer "Train the Trainer" seminars to the sites as they plan cross-educational seminars.
- Guide the development of policies to protect children in the faith communities, such as screening, background checks, and supervision of child care workers.
- Assist the sites to formulate plans to sustain the project after the grant period ends.

The Sites will (Project year, June 1, 2003 thru May 31, 2004):

- Hire staff.
- Establish local Multidisciplinary Committees
- Participate in Needs Assessments of their communities.
- Engage in Collaboration and Strategic Planning activities.
- Begin to design cross-trainings, resource directories and other programs to enhance faith community and victim assistance links.
- Formulate plans to sustain the project after the three-year OVC funding cycle ends.

Years II and III

Contingent on meeting the first-year objectives and the continued availability of funding, **the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.** will provide additional grants of \$160,000 each year to the sites, and continue guidance and support. It will:

- Assist the sites in analyzing how needs identified in Year I will be addressed.
- Develop publications, outreach materials, and other resources to assist the sites in reaching more victims.
- Provide faith communities with training on safety issues of victims and volunteers in re-entry programs of offenders.
- Provide the sites videotapes for outreach.
- Develop crisis management guides for the faith communities.
- Design brochures on the various faith perspectives within the communities for victim assistance providers.
- Offer management and resource development seminars.
- Assist the sites with sustaining the project after the granting periods end.
- Convene a meeting of all five sites to interact and to refine a model for collaboration of faith-based and victim services programs in inner cities.

The Sites will:

- Engage in strategic planning for Years II and III based on findings during Year I.
- Cross-train among the agencies and faith communities
- Add or improve services to victims.
- Develop resource guides and sustainable referral systems.
- Develop protocols to assure spiritually sensitive victim services.

The Project Sites

Anti-Violence Partnership Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Anti-Violence Partnership of Philadelphia began in 1980 as a victim assistance program serving family members of homicide victims. It later expanded to address the entire cycle of violence and violence prevention.

Philadelphia's crime rate is above the national average, yet the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Research on Religion and Urban Society reports that there are more than 2000 faith communities in the city. Nearly 90% of these congregations offer at least one community service, including after-school programs, job counseling, and soup kitchens. Faith-based services to crime victims are lacking.

AVP anticipates that their multidisciplinary advisory committee will meet bi-monthly with the possible development of sub-committees to assure that the Project continues after grant funding ends.

Information from a needs assessment will guide development of coalition building, volunteer training, and cross-training of victim assistance and faith-based organizations to eliminate service gaps in years II and III. At the end of Year I, AVP will develop a Resource Guide and host a one-day conference on "Collaboration Between Faith-Based and Victim Assistance Organizations."

Metropolitan Interdenominational Church Nashville, Tennessee

The Metropolitan Interdenominational Church, through its affiliation with the Interdenominational Ministers Fellowship (IMF), will improve services to victims of crime in the five Nashville neighborhoods with the highest rate of victimization and poverty: the J.C. Napier, Sam Levy, John Henry Hale, North Nashville, and James Cayce Homes neighborhoods. The IMF, which includes more than 40 predominantly African American congregations and ten community-based organizations, recently partnered with The Covenant Association to stop gun-related violence in Nashville. This partnership resulted in a community round-table discussion at Vanderbilt University to develop a multi-faceted crisis response plan.

Nearly 90% of the residents of the targeted neighborhoods are African Americans, many who cope with poverty and discrimination as well as victimization. These residents tend to distrust public agencies, particularly those affiliated with the criminal justice system. Subsequently, they look to the faith-based community, especially churches, for support. Few offer crime victim services.

This Project will utilize a professional community organizer to oversee the work of their multidisciplinary advisory committee and its strategic planning process, plan meetings and network within the five neighborhoods. They plan to use the LOGIC Model (objectives, activities, activities, projected intermediate outcome, and final outcome) to provide ongoing assessment of their strategic plan. The Project plans an assertive resource development plan to assure continuation of the program after the grant period. They will develop a Resource Guide and hire a Training Coordinator for Years II and III cross trainings.

The Sidran Institute Baltimore, Maryland

In the process of developing a curriculum entitled *Risking Connection in Faith Communities*, which has been taught at Wesley Theological Seminary, the Sidran Institute discovered that many clergy members feel unprepared to deal with the aftermath of victimization. Additionally, they feel they are not connected to or aware of traditional victim services, and are unsure of how to work in partnership with these secular organizations. Thus, they eagerly sought involvement with this project.

Sidran will engage the University of Maryland School of Medicine's School of Mental Health Program in the project as they focus on child and teen victims. If the needs assessment warrants, they will use a previously published work, *The Essence of Being Real: Relational Peer Support for Men and Women Who Have Experienced Trauma*, to offer victim support groups in the faith communities.

The Sidran Institute is developing a 15-member multidisciplinary committee representing all faiths and ethnicities in Baltimore, crime victim assistance programs, victim treatment and counseling agencies, law enforcement and judicial agencies, and both direct and indirect victims of crime. This committee will meet monthly and receive stipends to enable and focus their involvement.

With the initial year devoted to planning and organization, Sidran will use data from their needs assessment to develop a functional strategy for years II and III. They will begin developing a Resource Guide at the end of Year I.

St. Paul Area Council of Churches St. Paul, Minnesota

The ecumenical and interfaith St. Paul Area Council of Churches, representing 168 congregations from 23 different denominations is the lead agency for this project. They will work with **Breaking Free**, a service organization serving Africans and African American victims, and **Civil Society**, a legal advice and victim support organization to better serve immigrant/refugee and other vulnerable populations in the Thomas/Dale neighborhood, a high-crime area of St. Paul.

The Thomas/Dale neighborhood, which has been predominantly African American since the 1970's, has recently experienced a high resettlement of Hmong, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian, Russian, Somali, and other African immigrants and refugees.

The St. Paul Project partners recognize that immigrants and refugees tend to endure crime rather than speak up about it, often coming from countries where government officials and police are violent. Additional stressors focus on socio-economic concerns. Within the last ten years, the number of families living in poverty in the Thomas/Dale neighborhood has increased more than 55%.

The three partner organizations and their multidisciplinary advisory committee will utilize data from a needs assessment to develop five faith and culture-sensitive cross-training models during Year II for: (1) faith-based professionals and staff; (2) faith-based volunteers; (3) victim assistance providers; (4) people of faith who become victims of crime, and (5) victims of crime from underserved populations within the community.

STAND! Against Domestic Violence Richmond, California

Once a primarily African American community, Richmond has become home to increasing numbers of Asians, including Chinese, Laotian, Mien, Korean, and Vietnamese. The community includes Pacific Islanders (12%), and Latinos & Hispanics (26.5%). Caucasians make up 21.2% of the population. Richmond suffers a crime rate twice that of other cities its size in California, including rising gang activity.

STAND! will build on its established relationships with the faith community and victim services community in Contra Costa County and Richmond to improve faith-sensitive services to victims. They currently are partners with the Greater Richmond Interfaith Program and the Richmond Police Chaplaincy, among others.

STAND!'s diverse multidisciplinary committee will expand from an existing county-wide Faith Community Task Force to End Domestic Violence. They will utilize a needs assessment to plan trainings, publications, and products during Years II and III, assuring that all languages and faith groups are represented. They will offer Faith Breakfasts and Community Roundtables to assess gaps in services and identify cross-training needs. The committee will be reduced to 12 members in Years II and III for the sake of workability, but they will utilize the larger extended group of supporting partners as needed.

The Project will create and distribute a Resource Guide for victims and their families and plans at least two forums on "Faith Communities and Victims of Crime" in Year II.

Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc. Project Staff and Consultants

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National Advisory Council

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Rev. David & Anne Delaplane	The Clergy Committee (CO)
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