



# Faithful Allies

## Working with Christian Leaders

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### WHO IS KOREAN AMERICAN FAMILY SERVICES?



- Founded in 1983 by immigrant Korean women influenced by **Dr. Tae Young Lee**, Korea's first female attorney, and women's and children's advocate
- Serve over 7,000 adults and children each year

## KFAM OVERVIEW

- 42 Staff
- 13 Board Members
- 150+ Interns/Volunteers per year
  
- 4 key programs :
  - Counseling
  - Family Violence
  - Child Wellness
  - Asian Foster Family Initiative



## COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH

- KFAM's mental health services are tailored to the unique needs of Korean American families, adults, & children



## CHILD WELLNESS

- KFAM promotes child wellness & development through our Child Care Food Program
- Parenting seminars, children's art workshops, Mommy & Me classes and other programs for Korean immigrant parents



## ASIAN FOSTER FAMILY INITIATIVE (AFFI)

- AFFI launched in 2014
- AFFI recruits, trains, and supports Korean and other Asian Pacific Islanders (API) foster parents
- Strive to provide culturally appropriate homes to Korean/API foster children



## FAMILY VIOLENCE

- KFAM's Center for Women and Children provides free trauma-informed care and support for victims of violence.
- In 2019, provided 166 DVSA survivors with case management, counseling, & support group to
- Crisis hotline & walk-ins to 225 victims
- Plus other DV-impacted individuals: batterers' intervention, anger management, individual/couples/ family counseling, child supervised visitation, family law clinics



## KFAM's work with faith community

- Started in 2012 working closely with Korean faith leaders to build DV awareness, reduce stigma, improve 1<sup>st</sup> response
- Trained more than 1,000 Korean clergy members
- 40 hr. DV training, 2-day retreat, one day seminars, clergy conference, etc.
- We receive more referrals from churches, pastors are speaking on the pulpit, they are better first responders



## Faith Leaders' Knowledge of DV

- KFAM's 2012 Community Assessment findings:
- 8 out of 9 Korean survivors in focus group said they went to a faith leader before a DV service provider,
- 100% had negative experience – were told their abuse wasn't serious enough to warrant going to a shelter, criticized for calling police, shamed in the sermon for not supporting their husband
- In survey of 102 Korean clergy, 60% reported they knew of DV amongst their congregants, yet only 28% referred them out (DV agency, counseling, police, etc.)



## Why Christian Leaders?

- Easy way to reach out to the community
  - approx. 70-80% of Korean American immigrant families attend church regularly
- The role of church & respect given to Christian leaders by the community
- Church itself has various resources from the congregation
- Congregation often gives absolute trust in faith leaders



## Values: DV v. Faith Community

Domestic Violence Community	Faith Community
Feminist Origins	Patriarchal System
Progressive, social justice values	Christian, conservative values
Survivor-Center	Family-Centered



## Challenges?

- Since there are more male pastors, they bring conservative male dominant culture
- A lot of faith leaders believe they know everything they need to know about DV already
- A lot of victim blaming
- Don't want to break up the family in any circumstance
- Not a lot of faith leaders acknowledge DV happening in their congregation
- When church find out about DV in their church, they would want to hide it rather than to open up or to speak up about it
- Messy situation because both partners & extended family often attending the church together
- When a pastor help a victim, she ends up leaving the church in the end anyways b/c of embarrassment

## Clergy Conference

- Way to reach out to many clergy members
- 90+ attendees
- Guest Speaker, Panel discussion, Small group session..etc.
- To Introduce our agency and services around DVSA and to let them know about DV in the community.



## 2-Day Retreat for Women Leaders

- Started as a learning retreat for faith leaders where they learn about DV deeper.
- Utilize art and craft...etc. to provide “healing space” for participants
- Opportunity to building strong relationship/connection with faith leaders



- Why Women leaders?
  - In our community, women leaders are usually the ones that take care of families in the congregation.

## 40-Hr DV Training

- 40-HR DV Advocate Training
- In two settings; at KFAM and Seminary school
- Faith leaders learn how to serve their congregation as first responders
- Topics include DV 101, Sexual Assault, Legal issues (family law, immigration relief, criminal), dating violence, vicarious trauma, resources...etc.



## Impact of our work

- KFAM's 2019 evaluation report findings:
  - Slight increase in noticing church members with DV related problems.
  - 43.5% of faith leaders identified DV as “the most serious problem” that Korean community faces compared to 15.7% in 2012.
  - Faith leaders have substantially gained knowledge in various forms of IPV.
  - Significant change in Korean faith leaders' perceptions toward the most appropriate way to help DV victims between 2012 and 2019



## **What Does it Take to Work with Christian Leaders?**

- A lot of time/energy to build trust first before trying to change leaders' belief
- Flexibility/patience handling different perspectives (sometimes opposing comments)
- Modifying training/outreach material to make it acceptable to Christian leaders
- Emphasis on how the training/DV is related to their work in ministry
- Need to attend events to make connection (ex. religious conference, prayers, services, etc.)

## **KFAM's Strategy with Christian Leaders**

- Emphasizing "Healthy Family" rather than "Domestic Violence"
- Utilizing group of Christian leaders as bridge (KFAC)
- Providing useful information/resources (e.g., 1-page sheet with list of dos/don'ts & numbers to shelters, legal aid, etc.)
- Having an event that could provide "healing" for them as well (2-day retreat for pastor's wives focused on self-care)
- Providing opportunity for them to work closely with KFAM (e.g. volunteer for DV batterers' group or facilitate small group discussion during 2-day retreats)
- Carefully timing controversial topics that could trigger negative reaction (hold off until trust is built)
- Facts rather than opinion

## Takeways

- Be patient – building trust takes time
- Be humble – these are the respected leaders of the community who hold far more influence & sway than we do
- Be open minded – they may share different value systems and priorities, but ultimately we are all trying to create happier families and healthier relationships
- Be ready to be challenged – can be difficult working with those who may not respect things you feel deeply about
- Know your limits – think ahead where you, your colleagues, or your agency may have to draw the line

## Question?



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