

Collaborations

The Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

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Recruiting Faith Leaders For Your Project *by Scott Beard*

Time - Faith leaders are stretched for time. They have numerous commitments and feel a strong pull to the work they were "called" to do. Therefore, we are faced with the challenge of competing for their time. We must take care not to waste their time. Be prepared when meeting with faith leaders. Have a clear agenda in mind or on paper with specific objectives and requests. When meeting with the advisory group, always prepare a written agenda, maintain control of the meeting, and end on time.

Some faith leaders may serve better in a behind the scenes capacity, while others may be able to come to every meeting. Each Project Team should try to match their qualifications and time commitment with the needs of the project.

Project Worth – You must be able to demonstrate the need for this project. Present statistics showing the prevalence of crime victimization in their community. It may be enlightening for them to realize that violence is occurring among members of their congregation whether they see it or not.

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Highlighted Program: The Chatham County Georgia (Savannah) District Attorney Victim Witness program sponsors an annual conference for faith leaders on criminal victimization. Agencies in the community take turns hosting and providing necessary resources. In recent years, the program has concentrated on specific victimization issues such as child abuse one year, and drunk driving the next. They update a manual every year that includes information from victim service providers as well as poems and articles by survivors and clergy. Contact: Helen Bradley - HBradley@chathamcounty.org.

"One person can make a difference—and every person should try." Stephanie Roper

The Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

14750 Main Street, 1B
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Phone: (301) 952-0063
Fax: (301) 952-2319
Email: ScottBeard@mdcrimevictims.org



Education – Many faith leaders have not been educated about the dynamics of victimization. Learning about those dynamics may help them recognize and understand symptoms among members of their congregation. For instance, a woman who is bruised and scarred and makes excuses such as running into furniture, may not be merely clumsy. Children who come to church dirty and withdrawn may be revealing a life of abuse and neglect.

Empowerment – Faith leaders may think that members of their congregations would come forward if the leader's help was really needed. It is important for them to know not only that abuse occurs at all levels of society but that addressing the problem will greatly enhance the spiritual as well as everyday lives of their congregants. It may seem overwhelming to faith leaders who believe every problem falls on their shoulders to deal with complicated issues surrounding victimization. But if they know and trust others in the community to help with these issues they may experience a great sense of relief.

Survivors – Some people react better to evidence. Ask survivors from their congregation, or a similar faith community, to share their story with doubting faith leaders.

Alternative Faith Leaders – In many churches in the south, the wife of the pastor is called the "First Lady." She is seen as a leader in her own right who can make things happen. Other key people often have the faith leader's ear.

Peers – Faith leaders share a common bond that can be an opportunity for the project. Faith leaders who are committed to the project may be your best resources to bring other faith leaders into the Project. These contacts can come one on one or through an established faith leader association.

Food – The old axioms are often true. Breaking bread is a comforting way to smooth over rough edges and bring together various cultures and faiths. One idea is to provide indigenous foods representing the different cultures in the group. Also, many pastors feel more valued if they are provided with incentives such as monetary contributions from the Project.

Bibliography—Websites of interest

(Views expressed by the authors in the following articles and websites do not necessarily reflect the opinions of OVC or MCVRC)

- <http://www.cswe.org/> *Spiritual Diversity and Social work*: Edward Canda and colleagues have gathered more than 750 references on spirituality and social work in this comprehensive bibliography, with more than 200 references new to the second edition. Entries are organized according to topics, so scholars, students, and practitioners can easily identify reference materials matching their interests. The compilers have also written more than 150 paragraph-length annotations that highlight a wide range of works within each topic.
- <http://www.hinduism-today.com> *Hinduism Today* is a quarterly news magazine articulating Indian spirituality for 135,000 readers around the world. It was founded in 1979, by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami for the following purposes: To foster Hindu solidarity as a "unity in diversity" among all sects and lineages; To inform and inspire Hindus worldwide and people interested in Hinduism; To dispel myths, illusions and misinformation about Hinduism; To protect, preserve and promote the sacred Vedas and the Hindu religion, especially the Nandinatha Sampradaya; To nurture a truly spiritual Hindu renaissance; To publish a resource for Hindu leaders and educators who promote Sanatana Dharma.
- <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/hatecrime.pdf> *Hate Crimes Data Collection Guidelines*. US. Dept. of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Criminal Justice Information Services Division, Summary Reporting System, National Incidence Reporting System. Uniform Crime Reporting Revised, October, 1999.
- http://www.ncfp.org/Family_Giving_News-12.16.2002.html#spotlight *Spotlight on Faith and Family Philanthropy*. The Journal of Philanthropy.
- <http://www.us.bahai.org/> *The Bahá'í Faith* has been an active part of religious and social life in America since the late 1800's. We are a recognized advocate for spiritual solutions based on the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh on issues such as the elimination of all forms of prejudice with an emphasis on race unity, the equality of women and men, the spiritual education of children, the importance of family cohesion, and the establishment of world peace. Bahá'u'lláh is God's Messenger for this day, a day in which all humanity is spiritually mature and can visualize the reality of uniting to build the Kingdom of God on Earth.

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