



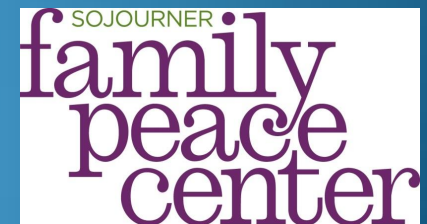
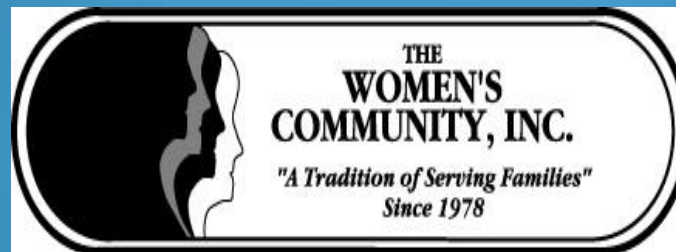
Group Work with Mothers Experiencing Domestic Violence and Their Children in Wisconsin

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Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Growing Together Project

Ann Brickson

Children and Youth Program Coordinator



GROWING TOGETHER ACTIVITIES

1. **Focus groups** with mothers experiencing domestic violence and youth
2. **Evaluation of the Child Witness to Violence Project** at the Sojourner Family Peace Center (SFPC) in Milwaukee
3. **Three small two-year grants** to culturally specific domestic violence programs



THREE GRANTS . . .

Lac du Flambeau Domestic Abuse Program and Lac du Flambeau Indian Child Welfare (Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians):

- Establish collaboration between tribal DV advocates and child protective services.

Wise Women Gathering Place (Green Bay):

- Adapt Discovery Dating healthy relationships curriculum to facilitate relationships between mothers and daughters who have lived with domestic violence.

Women's Community Creciendo Juntos (Wausau), :

- Use popular media to increase understanding between immigrant mothers experiencing domestic violence and their children.

FOCUS GROUPS AND SUPPORT GROUPS

- Six adult focus groups = 47 women
- Two youth focus groups = 12 teens
- Support group questions =
71 children



ADULT FOCUS GROUPS

LOCATION	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS
Milwaukee	8	Battered mothers w/CPS involvement, multi-ethnic
Green Bay	7	Battered mothers, multi-ethnic
Jefferson	9	Latina battered mothers
Wausau	8	Hmong battered mothers
Madison	9	African-American battered mothers
Superior	6	Battered mothers w/CPS involvement, multi-ethnic

CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTHERS

- Recruited by local DV program
- DV survivors who had received services from the program
- Represented major nonwhite ethnic groups in WI: Latino, African-American, Native and Hmong



CHARACTERISTICS OF MOTHERS

- Most separated, all from male partners
- Living with children (except CPS)
- Still connected to local DV program
- Positive experience with DV program



ADULT FOCUS GROUPS

- First language of participants
- Facilitator was native speaker
- Advocate known to participants was present
- Simultaneous interpretation for digital recording



ADULT FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Range of questions to learn:

- Impact of DV on motherhood, children and mother-child relationships
- How DV program was helpful
- How DV programs could improve services



RESULTS

- Affirmed and amplified what we already know
- Likely affected by positive relationship with DV program



CULTURALLY-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

- Much unanimity despite cultural differences
- Satisfaction enhanced by DV services in their language provided by an advocate from their cultural community



HOW DV AFFECTS MOTHERHOOD

- Tense, stressed, living in fear
- Put partner's needs first
- Less time and energy for children
- Poor role model for children



DV IMPACT ON CHILDREN

- Angry, fearful
- Behavioral, physical and mental health problems
- Parentified, protective of mothers
- Learned to accept and engage in violence



DV IMPACT ON MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

- Less time together
- Undermines trust
- Children misunderstand mother's protective behaviors



WHAT MOTHERS NEEDED WHILE IN CRISIS

1. Help securing permanent housing
2. Counseling and emotional support
3. Respite child care in shelter
4. Opportunities to enjoy spending time with their children
5. Activities for their children sponsored by the DV program



HOW DV PROGRAMS HAVE HELPED

- Counseling and emotional support – helped them stay strong for their children
- Helped rebuild relationships with children



HOW DV PROGRAMS CAN IMPROVE

1. More children's programming
2. Offer counseling and family activities for mothers and children together
3. More respite care



HOW DV PROGRAMS CAN IMPROVE

4. Assistance with more than domestic violence (mental health issues, managing parental stress, anger management etc...)
5. Offer services in more languages other than English
6. Permit extended shelter stays as needed



EXPERIENCES WITH CPS

- All CPS mothers had children removed for some period of time
- Removal is “the worst thing that could happen”
- CPS didn’t understand their efforts to protect
- Some said CPS was helpful with rent or household items



YOUTH FOCUS GROUPS

Two focus groups with teens:

- Ojibwe teen girls, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Bayfield, WI
- Multi-ethnic group of teen boys and girls in Neenah, WI



YOUTH FOCUS GROUPS

- All youth had mothers who were DV survivors
- All were living with at least one parent and receiving services from a local DV service provider
- Jointly facilitated by WCADV staff and DV advocate known to the participants



RESULTS:

HOW DV AFFECTS YOUTH

- Required them to grow up fast, take on parental roles
- Made them feel sad
- Compromised their trust in others
- “Put up walls” for self-protection
- Affected grades and concentration in school
- More socially isolated and estranged peers who don’t understand DV



HOW DV PROGRAMS HELPED

- Support during difficult times
- An escape from stressful lives
- Offered hope
- Advocates were truthful
- Offered a voice for youth
- Connection to financial resources for their families



CHILDREN'S SUPPORT GROUP QUESTIONS

- Gathered information from children in DV program support groups
- 71 children, average age 10
- Most were current shelter residents.
- Facilitators asked group and took notes
- WCADV analyzed for themes



QUESTIONS . . .

Five questions similar to adult and teen focus groups:

- Impact of DV on you and your family
- How DV programs can help children and families



HOW DV MAKES YOU FEEL

- Sad, angry, fearful, helpless
- Want to protect mother and retaliate against abuser
- Struggling to make sense of the abuse



HOW THEY FEEL ABOUT THEIR MOTHERS

- Empathy for her difficult situation
- Wish mothers were more physically and emotionally available
- Wish their mothers would leave the abuser and get help



HOW DV MAKES LIFE HARDER

- Instability of being in transition
- Mother is sad & less available



HOW DV PROGRAM CAN HELP

- Money, food, housing and employment
- Emotional support for themselves and their mothers



CONCLUSIONS - MOTHERS

Impact of DV on self and family:

- Forced me to put abuser's needs first
- DV made me tense, stressed and fearful
- Partner and I were poor role models
- Children forced to take on adult roles



CONCLUSIONS - MOTHERS

What kind of support and services do they need most?

- Counseling and emotional support
- Assistance with concrete services: housing, employment, child care
- Respite care is shelter
- Children's programming, esp. programming that supports mother-child relationships



CONCLUSIONS - OLDER YOUTH

Impact of DV on self and family:

- Forced them to grow up too quickly
- DV caused them to distance themselves emotionally from other people
- Anger at the adults in their lives, including legal and child welfare systems



CONCLUSIONS - OLDER YOUTH

What kind of support and services do they need most?

- Supportive adults who understand and believe them
- Emotional support and concrete services (e.g. employment, housing) for their mothers



CONCLUSIONS - YOUNGER YOUTH

Impact of DV on self and family:

- Sad, angry, frustrated, fearful
- Conflicted feelings about their mothers - sympathetic, but wish she would do more for them or resist abuser



CONCLUSIONS - YOUNGER YOUTH

What kind of support and services do they need?

- Emphasis on concrete support for their mothers: money, food housing and employment



**Children and youth:
“Please help my mother.”**

**Mothers:
“Please help my child.”**



CHILD WITNESS TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Our mission is to create peaceful communities in which domestic respect and a life free from violence is the right of every woman, man and child.

HISTORY OF CWDV



- Started in 2003
- Based on models from Families and Schools together, Betsy McAlister Groves' book, and the Nurturing Program
- Goal: Reduce harmful effects of children's exposure to DV by training professionals who work with children, offering direct case management services for families affected by DV, and facilitating educational support groups for mothers experiencing domestic violence and their children who have witnessed violence

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



- 12 week closed group
- Utilizes components of Nurturing Program
- Families enter in different ways - all are assigned ongoing Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS) advocates
- Groups begin with a meal followed by transitions into the various groups
- Last night of the group is a celebration - families share lessons learned and are awarded certificates of completion and a prize that promotes “family time”
- After graduation, invited back for family fun nights

WHAT DOES THE GROUP LOOK LIKE?



- Welcome and family activity
- Expectations of meal time
- Meal - family time
- Group division by age and developmental level
- Adult groups begin with a check-in and move into the topic with a closing activity completed before reuniting with their children for the evening
- Children's groups begin with circle time, an ice breaker, review of expectations, developmentally appropriate learning activities, closing activity, and they are brought back together with family

OBJECTIVES AND LESSONS – CHILDREN'S GROUPS



SOJOURNER
family
peace
center

1. Breaking the family secrets about violence by defining violence
2. Sharing personal experiences and learning about a range of feelings
3. Safety planning
4. Learning peaceful conflict resolution
5. Having a positive experience in a safe and structured environment
6. Strengthening self-esteem through positive reinforcement and validation of feelings

OBJECTIVES AND LESSONS – ADULT GROUPS



DV/parenting curriculum includes:

1. Effects of DV on children
2. Parent-child communication/talking with the child about the violence
3. Childhood development and behavioral expectations
4. Positive non-abusive discipline
5. Enhancing the child's self-esteem
6. General skills of healthy, nurturing parenting

FAMILY FUN NIGHT



SOJOURNER
family
peace
center

- Designed to bring graduates together for family-centered activity in the community
- Meal and transportation are provided
- Locations/themes: Children's Museum, Humane Society, Carnival-themed in house activities, etc...
- Provides the families a chance to reconnect; spend quality, fun time together; learn about other community events; and receive additional ongoing support

CHALLENGES



- More, More, More.....
- Family Fun Nights - participating families have had much younger children lately - have to find activities that are appropriate and engaging for a wide range of ages

LESSONS LEARNED - GROWING TOGETHER EVALUATIONS



- More, More, More.....
- As a result of feedback
 - Changed intake process
 - Linked all participants with a FASS advocate
 - Incorporated more community resources into CWDV adult curriculum

CRECIENDO JUNTOS



Andrea Oyuela

Coordinator of the Hispanic Program

The Women's Community

Wausau, WI

CRECIENDO JUNTOS

- ▣ Helping Latina women experience domestic violence improve communication with their children by using media as a conversation starter



COMMON STRESSORS FOR LATINA WOMEN EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- ▣ Language barriers
- ▣ Immigration status
- ▣ Difficulty finding a job
- ▣ Low acculturation
- ▣ Low self-esteem
- ▣ Guilt
- ▣ Isolation
- ▣ Fear of the unknown



CRECIENDO JUNTOS – CHILDREN OF WOMEN EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- ▣ Majority born in U.S. or brought to this country at a very young age
- ▣ At school age, begin to be exposed to a culture their mothers ignore
- ▣ Choose English as their primary language
- ▣ Feel they do not have anything in common with their parents
- ▣ Do not identify as Latino
- ▣ Ignore how acculturation affects their mothers



CRECIENDO JUNTOS – PROJECTED OUTCOMES

- ▣ Promote cultural pride and resilience
- ▣ Mothers able to identify their children's issues
- ▣ Children able to understand why their mothers are different from their U.S. friends' mothers
- ▣ Mothers improve their parenting skills
- ▣ Mothers feel connected in the community, lessening emotional isolation and increasing emotional safety



CRECIENDO JUNTOS



CRECIENDO JUNTOS

- ▣ Group started with 15 families
- ❖ Meetings were held once a month
- ❖ Families eager to continue and were actively involved in discussions and workshops



CRECIENDO JUNTOS - OBSTACLES

▣ ICE RAIDS!



CRECIENDO JUNTOS - OBSTACLES



CRECIENDO JUNTOS

- ▣ Meeting space in school with bilingual program, where families feel comfortable and safe
- ▣ Able to resume meetings once a month



CRECIENDO JUNTOS – COMMON DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN PARENTS AND THEIR TEENAGER

- ▣ Morality
- ▣ Spirituality
- ▣ Family values
- ▣ Language
- ▣ Technology
- ▣ Life style



CRECIENDO JUNTOS

- ▣ Parents learning about the differences between cultures, feeling more competent in their parenting skills and more connected to their children
- ▣ Parents identifying fears and becoming more open to having conversations with their children



CRECIENDO JUNTOS

- ▣ Children learning more about how their parents struggle to assimilate in U.S. culture
- ▣ Children learning about acculturation process, additional stressors and trauma response
- ▣ Children identifying the lack of time they spend with their parents as a stressor in their relationship



EVALUATION TOOLS

- ▣ Pre – test
- ▣ Post- test

Questions focus on trust, friendship, connectedness and heritage





Formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund

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