

Faith and Intimate Partner Violence

Handbook for Advocates

A collaborative publication produced by the
Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence
and FaithTrust Institute

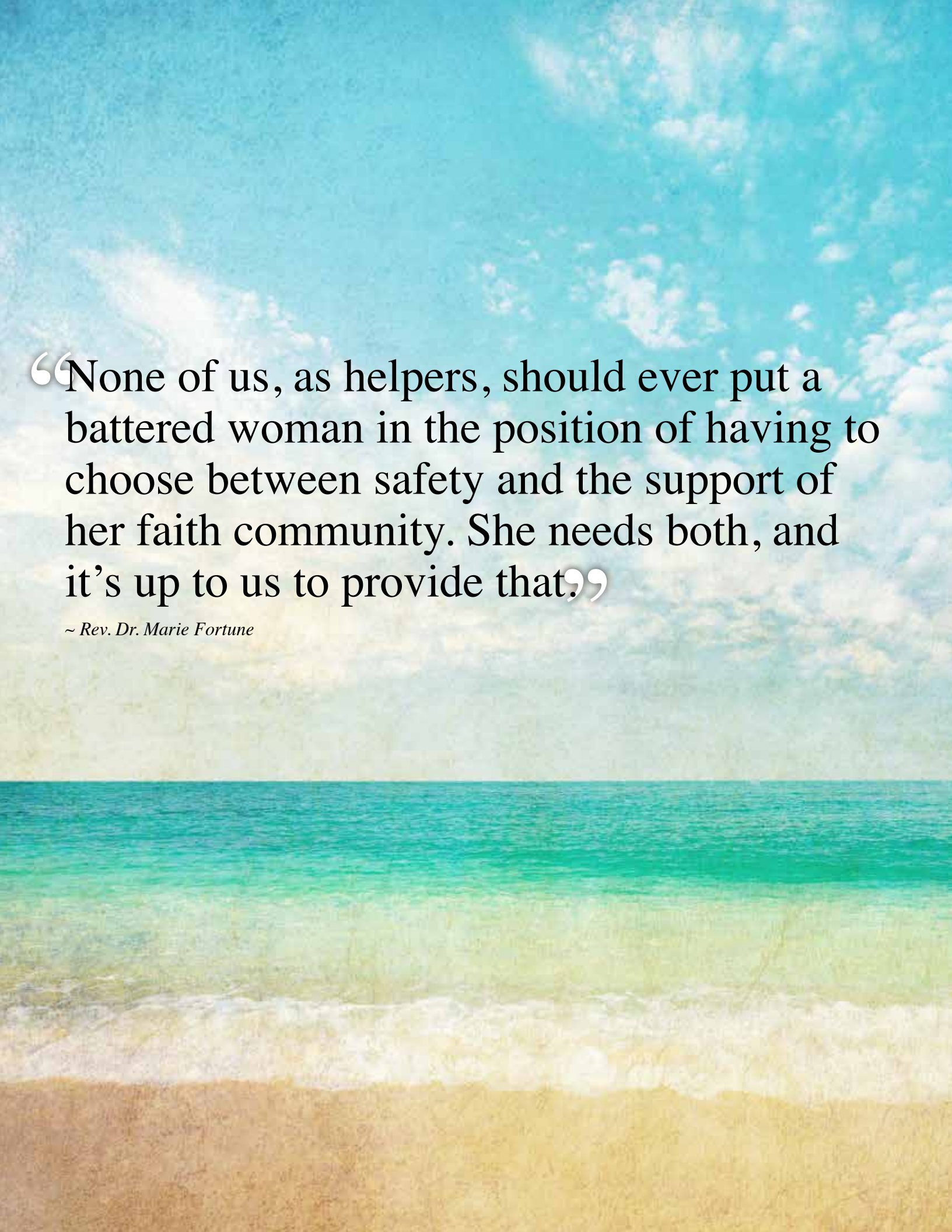
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Working together to end
sexual & domestic violence



FCADV

Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence

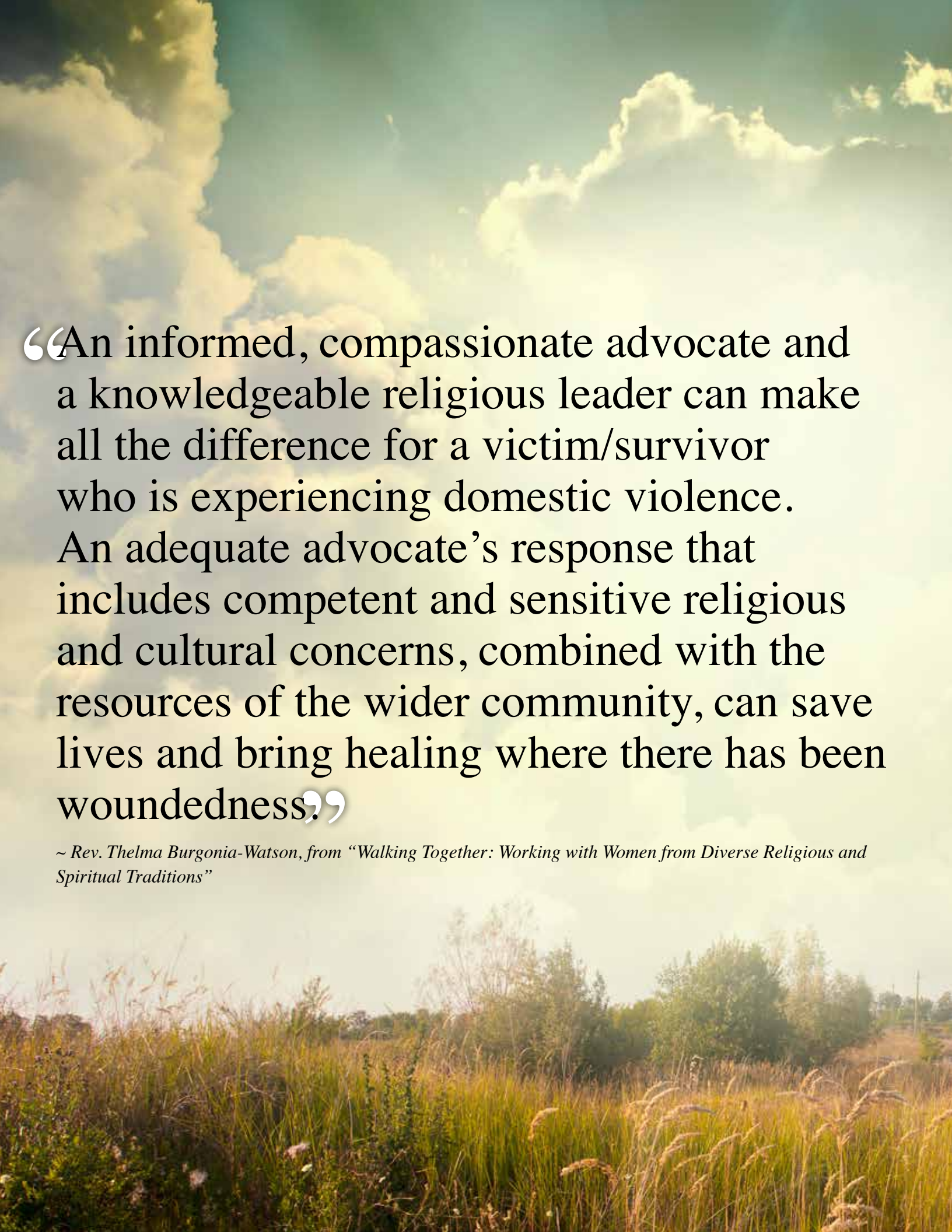
A scenic view of a beach with turquoise water and a blue sky with white clouds. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, and the sky is a clear, bright blue with scattered white clouds. The beach is a golden sand, and the waves are gentle and white. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

“None of us, as helpers, should ever put a battered woman in the position of having to choose between safety and the support of her faith community. She needs both, and it’s up to us to provide that.”

~ Rev. Dr. Marie Fortune

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“An informed, compassionate advocate and a knowledgeable religious leader can make all the difference for a victim/survivor who is experiencing domestic violence. An adequate advocate’s response that includes competent and sensitive religious and cultural concerns, combined with the resources of the wider community, can save lives and bring healing where there has been woundedness.”

~ Rev. Thelma Burgonia-Watson, from “Walking Together: Working with Women from Diverse Religious and Spiritual Traditions”

Introduction

Why is faith an important consideration in advocacy?

Religion is a primary cultural and personal influence.

Nearly eight in ten Americans are religiously affiliated.¹

For many people, including survivors, religious beliefs are intrinsic and influence the way they see themselves, make sense of their situations, weigh their options, and make decisions. Advocates must recognize this influence and respect survivors' understanding of their identities and faith traditions.

Cultural Competence is essential. Cultural competency is critical to providing sensitive, safe, and informed services to survivors of intimate partner violence. Spirituality, or the practice of faith, is an important aspect of culture. Just as you honor and respect the language, diet, and other customs of survivors, it is important to respect their spiritual beliefs. If you don't understand and value faith as part of a survivor's story, you are missing out on possible options for safety, encouragement and support for the survivor.

Survivors have spoken. Many survivors have shared that their spiritual beliefs and faith communities have been critical resources in survival and healing. You should not minimize or ignore those beliefs if you are going to effectively utilize every option and resource available.

In Florida, 7.36 million of 18.8 million residents are either full members or are regular attendees of a religious congregation, including Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others². These figures do not include those who attend less regularly, or did not report a specific faith tradition yet may still practice privately.

Domestic violence advocates regularly serve survivors with religious/spiritual beliefs.

Frequently Used Terms

Faith: belief in God, a higher power, or in the doctrines or teachings of religion

Spiritual: of or relating to the spirit or soul, as distinguished from the physical nature

Spirituality: the state or quality of being dedicated to God, a higher power, religion, or spiritual things or values, especially as contrasted with material or temporal ones

Religion: any formal or institutionalized expression of spiritual beliefs

Faith Community: a body of persons adhering to a particular set of beliefs and practices

Church or Congregation: an assembly of persons brought together for common religious worship or education, or for other church activities.

¹<http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/>

²http://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/rs/12/rcms2010_12_state_rate_2010.asp.

Religion can be a resource or a roadblock.

When intimate partner violence enters their lives, survivors who find meaning in their faith may experience a profound spiritual crisis.

An experience of abuse may leave a survivor struggling with theological questions that stand in the way of seeking safety or resolving the crisis. When these types of questions arise, people typically seek guidance and assistance from their faith leaders. In fact, faith communities are often in a unique position to be the first place a survivor discloses abuse and asks for assistance. With this disclosure, survivors may encounter both resources and roadblocks from their faith traditions and communities.

Resources are sacred texts, teachings or structures of a faith tradition that:

- Support ending violence
- Encourage survivors in seeking safety and healing
- Empower survivors
- Recognize a relationship/marriage is based on mutuality and trust, where violence has no place
- Seek accountability for those who harm others

A crisis of faith is a crisis. See page 10 for more examples and discussion.



Examples of sacred texts faith leaders may use as resources with survivors:

- “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Ephesians 5:20)
- “Live with them [women] on a footing of kindness and equity.” (Quran: An-Nisaa 4:19)
- “A man is to honor his wife more than [he honors] himself and to love her as much as [he loves] himself.” (Maimonides, Ishut 5:19)



Roadblocks are factors that contribute to the perpetuation of violence and compromise the safety of survivors and their children.

Roadblocks:

- Misuse sacred texts or teachings to justify, minimize, or excuse intimate partner violence
- Fail to understand that violence in a relationship/marriage breaks any covenantal bonds
- Prioritize forgiveness and restoration over safety of the survivor
- Perpetuate silence and shame

A faith community can be a critical stabilizing force for survivors. Whether or not it responds to important theological questions in a way that supports safety and healing, the community itself – and particularly the survivor’s personal faith – may remain essential resources.

What survivors need from their faith communities:

- To be heard and believed
- Encouragement and support for the road ahead
- Comfort and prayer
- Referral to advocates for safety planning and services
- Confidentiality
- Sound interpretations of religious texts that serve to support and encourage

Encouraging responses that a faith community can provide:

- “I’m so sorry this happened to you.”
- “I believe you.”
- “You deserve to be treated with respect.”
- “I’m afraid for you. Let’s focus on your safety.”
- “I know a good advocate who can help. Would you like me to call them with you or give you their contact information?”

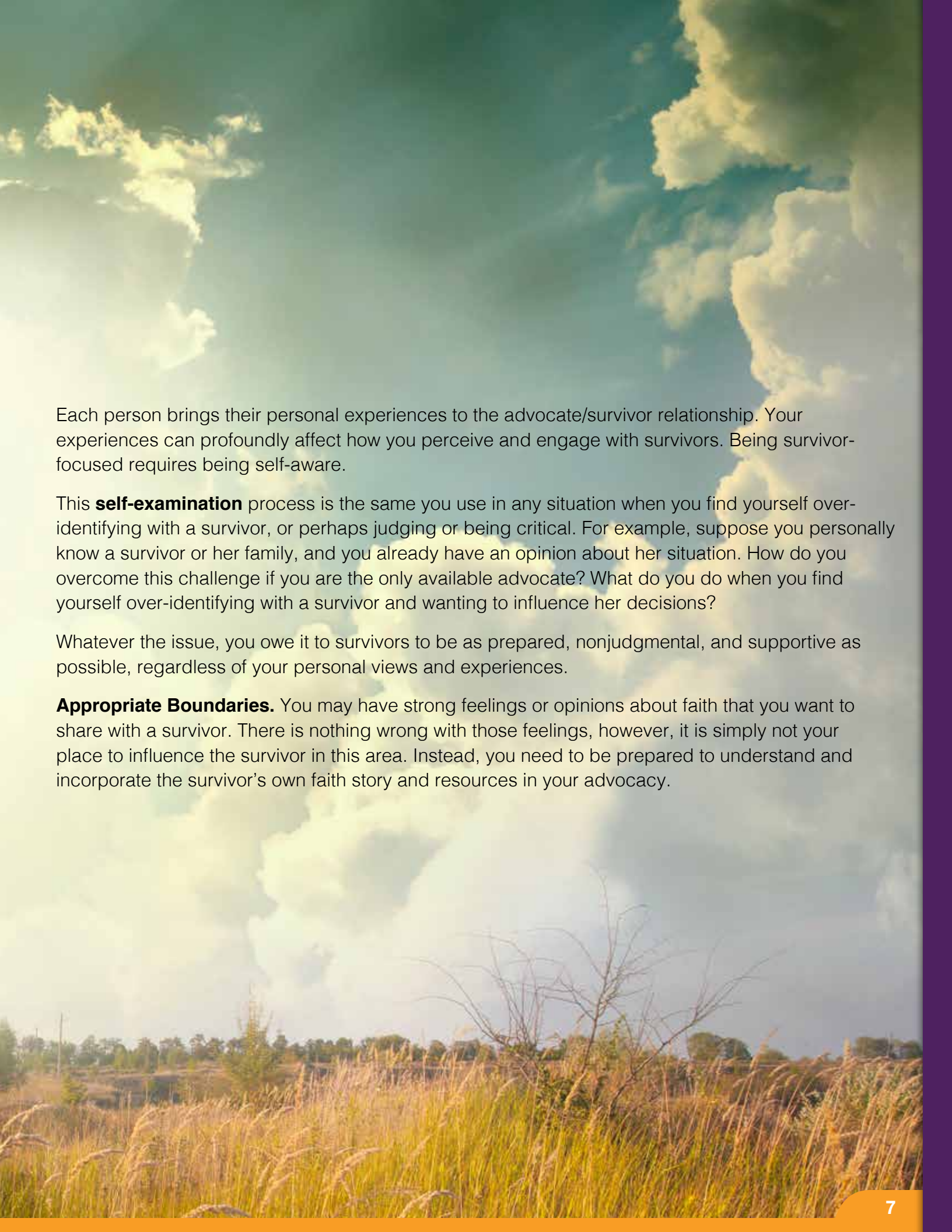
First Things First: Your Views

Your perception and experience impact your advocacy. Your interactions must be survivor-focused and your approach should be guided by curiosity and unconditional positive regard. This means you want to learn the survivor's story, believing and accepting it despite your personal views.

You need to consider your personal experiences with faith, spirituality and/or religion, both positive and negative. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- What is my personal experience with religion and faith?
- If it has been negative, how will I find a way to be a resource to a survivor who discusses her spirituality?
- If it has been positive, how do I experience it as a resource in my work as an advocate?
- How do I feel about people who do not share my particular faith experience or traditions?
- How do I feel about others who don't believe as I do?
- What do I know about the survivor's faith tradition, and how do I know it? Might I have a bias?
- Have I ever been harmed by someone – especially a person in a position of authority—from a faith community? If so, how has this experience affected my perceptions?
- How will I set aside my views in order to best serve those who are involved in a faith tradition that I view as abusive, misogynistic, or otherwise oppressive?
- What steps can I take to ensure I don't proselytize* or influence their decision around spiritual beliefs and faith communities?
- If someone from my faith tradition wants to discuss faith issues, am I comfortable sharing my perspective?

* Proselytize means to induce or recruit someone to convert to another faith or ideal.



Each person brings their personal experiences to the advocate/survivor relationship. Your experiences can profoundly affect how you perceive and engage with survivors. Being survivor-focused requires being self-aware.

This **self-examination** process is the same you use in any situation when you find yourself over-identifying with a survivor, or perhaps judging or being critical. For example, suppose you personally know a survivor or her family, and you already have an opinion about her situation. How do you overcome this challenge if you are the only available advocate? What do you do when you find yourself over-identifying with a survivor and wanting to influence her decisions?

Whatever the issue, you owe it to survivors to be as prepared, nonjudgmental, and supportive as possible, regardless of your personal views and experiences.

Appropriate Boundaries. You may have strong feelings or opinions about faith that you want to share with a survivor. There is nothing wrong with those feelings, however, it is simply not your place to influence the survivor in this area. Instead, you need to be prepared to understand and incorporate the survivor's own faith story and resources in your advocacy.

Assessment

How can you assess the religious/spiritual needs of survivors?

Indirect Approach

Your intake process or general conversation can help you learn about the religious/spiritual needs of survivors without directly asking faith-based questions. In particular, strength-based questions can naturally generate good information about a survivor's faith. Listen for faith-based responses when addressing standard topics.

Even if you are unsure or uncomfortable talking about faith or spirituality, survivors may be grateful that you recognize its significance to them with a non-judgmental approach.

Support System:

- Do you have a support system, and what does it look like?
- Who in your life are your biggest supporters?
- What has helped you survive so far?
- What nourishes your spirit? What gives you courage and strength?

Safety planning: When safety planning and/or completing a petition for an Injunction for Protection, ask if there are other specific places besides home, work or school where her abuser might try to find her, such as her place of worship.

Schedule: It is common for advocates to ask incoming residents about their weekly schedules. This is another opportunity to determine if religious or spiritual activities are a part of the survivor's life.

Transportation: A survivor may request regular rides to a church, temple, mosque, or other faith-based settings. This is a perfect opening for a conversation. A good question to ask in this situation is, "It sounds like your faith community is a positive resource. Is there any other way we can support you in this area of your life?"

Dietary Restrictions: Asking incoming shelter residents about their dietary restrictions is considerate of those with faith-based food restrictions. For example, many observant Jews and Muslims may avoid pork or shellfish for religious reasons. When making a shopping list for the shelter pantry, include all residents in the decision making to help address any faith-based dietary needs. Avoid questions like "Why can't you eat ____?" which may make her feel she has to justify her dietary habits. Instead, you could ask how it will impact her if other residents store and cook foods on her list of dietary restrictions.





Power and Control Wheel:³ When discussing “isolation,” “using children,” or “male privilege,” a survivor might talk about how her abuser doesn’t allow her to attend her place of worship anymore, mocks her faith in front of the children, or manipulates their faith leader into advising her to “obey” or “submit more” to stop the abuse. She may reveal other important faith-based information as well.

Direct Approach

Sometimes the answers to standard intake questions will not reveal a survivor’s faith perspective. Her hesitation may be based in fear, shame, mistrust of support services, or lack of a private place to receive services (such as in a rural area). She may have heard that shelters “cause” divorce, or “destroy the traditional family.” She may believe her information or situation will not be confidential particularly if her faith community, her friends, or her family members support or volunteer for the organization.

If this is the case, you may need to ask direct questions to ensure she has every opportunity to talk about her faith-based needs. The more transparent and open you are, the more comfortable and open survivors will be.

The best way to directly help a survivor talk about personal yet important topics like faith is to normalize the conversation. Just as many medical professionals have adopted asking all patients if they feel safe at home as a standard question, faith questions can be normalized with survivors. Such questions can include:

- Many of our residents have a faith or spiritual practice that is important to them. How about you?
- We have heard from many survivors that their faith is very important to their lives and survival. Is this true for you?
- We have heard from many survivors that spirituality is a significant part of coping. Is that true for you?
- We have learned from a lot of people that abuse has affected the most important aspects of their lives, like their family, their friends, and their faith. What is your experience?
- What effect has the abuse had on your beliefs and values, such as relationships or family or faith?
- Do you participate in a faith community? If so, have you sought help there? What did you find? How do you feel about the response you received?

A supportive demeanor and non-judgmental response to answers that reveal faith-based resources (faith leaders, faith communities, personal spirituality) helps survivors know it is safe to talk about their beliefs and traditions.

³<http://www.theduluthmodel.org/pdf/PowerandControl.pdf>

A Crisis of Faith is a Crisis

Crisis of Faith: The spiritual beliefs of survivors and the influence of their faith community can have a fundamental impact on their safety, decision making and survival. The abuse or the need to leave the abuser may cause a crisis of faith.

Survivors often struggle to make meaning of their suffering and to process ideas around forgiveness, submission, repentance, abandonment by God, and other faith-related topics.

Survivors of abuse may ask:

- Why did God let this happen to me?
- What have I done to deserve this?
- Is God punishing me?
- Where was God when I needed help?
- Will God forgive me if I get a divorce?
- Do I have to forgive my abuser?

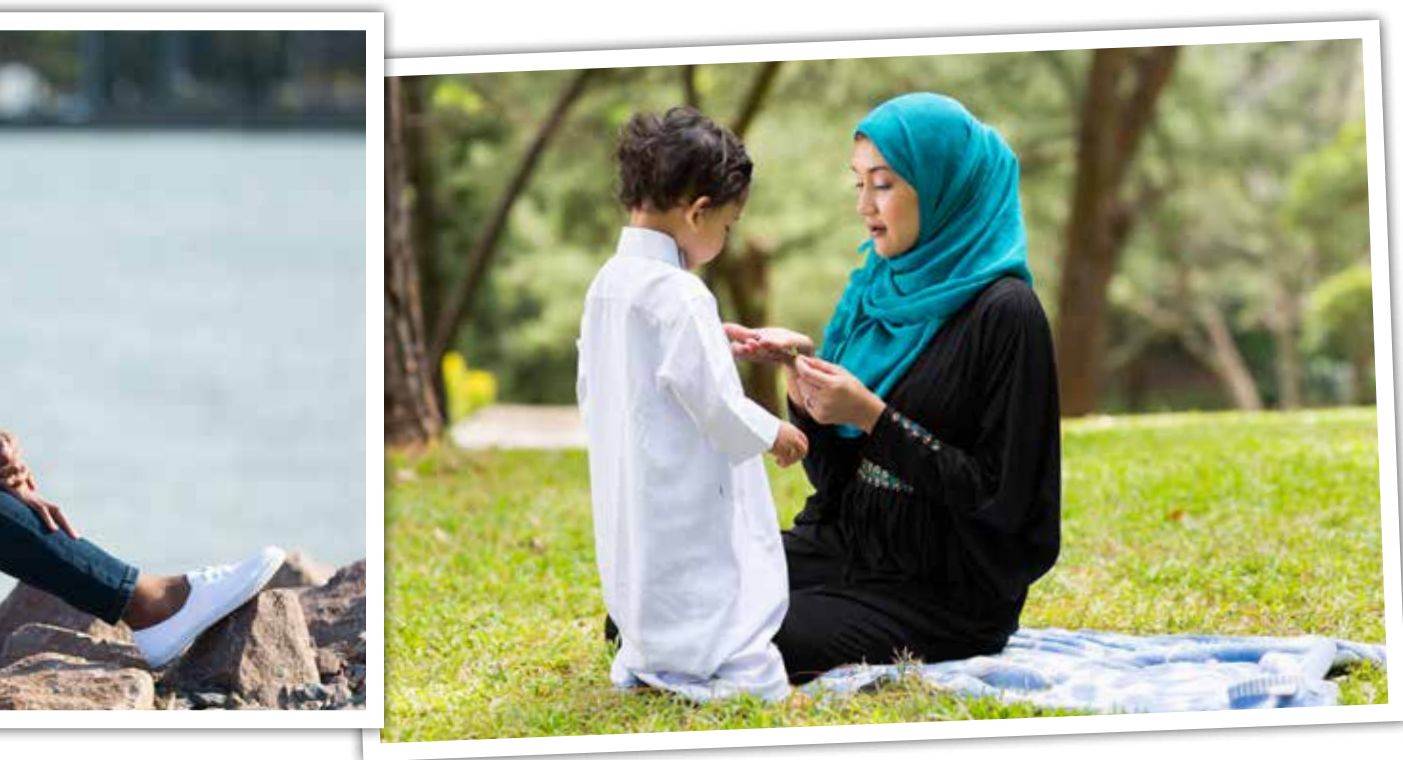


For many survivors, given the significant role of spirituality and religion, it is important that this crisis is acknowledged and addressed in a non-judgmental manner.

Remember to recognize your own limitations regarding the survivors' spiritual or religious beliefs and traditions. Your role is to be supportive without endorsing or dismissing her personal beliefs. See page 6, *First Things First: Your Views*.

There are many reasons why couples counseling is not safe when domestic violence is involved. A few of these include:

- The faith leader may not know how to identify the batterer's need for power/control or the kinds of abuse used to achieve it.
- The faith leader may not know how perpetrators manipulate and misuse sacred texts or religious beliefs to justify abuse.
- A focus on mutual responsibility for problems in the relationship can encourage the batterer to continue to hold the survivor responsible for the abuse.
- The batterer may retaliate against the survivor for disclosing abuse to the faith leader.
- The batterer may retaliate against the survivor when a faith leader detects and/or confronts the abuse even without a clear disclosure.



To respond to these questions, it is important to ask the survivor what they think. Here are some possible responses:

- What do you think about that?
- It sounds like this means a lot to you.
- How did you decide that?
- What does your pastor/rabbi/imam/faith leader say about it? What does your faith tell you about violence? Justice? Peace? Oppression?

Due to a lack of understanding of intimate partner violence, the faith community may discourage a survivor from seeking safety by:

- Normalizing or minimizing abuse within relationships/marriage
- Advising couples counseling and restoration of the relationship over safety
- Encouraging submission as a solution to the abuse
- Using religion or sacred texts to impose reconciliation
- Shunning those who choose to end their relationship

Let survivors know that if their faith is important to them, it is important to you. If you aren't familiar with a topic, let the survivors know. In those cases, you might ask:

- Have you talked to anyone about these concerns before?
- Is there someone you trust who would be helpful with these questions?
- Would you like to talk to a faith leader about what you are going through?
This last question is only appropriate when a faith-based referral is available.

Honoring the Diversity of Faith-Based Beliefs amongst Survivors

How can you honor the diversity of faith-based beliefs of survivors in practical ways? What does a welcoming shelter space look like? Here is a checklist for shelters regarding the faith-based needs of survivors.

Spiritual Practice

- When possible, provide separate or private space for individual and/or group meditations, rituals, prayers, and worship.
- Provide ritual items such as candles, copies of Bibles (both Christian and Jewish), Qur'an, prayer books, and other relevant items for worship and holy day observance.
- Encourage celebrations of any holidays observed by residents, such as Ramadan and Rosh Hashanah. Be sensitive, especially during December, to the reality that not all residents are Christian. High visibility of the "Christmas season" can feel very isolating to women and children of other faiths and traditions.

Respect

- Do not let cultural biases, myths, or stereotypes get in the way of validating the survivor, her experiences, and her decisions.
- Do not proselytize or otherwise attempt to lead her away from her beliefs no matter how sincerely you hold your own personal beliefs.
- If you think you might be unable to support the survivor nonjudgmentally, talk to your supervisor, and, when appropriate, refer the survivor to another advocate. This should only be communicated to the survivor as a natural part of the intake process, such as a referral to someone who is more familiar or knowledgeable about issues the survivor is facing. For example, "I think I know a great advocate for you."





Dietary Practice

- When possible, provide cooking equipment (e.g. pots and pans) utensils, and space for food preparation and eating in accordance with particular religious traditions (Kosher, Halal, etc.).
- Maintain a supply of paper plates, utensils, cups, etc.
- Provide a vegetarian meal option at every meal.
- Include residents in the decision making when creating shopping lists for the shelter.
- Explore the possibility of providing residents with Kosher, Halal, etc. packaged meals.
- Provide or make accessible cooking ingredients for meals from various religious, cultural, and ethnic traditions.

Kosher foods are those that conform to the regulations of kashrut (Jewish dietary law).

Halal is any object or an action which is permissible to use or engage in, according to Islamic law. It is often used in reference to foods and drinks permissible for Muslims to eat or drink under Islamic Shari'ah (law).

Modesty

- Be aware that, for some women, modesty has religious significance.
- Provide space where individual privacy is secured – for bathing, dressing, and use of the toilet.
- Don't walk into a resident's room unless she has expressly let you in. Don't assume that residents are comfortable talking to you in pajamas or any state other than fully dressed.
- Always be cautious about the use of touch. Ask before you reach out to hug someone, and ask in a way that makes it clearly their choice, such as "Would you like a hug?"



Assessing Faith-Based Referral Sources

It is very important to become familiar with community faith-based resources. You need to know before you make a referral to a faith-based resource that it is safe, non-judgmental, welcoming and competent. Survivors may perceive any referral you make as an endorsement and therefore safe. Here are ways to assess faith-based referral sources:

Listen to survivors. Some will have stories about how faith communities have responded to them. Just as you might alert your co-workers to how other individuals or systems treat survivors (police officers, judges, child protection workers, etc.), you should communicate this knowledge about faith-based resources, within the bounds of confidentiality, with the rest of the advocate team.

Recognize faith leaders/communities who have reached out to you. Which communities have requested information about your services, and more importantly, training on intimate partner violence and sexual assault? The groups who have been proactively engaged in your work may be your safest and most trustworthy referrals.

Identify the faith leaders/communities already supporting your mission. Existing support for your mission may indicate openness to assisting survivors. If you are involved in a faith community, share with your peers as appropriate your observations of your own faith leaders as to whether or not they are sensitive and safe referrals.

Listen to and observe local faith leaders in community events and in the media. They might support your center financially or otherwise, but do they also speak out against domestic and sexual violence? Do they promote the ideals of peace, social justice, and equality?

Follow up, follow up, follow up. Whenever possible, follow up with survivors when they have accessed the resources of the local faith communities based on your referral, particularly if it is a new referral. Were they treated respectfully? Was the staff and environment welcoming? Were they pressured to make decisions before they were ready? Were they encouraged to reconcile the relationship with the abuser when it was unsafe or pressured into couples counseling?

Engaging Faith Leaders

Faith-based organizations are often the bedrock of both urban and rural communities, particularly for underserved populations. In addition to emotional and spiritual support, faith communities can be a vital resource for food, clothing, transportation, employment, and other basic daily living needs. How can you engage faith communities in addressing and preventing intimate partner violence?

Learn your area's faith-based resources. Start with the resources you know and work from there. Do the faith leaders in your area meet together for mutual support or civic reasons? In many areas, faith communities have joined together to address local issues such as poverty, homelessness, and social justice. Does a faith-based organization you already collaborate with participate in such a coalition?

Learn your area's faith community leaders. You have many potential allies in a faith community, not only the head pastor, bishop, rabbi, or other formal leader. Some of these might include:

- Elders
- Lay ministry leaders
- "First Ladies"
- Faith-based outreach ministry/non-denominational ministry
- Stephen Ministers
- Hospital and prison chaplains
- Parish nurses
- Those not affiliated with services but who are respected in the community

Seek those leaders who are largely responsible for organizing local events and who are known in the community for advising others wisely.

Make connections. Do any agencies you already partner with (food banks, charitable organizations, law enforcement, etc.) also partner with faith communities? Use those connections/events to meet and greet faith leaders, thank them for their service to the community, and express a desire to collaborate.

Explore common ground. Remember that faith communities and DV service providers both care about and work towards the well-being of families and the community. Find shared goals, such as justice, peace, compassion, violence-free families, etc. Communicate using this shared language.

Many rural areas have ministerial associations or alliances. These are groups of faith leaders – formal and informal – that meet to provide support for each other, coordinate resources, and to address topics that affect the wider community. If you don't know if your area has a ministerial association, you can ask faith leaders if they participate in one. Some communities have road signs at their town-centers indicating the presence of an association and welcoming newcomers and visitors to the area.

Faith communities may not think to connect with a local domestic violence center unless they have a member who is in crisis. However, prevention programming may also provide opportunities for collaboration. See Opportunities for Collaboration on page 17.

Openly address the topics of mandated reporting, confidentiality and liability with faith

leaders. These topics may not hold the same meaning for each of you. For example, clergy and advocates may have different reporting requirements. It is important for everyone to know those requirements when acting collaboratively. A helpful tool can be found here: www.childwelfare.gov.

Evaluate openness and willingness to work with survivors. What do they do when you approach them about intimate partner violence?

- Do they step away from you?
- Do they change the subject quickly?
- Do they indicate interest by asking questions?

How do they respond when you ask if they have encountered intimate partner violence in their organizations? If they say no, they may benefit from training. You might respond:

- “Have you ever talked about intimate partner violence with your congregation?”
- “We work with survivors from many faith backgrounds. Can we tell you about our services?”
- “We provide training to faith leaders on intimate partner violence. Would you be interested in training opportunities for your faith community?”

If faith leaders indicate they know intimate partner violence has affected their communities, you can respond:

- “How do you respond?”
- “Are you comfortable addressing it?”
- “We would love to help you have those conversations.”
- “What resources exist in the community to assist survivors?”
- “Are you familiar with the local certified domestic violence center?” If yes, how would you describe your relationship?”
- “We can help survivors access safety, advocacy, and other resources.”
- “We can provide training on how to identify and address intimate partner violence.”

Recruit faith leaders to be trained on intimate partner violence. Does your center offer trainings to the public? Invite faith leaders, particularly those who are already involved with your center. Keep in touch with them and invite them to your events. Tell them about the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Encourage them to sign up for the Florida Voice Newsletter - <http://www.fcadv.org/florida-voice-newsletter>.

Remember that both faith-based and community organizations can be overburdened and underfunded.

Many faith leaders are not paid for the community events and services in which they participate. When faith leaders cannot or do not attend, do not assume it is because they are uninterested or antagonistic.

Choose Collaboration. View each faith leader as an ally until you discover otherwise. Begin work as though you are on the same team because doing so can make it happen. Remember that you have things to teach and things to learn.

Travel in rural areas can be expensive and very time-consuming. When possible, consider hosting meetings at faith-based organizations to maximize the opportunity for faith leaders to join you.

Opportunities for Community Collaboration

Local Cooperative Groups. Many local communities bring members and leaders together in teams to prevent and address intimate partner violence. The names of these groups may vary by city or county, but typically they are called coordinated community response teams, task forces, or community action teams. Invite faith leaders to attend and participate in these important groups. This is a great opportunity for cross-training; offer faith leaders the opportunity to talk about their community outreach ministries while you educate them about the unique needs of survivors of intimate partner violence.

Community Events. Take advantage of any and all community events to connect with those leaders, particularly events sponsored by faith communities.

- What are the events in your area?
- Which organizations sponsor community-wide events?
- Do you have a county fair in which you might have a presence?
- Do you have back-to-school events, child safety events (such as car seat installations), or community food drives in which you can participate?
- Does your local medical center sponsor health fairs at which you could have a booth?
- Are there culturally-specific events occurring in your area in which you can show your support?

Participating in these events not only connects you with survivors but faith leaders as well.

Prevention Activities. Faith communities offer rich opportunities for prevention work, as the organization, structure, and often intimate nature of their communities may provide them access to every level of prevention, including:

- An individual level - providing education
- A relationship level - modeling healthy behaviors for families
- The community level - collaborating with other organizations to proactively address local social problems
- The societal level - by creating policies and procedures designed to prevent violence before it starts

Invite faith leaders to be involved in community meetings, educational opportunities with youth, social marketing campaigns, and trainings on safe policies and procedures.



Coordinated Response by Faith Communities

Faith leaders may ask how they can help. Here are some suggestions to offer:

- **Become a Safe Place.** Make your church, temple, mosque, or synagogue a safe place where survivors of intimate partner violence can come for help. Establish a Safe Church Policy and adopt procedures to protect vulnerable members. Display brochures and posters which include the telephone number of the certified domestic violence center in your area. Publicize the Florida Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-500-1119, 800-621-4202 (TTD) and local shelter information.
- **Educate the Congregation.** Provide ways for members of the congregation to learn about domestic and sexual violence. Routinely include information in monthly newsletters, on bulletin boards, and in marriage preparation classes. Create an environment of awareness. Sponsor educational events in your congregation on violence against women.
- **Speak Out.** Speak out about intimate partner violence and sexual assault from the pulpit. As a faith leader, you can have a powerful impact on people's attitudes and beliefs. Intimate partner violence is a traumatic life experience. Your congregation relies heavily on you for solace and guidance to cope.
- **Lead by Example.** Volunteer to serve on the board of directors at the local certified domestic violence center or attend a training to become a crisis volunteer. Model non-violent behaviors and healthy relationships in your home, congregation, and community.
- **Offer Space.** Offer safe, welcoming, and confidential meeting space for educational seminars or weekly support groups.

- **Partner with Existing Resources.** Include your local certified domestic violence center in donations and community service projects. Adopt a shelter for which your church, temple, mosque or synagogue provides material support, or provide similar support to families as they rebuild their lives following a shelter stay.
- **Prepare to Be a Resource.** Do the theological and scriptural homework necessary to better understand and respond to family violence and receive training from professionals in the fields of intimate partner violence and sexual assault.
- **Respond.** If abuse is disclosed to you, prioritize survivor safety. This includes maintaining strict confidentiality. Let survivors know of the community resources available to assist them. Work with domestic violence centers to identify appropriate batter intervention programs and refer batterers to those services. Do not attempt couples counseling.
- **Support Professional Training.** Encourage and support training and education for clergy and lay leaders, ministry leaders, hospital chaplains, paid staff, volunteers, and seminary students to increase awareness about intimate partner violence and sexual assault. Read *A Commentary on Religion and Domestic Violence* by Rev. Dr. Marie M. Fortune, Salma Abugidieri, and Rabbi Mark Dratch.
- **Address Internal Issues.** Encourage continued efforts by religious institutions (your denomination) to address allegations of abuse by clergy or lay leaders to insure that your leaders are a safe resource for victims and their children.

For a reminder on why couples counseling can be very dangerous, please see page 10.

www.fcadv.org

www.faitrustinstitute.org

FAQ:

“We have federal funding. Can we even talk about religion?”

You cannot proselytize or favor one faith tradition over another. As part of cultural competency, you can and should support the survivor’s effort to address her faith issues and connect with her faith community in a helpful way.

“I grew up in the church but I have come to believe that religion is part of the problem for domestic violence.”

It is part of the problem and it is also part of the solution for people whose faith is important in their lives. Your job as an advocate is to help the survivor remove roadblocks and find the resources that speak to her.

“I grew up in a predominantly Jewish community and went to Jewish schools. I just don’t know very much about any other faith tradition.”

Educate yourself about the basic teachings of traditions other than your own. A good place to begin is the FCADV and FaithTrust Institute websites.

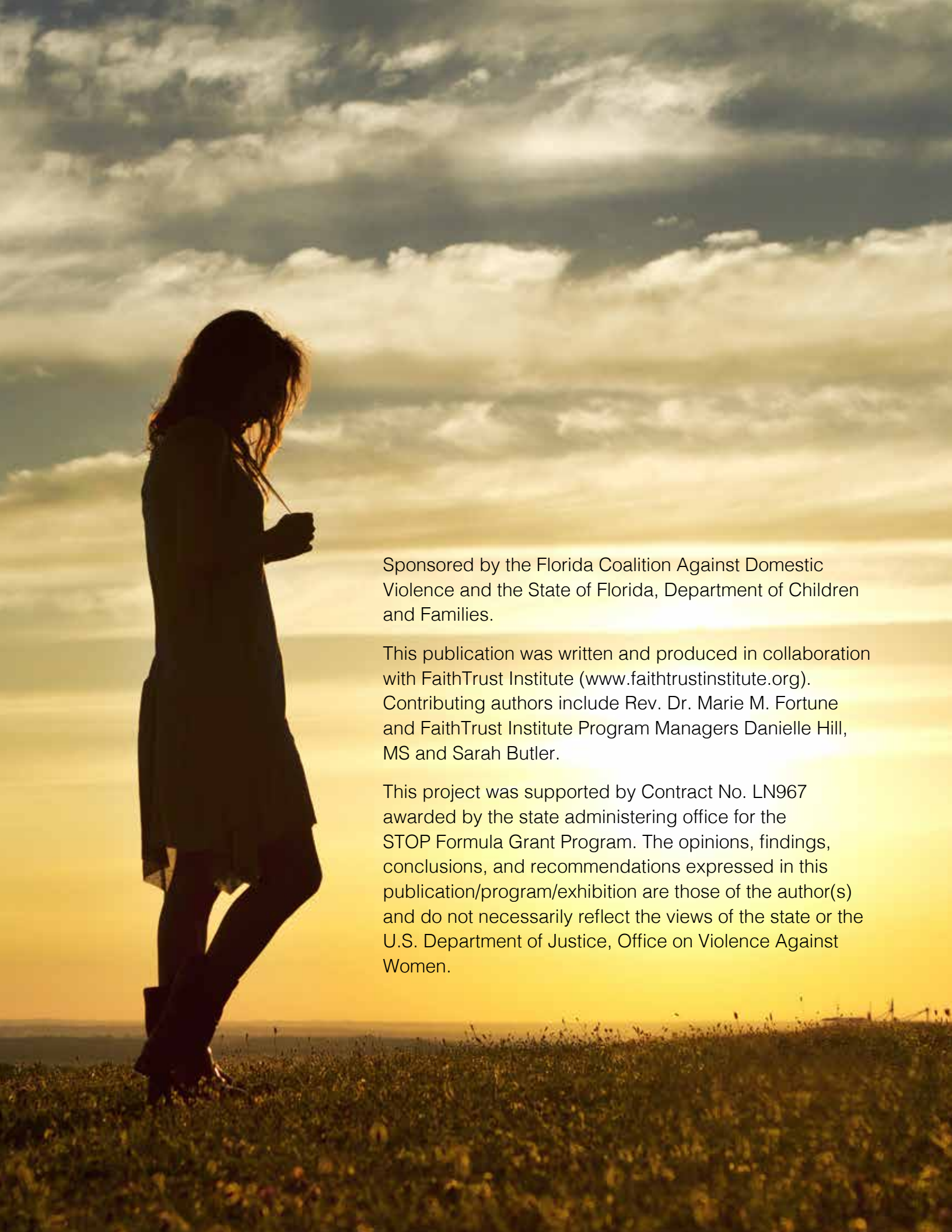
“I just don’t feel comfortable really engaging around questions of faith. This is way outside my expertise.”

Be confident in your ability to learn from survivors and the other resources you have available to you. Take the time to develop the cultural competencies surrounding faith and spiritual beliefs.

“What about reading materials? Are there any good resources for particular faith groups that address intimate partner violence?”

Yes. Have reading materials available in your shelter for survivors from various traditions. Contact FCADV for more information at Info_fcadv@fcadv.org.





Sponsored by the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the State of Florida, Department of Children and Families.

This publication was written and produced in collaboration with FaithTrust Institute (www.faithtrustinstitute.org). Contributing authors include Rev. Dr. Marie M. Fortune and FaithTrust Institute Program Managers Danielle Hill, MS and Sarah Butler.

This project was supported by Contract No. LN967 awarded by the state administering office for the STOP Formula Grant Program. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the state or the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women.



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