Dear Advocates, Colleagues, and Friends,

In 2014, a survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors across the U.S. was conducted to learn their views on sexual and domestic violence. Although the survey participants do not represent the breadth of religious diversity in communities across the U.S., the survey results are instructive.

A significant portion (74%) of the responding faith leaders underestimated the level of sexual and domestic violence in their congregations. As a result, they reported that they address the issue infrequently and are not sure how they should respond to victims. Most faith leaders have not received the skills, resources, or training they need to respond appropriately.

However, the survey is not all bad news. Consistent with Safe Havens’ experience, the survey asserts that there is an “unrealized potential with churches for the prevention of and response to sexual and domestic violence.” In further good news, “81% of pastors said they would take appropriate action to reduce sexual and domestic violence if they had the training and resources to do so.”

Even without a survey, we all know the importance of a safe, confidential, and effective faith community response to victims of sexual and domestic violence. We’d like to help you develop partnerships with local leaders of all faiths and denominations. These partnerships can support victims and bring faith leaders into the conversation about ending sexual and domestic violence.

Since 2008, Safe Havens has received funding from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office on Violence Against Women to develop resources that can help you, the service provider community, build partnerships with local faith leaders and congregations. Safe Havens has developed resources on elder abuse and faith and resources for rural communities. Our newest resources are called Pieces of a Bigger Picture. They have been developed for a more general audience.

- Safe Havens’ online toolkit, Pieces of a Bigger Picture: Faith Communities and Service Providers Working Together to Support Victims of Sexual and Domestic Violence, provides information about sexual and domestic violence for faith leaders and information about faith community outreach for service providers. The faith leader resources are also available in print from Safe Havens.

Safe Havens’ Pieces of a Bigger Picture: Guide for Building Partnerships between Service Providers and Faith Communities to Support Domestic and Sexual Violence Victims and Survivors explores how partnerships between faith leaders and advocates can provide wrap-around, holistic support for victims. It also explores some of the challenges and suggests strategies for overcoming those challenges. If you are asking yourself, “What is the role of local faith leaders in helping victims?” or “How do we address some of the challenges that are keeping us from working with faith leaders?” please take a look at this resource.
In conjunction with the toolkit and Partnership Guide, Safe Havens has developed this Pieces of a Bigger Picture Training Model, which includes ten interactive training exercises that address both sexual and domestic violence in a way that is relevant to faith leaders (clergy and lay). The goal of these activities is to help faith leaders better understand trauma, power and control, empowerment, victim-centered responses, and other issues that will enable them to support victims and provide referrals to your services.

This Training Model provides activities, instructions, and information that will help you successfully engage faith leaders in your community. We have used this Training Model ourselves in multiple communities across the U.S. Here is what some of the participating faith leaders had to say.

“We feel that we were part of one team, not two separate teams.”

“I am empowered to talk about these issues and have language and techniques that open up the topic.”

“It was good to have faith leaders learning together because we have much in common and when someone spoke, there was a common understanding.”

“The faith community has a valuable role to play; as a member of the faith community, I need to help faith leaders become more aware, more responsive.”

“I learned how abusers manipulate, use power & control, including remorse & pity. Many pastors are not equipped to understand this.”

Advocates also got a lot out of the training.

“Today, seeds were planted, and a bridge was built.”

“I appreciate the relationships built in this training. I feel like we are going to take this training and run with it.”

“I now understand the importance of finding a way to honor faith as well as safety.”

“Learning how to forge partnerships with faith leaders and faith communities was invaluable.”

“We need to include the faith community if we want to end domestic violence!”

As you review this Training Model, you will see we have presented a very full day of activities. You may wish to present the activities over two or more sessions, or leave some activities out and present a shorter program. We like to spend at least four hours on training and partnership building when we gather faith leaders and advocates, but you will know what works best for your community. Consider carefully your current relationship with local faith leaders and feel free to pick and choose activities that fit your setting.
Each activity includes some background information, goals and objectives, approximate time needed to present the activity, the materials you will need, instructions (denoted by an “I” in italics in the left margin), and talking points.

For more information about Safe Havens’ Partnership Guide, toolkit, or this Training Model, please contact Safe Havens at 617-951-3980/3981 or email us at info@interfaithpartners.org. You can call to request printed versions of our resources for the faith community. Also, all our resources can be downloaded for free at www.interfaithpartners.org.

Many thanks for all you do on behalf of faith-based victims of sexual and domestic violence.

Sincerely,

Rev. Anne Marie Hunter Alyson Morse Katzman Shireen Akram-Boshar

Introduction