



PRESIDENT'S FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER INITIATIVE

CHAPLAINCY SERVICES A MINISTRY OF PRESENCE

You are a person of faith, and you are deeply concerned about domestic violence. You'd like to do something to help, and have just heard about the President's Family Justice Center Initiative (PFJCI). You are pleased to discover that the PFJCI in your community offers chaplaincy services, and you'd like to get more involved. Perhaps you are wondering whether you could be an effective PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer.

This booklet will help you understand some of the qualities that are necessary to be a safe and effective PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer. This information will help you to discern whether volunteering at the PFJCI Chaplaincy service is right for you.

Survivors of domestic violence have many needs. Some may need a safety plan. Some may want to file criminal charges, get a restraining order, or talk to an expert domestic violence advocate. Some may need to know more about domestic violence and think about next steps. Some may need to tell their story. Some may have questions about their faith and the abuse they are experiencing. There are as many different needs as there are survivors.

The President's Family Justice Center Initiative (PFJCI) brings together many different domestic violence service providers, law enforcement, and legal services in one place. This makes it easier for survivors of domestic violence to find all the help they need. All services at the Family Justice Center (FJC) work together and are as safe and confidential as possible.

Because many survivors have questions about their faith and use their faith as a resource, many FJCs include a Chaplaincy service. The goal of the Chaplaincy service is to offer safe, victim-centered, non-directive, interfaith, non-proselytizing, non-judgmental, culturally responsive spiritual care to survivors.

The PFJCI is also federally funded. This means that there are constraints and rules that everyone must follow. For example, the Chaplaincy service must serve all faiths, and cannot display religious symbols from any particular religion on the walls.

Knowing more about the PFJCI Chaplaincy service will help you to think about whether it might be the right volunteer opportunity for you.

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1. PFJCI CHAPLAINCY SERVICES ARE VICTIM-CENTERED

"I was dying inside."

*- a domestic violence survivor**

"When I was ready to talk, they were listening. That was the beginning of my recovery."

- a domestic violence survivor

Survivors enter the Family Justice Center (FJC) with many needs. Being "victim centered" means that we at the PFJCI Chaplaincy services will be centered on the needs of the victims and survivors with whom we work. To do this, we must put aside our own needs and agendas while we are at the FJC. We must make ourselves ready to listen and to be fully present with the survivors who ask for our help.

To be effective PFJCI chaplains, it is important that we carefully assess our own needs and agendas. If our own needs and agendas cannot be set aside, we should not be volunteering at the FJC. For example:

- Sam's agenda is congregational growth. He is interested in volunteering at the FJC because he would like to invite everyone who comes in to attend services. However, a federally funded facility cannot support any particular faith or congregation over any other. If Sam cannot put aside his own agenda, he should not be a PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer because it is not appropriate to recruit members for a particular faith community at the FJC.
- Betty's agenda is winning souls to her faith. She feels that she owes it to the folks that she meets to share her faith with them. However, when Betty proselytizes, or talks about her own faith, the conversation centers on Betty rather than on the client. Betty should not be a PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer because she does not allow survivors to speak about their own faith in their own language, using their own imagery.

* Unless otherwise noted, words of survivors throughout this booklet are taken from Casa Myrna Vazquez, "Domestic Violence: Stories of Survivors/Violencia Domestica: Historias de Sobrevivientes," Boston, MA 2000. Many thanks to Casa Myrna Vazquez of Boston, Massachusetts for permission to use this text.

Being “client-centered” means that our goal is to connect PFJCI clients to their own faith, not to connect clients to the volunteer’s faith.

2. PFJCI INTERFAITH CHAPLAINCY SERVICES ARE NON-DIRECTIVE

“I had to ask for permission to go to the bathroom.” - a domestic violence survivor[†]

“Women reported being followed to work or to friends’ houses, constant phone calls to make sure they were where they said they would be, and sudden appearances to check up on them.”[‡]

*“He was aggressive. Whatever opinion he offered or suggestion he gave, I pretty much went along with it, thinking he knew best. He led me to believe that he was my savior.”
- a domestic violence survivor*

“I felt just like a prisoner.” - a domestic violence survivor

Domestic violence establishes one person’s power over the other. Abusers seek to control every aspect of their victims’ lives, telling them what to do, what to think, what to say, what to believe, who they can talk to, when they can go out, what they should wear, and so forth. As a result, survivors often struggle to find their own voice and desires, in the midst of those that have been imposed forcefully on them. Some survivors may be so used to someone else making all the decisions, and so lacking in confidence in their own abilities, that they ask others (advocates, chaplaincy volunteers, police) to make decisions for them.

The goal of the PFJCI is to empower the survivor to make her/his own decisions. In order to empower survivors, PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteers will offer options,

[†] Direct communication with Anne Marie Hunter, Director, Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence, 1992.

[‡] Angela Browne, *When Battered Women Kill*, New York, The Free Press, 1987, p. 43.

services, and resources and allow survivors to make their own choices. PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteers must not assume the role of the batterer, and will never tell the survivor what to do. This, too, requires volunteers to lay aside their own needs and agendas. For example:

- Bob has what his friends jokingly refer to as a “savior complex.” He wants to save the world. When someone comes to him with a problem, he just can’t help diving in, taking control, and telling the person what they should do. Bob just wants to get in there, fix it, and make it all better. Bob should not be a PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer for two reasons. First, Bob will further disempower clients by taking the role of the abuser and telling clients what they should do. Second, Bob will endanger clients, because the client, not Bob, is the best judge of what is safe.

3. PFJCI INTERFAITH CHAPLAINCY SERVICES SUPPORT THE SURVIVOR’S RIGHT TO SAFETY

“We were two Christian people, and I was committed to my vows and my relationship. I wanted to please my husband, as I had been taught in church. I prayed and kept things to myself.” - a domestic violence survivor

“Both pastors from my church went to court with my husband, and the church lawyer represented him.” - a domestic violence survivor

Domestic violence is always harmful and often lethal. Everyone involved, the victim, the children, the victim’s family, the victim’s friends, the victim’s co-workers, are affected. Without professional intervention from domestic violence experts, incidents will become more frequent and more severe over time. PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteers prioritize the safety of the clients and their families above all other concerns. This, too, may require that a volunteer set aside his or her own agenda. For example:

- Jill is passionate about preserving marriage. She really cares about the integrity of families. Jill wants to work at the PFJCI because she wants to help people find whatever it will take to make their marriage work. Jill should not be a PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer because the PFJCI’s goal is

not to keep all relationships together, but rather to keep all survivors safe. Knowing that domestic violence is always harmful and often fatal, the PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer will help clients focus on their own safety, learn about options and resources, and decide for themselves what they need to do next and whether the relationship or marriage will continue or not.

- Kendra is very sympathetic to victims of domestic violence. However, her faith teaches her that, although women may seek services for domestic abuse, they should not leave their homes because that would bring shame on their families. Kendra should not be a PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer because the PFJCI's goal is not to keep clients in their relationships, but rather to keep all survivors safe. Knowing that domestic violence is always harmful and often fatal, the PFJCI volunteer will help clients focus on their own safety, learn about options and resources, and decide for themselves whether or not they will leave their home or get a restraining order to remove the abuser from the home.

4. PFJCI INTERFAITH CHAPLAINCY SERVICES ARE WELCOMING TO ALL

"I was told that I needed to 'straighten out my lifestyle and then I would be all set'."

-survivor of domestic violence[§]

"I felt that I had got back my own self-esteem, my hope, and my faith."

-survivor of domestic violence

Many victims and survivors of domestic violence turn to the faith community for help. For some, the faith community is a "safe place" to talk about something so intimate. For other victims, the faith

[§] GLBT Domestic Violence Coalition and Jane Doe, Inc., "Shelter/Housing Needs for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) Victims of Domestic Violence," Analysis of Public Hearing Testimony of October 27, 2005, Massachusetts State House. *Both quotes from this page are taken from this document.*

community is the place to turn in response to the shame, terror, and confusion that characterize domestic violence. Many victims are looking for a place to talk about their “next steps” or options before they turn to service providers or law enforcement for help. Others may find that just putting the story into words, with an engaged, non-judgmental, sympathetic listener, helps them to face reality and make decisions. The PFJCI’s goal is to respond effectively to all clients regardless of their race, class, creed, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, physical ability, or gender.

PFJCI Chaplaincy services must welcome many clients from many different backgrounds. In order to allow the client’s faith to set the agenda, PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteers should not wear clothing or symbols that are exclusive to any one faith. Because the PFJCI is federally funded, no religious symbols of any kind that are specific to any particular denomination or faith can be displayed on the walls.

Establishing space that welcomes all people is a difficult thing to do. Once again, PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteers must lay aside their own agendas. For example:

- Christa’s faith teaches her that homosexuality is wrong. When a lesbian asked for help, Christa couldn’t help thinking that the abuse was God’s judgment on the victim’s sexual orientation. Christa was unable to be fully present and listen empathetically to the client. Christa should not be a PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer because she is unable to respond effectively and non-judgmentally to clients from the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities.
- Ted doesn’t believe that people of different races should marry. When an African-American woman came in for help and Ted learned that her abuser was white, he became nervous and confused. In Ted’s understanding, the relationship was wrong in God’s eyes to begin with. Ted struggled to listen sympathetically, but in his mind he had already passed judgment on the client. Ted should not be a PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer because the PFJCI’s goal is to respond effectively to all clients regardless of their race, class, creed, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, physical ability, or gender.
- Julia is a devout Christian who is committed to the PFJCI’s goal to alleviate domestic violence. However, when a Jewish client asked Julia to pray with her, Julia prayed “in Jesus’ name.” If Julia cannot respond to the faith needs of all clients, she should not be a PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer because the PFJCI Chaplaincy serves all faiths and must respect the faith of all clients.

5. PFJCI INTERFAITH CHAPLAINCY SERVICES DO NOT BLAME THE VICTIM

“The abuse didn’t happen overnight. It started with my husband putting me down and calling me names. We would fight about his drinking and he would say that I brought out his temper, that it was my fault. And I really believed it for a while.”

- a domestic violence survivor

“The insults continued. Then he took to throwing things and yelling and screaming and punching the wall. Then he started shoving me and I kept trying to figure out how we could get

back to the time when he was romantic and kind and attentive. I was always wondering what I'd done wrong and how to correct it."
- a domestic violence survivor

"For the first time [after receiving services at a shelter] I didn't feel like I was crazy or that it was my fault."
- a domestic violence survivor

Perpetrators of domestic violence constantly blame their victims for the abuse. They surround the victim with derogatory and condemning names, calling the victim stupid, irresponsible, lazy, promiscuous, fat, ugly, and God-forsaken. Perpetrators lay responsibility and blame for the abuse at the feet of the victim. "If you were raising the kids right, I wouldn't have to beat up on you all the time." "If you weren't so stupid, I wouldn't have to knock some sense into you." "If you weren't looking at other men, I wouldn't have to keep you in the house and rip the phone out of the wall." "If you didn't nag all the time, I wouldn't have to hit you." With phrases like these, perpetrators state that the abuse is the victim's fault. Perpetrators often portray themselves as the victim.

At the same time, victims of domestic violence often mistakenly take responsibility for the abuse when it is not their fault. For example, they may think, "If I only had dinner on the table on time," or "if only I wore nicer clothes." Often, victims try many different ways to appease the abuser, only to discover that, in fact, they cannot control the violence because the violent behavior is a choice that the perpetrator has made.

One goal of the PFJCI Chaplaincy services is to remove the burden of guilt and shame from the shoulders of survivors. For this reason, PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteers must be able to respond to survivors without blaming them in any way for the abuse. This, too may require that the volunteer lay aside preconceived notions and personal agendas. For example:

- Richard was serving in the PFJCI Interfaith Chaplaincy Services when a Jewish victim asked for help. She told him of the abuse that was happening at home. Richard explained the importance of "*shalom bayit*," the Jewish ideal of peace in the home. Richard listed many things that Jewish women should do to establish and maintain peace in the home. Richard should not be a PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer because he has suggested to the client that the violence in her home is the result of her own shortcomings. At the PFJCI, we cannot blame the victim, no matter how subtly, for the abuse.
- Susan was enthusiastic about her work at the PFJCI. One day, a client came in who described verbal and emotional abuse at home. Susan discovered that the client had several children from a previous relationship. Susan asked the client, "Don't you think that dealing with the step-children might be a lot for him? No man wants to be saddled with another man's children!" Susan should not be a PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer because she has just suggested that the client's children are somehow a cause for verbal and emotional abuse. At the PFJCI, we cannot blame the victim for the abuse.

PFJCI CHAPLAINCY: A MINISTRY OF PRESENCE

When PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteers are able to set aside their own needs and agendas, clients receive the gift of their presence. The needs and concerns of the survivor take center stage. The overarching concern is to meet the needs of the survivor where she or he is at this time. The volunteer can truly say, "For this

moment, I am here to support this person in connecting to his or her own personal spiritual resources, whatever those may be.” This is a ministry of presence.

Because the goal is to allow the client to connect with his or her own faith resources, the best and most valuable chaplains will be effective in serving clients from many different faith traditions. Chaplaincy volunteers must be secure enough in their own identity and faith that they can comfortably focus on and affirm the victim’s own faith and values.

The primary job of the ministry of presence is active listening. The client should be allowed to tell his/her story in his/her own words and with as little interruption as possible.

The PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer’s next job is to affirm the client and acknowledge the abuse. Phrases such as these will be helpful:

- It took tremendous courage to come here today. I applaud your courage.
- I’m concerned for your safety.
- I am sorry that this has happened to you.
- This abuse shouldn’t happen to anyone.
- The behavior you have described sounds very abusive.
- This is not your fault.
- You are not alone.
- There are services here for you.
- There is hope that you will find safety.

The PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer will also seek to affirm and strengthen the client’s faith and the resources that are part of that faith. In speaking to the client about faith resources, the chaplaincy volunteer should reflect the faith language and imagery that the victim brought through the door. If the client refers to God as “He,” “Jesus,” or “Great Creator,” that language should be reflected back to the client as much as possible.

The chaplaincy volunteer will also be expected to address faith-based roadblocks. For example, when a client feels that she must “forgive no matter what,” it can be pointed out that repentance and changed behavior on the part of the batterer need to precede forgiveness. When a client feels guilt for “breaking up the marriage,” it can be pointed out that it is the abuser’s violence, and not the survivor’s need for safety, that breaks the covenant of marriage.

The chaplaincy volunteer can also affirm the client's social network and resources. Where in the family or community does the client turn for help? Who does she/he know who has been supportive in the past? Who, if anyone, is it safe for the client to contact? What can the client do to find the support she needs as she moves forward?

In some rare instances, a PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteer may be asked to pray with a client. This must be handled with great sensitivity. The client should be asked how s/he typically prays, and what s/he would like to pray for (courage, strength, insight, hope). When the prayer is offered by the PFJCI Interfaith Chaplaincy volunteer, the language used should reflect the language of the client (Jesus, Allah, the Great Creator, the Father God, etc.) and must be respectful of the client's faith.

PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteers must always pray respectfully with a client. To remain respectful of the client's own faith and reflective of the client's own language, the chaplaincy volunteer may:

- a. pray using the client's own faith language and imagery, or
- b. offer to pray silently with the client, or
- c. pray silently along with the client, who offers the prayer, or
- d. pray the following prayer, which may be adapted to reflect the faith language and concerns of the client:

We come before You today seeking courage, strength, and guidance during a confusing and dangerous time. Be with [the client's name] as she/he seeks to find her way from fear to safety and from despair to hope. Be with her/his children [if there are any] and family, and help them all to find a place of safety and peace. Help her/him to know that You are always present.
Amen.

At the end of the session, the chaplaincy volunteer should, when appropriate, refer to an outside resource that is in the client's faith tradition and has been trained in domestic violence. This referral may be made with words that sound something like the following:

- "I'm not a member of your faith, but I can refer you to someone right here in the community who is a member of your own faith tradition and who has been trained in domestic violence. S/he will

be able to help you to further explore the faith concerns that you have raised with me today.”

Community leaders who are on the referral list should be trained through the FJC volunteer and chaplaincy trainings.

The best and most valuable chaplaincy volunteers will know the community and have a comprehensive and well trained resource/referral list. They will know many resources in many different faith communities.

PFJCI Interfaith Chaplaincy Services may have brochures and business cards available from many different religious congregations in their community so that clients can locate information about local religious congregations.

PFJCI Chaplaincy services should have resources for distribution that are specific to various faith traditions. For example: Marie Fortune’s Keeping the Faith: Guidelines for Christian Women Facing Abuse, or Zainab Alwani and Salma Abugideiri, What Islam says about Domestic Violence: A Guide for Helping Muslim Families, or FaithTrust’s You are Not Alone: Solace and Inspiration for Domestic Violence Survivors Based on Jewish Wisdom would be appropriate.

When appropriately practiced, PFJCI Chaplaincy volunteers offer a ministry of presence and quiet listening that moves clients to a place where they can truly say, as one survivor said,

“I knew there was hope and wanted to tell others.”