

**Asian/Pacific Islander
Domestic Violence Resource Project (DVRP)
Community Awareness Toolkit**

VIRGINIA WASHINGTON DC MARYLAND



**FREE FROM
VIOLENCE**

DVRP 

(202) 833-2233
www.DVRP.org
info@dvrp.org

Who We Are

The Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project (DVRP) has been serving survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault for 20 years. Our mission is to address, prevent, and end domestic violence and sexual assault in the Asian/Pacific Islander (A/PI) community, while empowering survivors to rebuild their lives after abuse. We are the *only* pan-Asian organization that provides culturally and linguistically specific domestic violence and sexual assault services in the DC metro area. Our staff, advocates, and volunteers collectively speak over 20 A/PI languages, including Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Urdu, and Hindi.

We are survivor-centered. We are survivor-run.

What is survivor-centered? We meet survivors where they are, not where we want them to be. Our work is founded on survivors' experiences, needs and priorities. DVRP is also survivor-run: we have survivors on staff, on our Board of Directors, and also as advocates and volunteers.

DVRP's **Survivor Services Program (SSP)** provides direct services to A/PI survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Our full-time Case Managers, supported by Bilingual Advocates, serve women and men, regardless of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc. SSP services include safety planning, information and referrals to shelter, legal, and social services (such as food, clothing, mental health and substance abuse services).

The **Outreach Program** works in the community to raise awareness of domestic violence and sexual assault. We do this by promoting healthy relationships, stressing the importance of consent, and distributing outreach materials anywhere and everywhere so people know about our services.

Our **Training and Technical Assistance Program** works closely with mainstream service providers and community leaders to strengthen their ability to serve A/PI survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. DVRP trains service providers on best practices when responding to A/PI survivors, cultural competency, DV screenings, and other trainings specific to sensitive topics in the A/PI community.

Purpose of the Community Awareness Toolkit

In 2014 DVRP's A/PI Community Outreach Assessment determined that the DC A/PI community (including community leaders and services providers) wanted to become more proactive regarding domestic violence and sexual assault in the community. However, most assessment participants indicated they only had a basic understanding of the issues. Additionally, they did not feel capable of consistently identifying signs of abuse. In light of the Community Outreach Assessment this toolkit was created to fulfill the following goals:

- Strengthen the ability of A/PI organizations and community leaders to effectively recognize signs of domestic violence and sexual assault; and

- Facilitate a collaborative community response to domestic violence and sexual assault by establishing a referral process to DVRP.

Recently, the widespread occurrence of domestic violence and sexual assault has been receiving more national publicity than ever before; thereby generating more community initiated responses to violence. Yet there are still significant pockets of our diverse, growing A/PI community in which domestic violence and sexual assault remain invisible. Survivors continue to be silenced, while abusers continue their violent behavior. Many of us mistakenly believe these issues have nothing to do with us because we do not know anyone who is experiencing them. Or that even if we did, it would not be our place to intervene in a private matter. The reality is that domestic violence and sexual assault affect each and every one of us. Male and female. Old and young. Straight and gay. We all know survivors and perpetrators of violence.

In order to take the first step toward change, we have to address the underlying dynamics that perpetuate violence in our community. Some of the most prevalent factors include:

- **Privacy.** Traditionally, many A/PI community members believe that family matters should not be discussed publicly. The notion that privacy should be maintained regardless of the severity of what is happening in the home allows family abuse to continue without intervention or support from those outside of the family.
- **Taboo.** Some members of the A/PI community feel it's inappropriate to discuss sexual behavior. Consequently, topics related to sexuality are forbidden. When we collectively refuse to address sex, we allow sexually violent behavior to thrive in the vacuum of silence.
- **Shame.** Family honor is typically highly valued in the A/PI community. Many of us go to great lengths to preserve that honor by avoiding anything that might shame the family. Unfortunately, when we prioritize family honor rather than a survivor's wellbeing and safety, we are silencing survivors and keeping them in potentially life-threatening situations.
- **Victim Blaming.** In many A/PI ethnic cultures, family leaders and community members often blame survivors for what has happened to them. We ask survivors what they were wearing, what they did or what they said that caused them to be abused. When we exclusively focus on the survivor, we release the abuser from any accountability for his/her actions.

As more of us become aware of the dynamics behind domestic violence and sexual assault, the more we can slowly change our communities' silent tolerance for such behavior. We can challenge the ideas and practices that tolerate domestic violence and sexual assault. We can create a world that is supportive for survivors so they no longer feel ashamed and alone. We can create a world free of domestic and sexual violence.

Recognizing Signs of Domestic Violence

DVRP's definition of domestic violence is a *pattern* of abusive behaviors used to gain **power and control** over a dating partner, spouse or relative. It is not an isolated incident and can include verbal, emotional, psychological, sexual, economic, spiritual, or physical forms of abuse. As a community leader, it is essential to recognize signs of domestic violence and offer assistance when it is safe and appropriate.

In the Asian/Pacific Islander community, it is commonly believed domestic violence is only physical abuse. Bruises, cuts, and fractures can be clear visible signs of abuse, but not all abusers use physical abuse or only physical abuse. Here are a few examples of how one person can enforce power and control over another:

- **Economic:** controlling/withholding finances; not allowing partner to have or keep a job.
- **Emotional/Psychological:** name calling; blaming; shaming; unreasonable jealousy; threatening to leave or commit suicide; isolating partner from friends and family.
- **Sexual:** forcing partner to watch pornography; forcing partner to perform sexual acts.
- **Spiritual:** not allowing or forcing a person to attend a place of worship; using religious text to make the person feel bad; spreading rumors about the person at a place of worship.

We want to acknowledge each domestic violence situation is as unique as the individuals in them. Abusers can get creative with manipulative tactics that may not be mentioned above. However, we can learn how to respond to a survivor. Whether as a bystander, service provider, or community leader, we can help determine the safety and future of the survivor and other affected family members, including children.

Bystander Engagement

Bystanders are people who see or hear a potentially harmful situation, but might be unsure of what to do, afraid of intervening or waiting for someone else to act first. We are all bystanders....YOU are a bystander! You can help end domestic violence and sexual assault whether you are a community leader, a coworker, a caregiver or a complete stranger. You can:

- Learn more about what domestic violence and sexual assault looks like in our communities (i.e. the signs);
- Listen to and support any survivor who shares his or her story with us without judgment or shame;
- Speak up and out to hold abusive members of our community accountable;
- Use the Three Ds (from the Green Dot Initiative):
 - Direct: confront the situation directly, but put your safety first.
 - Distract: cause a distraction to interrupt or change the situation.
 - Delegate: involve others who may be in a better situation to prevent the violence from taking place.
- Call the police if someone is at risk of imminent harm; and
- Raise awareness amongst our peers, friends and family.

Guiding Principles When Working with Survivors

- Never assume what a survivor wants, needs, or should do.
- Be aware of your baggage, values, and priorities and do not force them onto the survivor.
- Understand that speaking the same language or being from the same community does not make a person qualified to speak about domestic violence or sexual assault.
- Check before assuming that a resource does not exist (i.e. counseling services for survivors in the Vietnamese community).
- Ask clarifying questions.
- Remember the survivor is the expert in her/his own experience and should be the guide.
- Remember your professional role as a community leader.

Refer Clients to DVRP

Remember: domestic violence is against the law. The Asian/Pacific Islander communities face unique challenges, but keep in mind no one deserves to be abused. Even if the survivor is undocumented, s/he can get help. Call DVRP to speak to a Case Manager about services available in your area.

