

## **Safety Through Connection: Engaging Multisector Collaboratives in Promoting Safe Relationships**

### **Collaborative Program Summaries**

The Safety Through Connection program, facilitated by Prevention Institute, supports collaboratives in California in creating inclusive community environments where safe relationships are nurtured, valued, and protected--and where relationships, families, and the community as a whole thrive. It does so through strategies to create norms and cultures that support equitable relationships and nonviolent problem-solving, and to strengthen economic security and other conditions that support safe relationships. The program is particularly focused on improving safety for community members who face oppression and systemic inequities, and who experience disproportionate rates of intimate partner violence (IPV).

In years two and three of the Safety Through Connection program, the collaboratives will implement strategies to reduce factors that increase the risk of IPV and increase protective factors that contribute to safe relationships. The following are summaries of each of the collaboratives and their Safety Through Connection program strategies:

- **The East African Men and Boys Collaborative**, based in San Diego, is a community-driven network that supports the stability and wellbeing of East African refugee and immigrant youth and families. Through the STC program, they will engage their community in building healthy relationship skills as a way to change community standards and support a culture of safety. Addressing community standards and complex cultural dynamics is one way the collaborative will engage the community in conversations around IPV. They will support the East African refugee community, including adolescent men who are transitioning to adulthood and seeking guidance in navigating careers and relationships as well as supporting their mental health and wellbeing including use of substances. The collaborative has launched the San Diego Refugee Communities Coalition to strengthen local leadership and participation in the decision-making activities of employment, educational, and economic development institutions. Through these strategies, the East African Men and Boys Collaborative will cultivate youth leadership and a coalition of champions for refugee health, safe relationships, and IPV prevention. They will also strengthen community norms and culture, and plant seeds for changes within multiple agencies and systems in the community.
- **Los Angeles Worker Center Network (LAWCN)** organizes with workers from low-wage industries and their families on issues like increasing the minimum wage and fighting wage theft. Through this program, they are integrating IPV prevention into the network's strategic planning process to elevate IPV as a community issue. The network is also advocating for policy and systems changes around wage theft and overtime violations to support fair pay, increasing financial independence and economic security. Economic insecurity contributes to financial stressors in families, instability, and conflict and increases risk of IPV. This is why LAWCN emphasizes addressing this issue among low-wage workers, who are disproportionately impacted by wage theft and other issues that decrease their economic insecurity. The COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to increases in rates of intimate partner violence and network members financial, food and protective equipment needs. Over the past year, the network has been able to respond and

provide immediate relief while also attending to long-term strategy planning and systems changes. Moving forward they also plan to hold assemblies of workers from across the network to support peer-to-peer sharing and power building around topics such as safe relationships, the legislative process, overtime pay, filing wage claims, racism, and others to improve social connections and build solidarity.

- **Mujeres Poderosas Amorosas (MPA)** in Fresno County brings together leaders with a long history of implementing culturally-rooted policy, systems, and environmental change strategies to promote healthy eating and active living. Through the STC program, they have established a network driven by Latina immigrants to serve as a space for emotional wellness, resource sharing, community organizing, and building influence and power. The collaborative creates spaces for Latinas to counter isolation, and promote emotional wellness, healing, and self-esteem. This is because trust and inclusion in communities is known to support safe relationships. To improve neighborhood conditions like housing, employment, and education, MPA advocates for policy, system, and environmental changes that promote healthy and safe relationships and family stability. MPA also plans to counter toxic social norms that reinforce machismo culture and minimize the worth of Latina immigrants through communications campaigns and educational programs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant repercussions in the community and affected the needs and priorities of Latina immigrants. Many of the women have added stressors in trying to provide for their children and elders with increased concerns about food and healthcare access, for example. Mujeres Poderosas Amorosas has created a WhatsApp network as a virtual space for women to support one another and mobilized to help elderly Latinas in the community through #SavetheSenoras, where women provide groceries, personal hygiene products, household supplies and financial assistance to elderly women. MPA is also creating economic opportunities for Latina immigrants as part of local COVID response efforts.

- **The Center at McKinleyville** in Humboldt County is a one-stop location for services, information, and activities for community members that was created to address disparities in access to health and social services in rural and tribal communities. Through the STC program, the Center will engage families who have been marginalized through community meetings, a Community Advisory Committee, and other events to increase social connections, promote a sense of agency, and increase participation in prevention activities. Depending on community preferences and drawing on evidence-informed approaches for IPV prevention, The Center will develop training, displays, and other activities that focus on topics such on parenting, social-emotional learning, communication, social support building, mentorship, and life skills. They will also build community capacity to affect policy change that address community-level drivers of IPV. Through these strategies, The Center will cultivate inclusion and trust among community members and Center partners, increase healthy relationship skills, strengthen community beliefs that support safe relationships, mitigate the impacts of poverty and housing insecurity, and initiate changes within multiple systems in the community.

In addition to the strategies outlined, each collaborative will participate in capacity building, evaluation, and sustainability planning to build their skills and commitment to promote safe relationships in their communities for the long haul. Overall, the program will help increase understanding of how existing



community collaboratives can enhance their partnerships and implement, evaluate, and sustain multisector IPV prevention as a priority within a broader community agenda.

For more details about Safety Through Connection, please visit:

<https://preventioninstitute.org/projects/safety-through-connection-engaging-multisector-collaboratives-promoting-safe-relationships>

*Supported by the Blue Shield of California Foundation.*