

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EVIDENCE PROJECT



## Program and Practice Profiles *Caminar Latino*

## OVERVIEW OF THE DV EVIDENCE PROJECT

Increasingly, domestic violence programs are being asked to learn more about, contribute to, and describe how they are engaging in evidence-based and evidence-informed practices. Funders, policymakers, researchers, and advocates themselves are more interested today in what evidence exists that a particular intervention or prevention strategy is making a positive difference for survivors, or is meeting the outcomes it was designed to achieve. With this information, domestic violence programs can better secure continued support for proven programs and practices, and can more easily identify, develop, and/or adapt innovative or exemplary approaches from other communities.

To respond to this new emphasis on evidence-based and evidence-informed practice, the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRCDV), with support and direction from the Family Violence Prevention and Services Program at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, engaged in a two-pronged approach. First, evidence was collected and synthesized from published, empirical research studies. Second, in recognition that controlled research studies are not the only form of evidence to consider in determining program effectiveness (Puddy & Wilkins, 2011; Schorr & Farrow, 2011), the project also identified where emerging and promising evidence exists that specific programs and practices are effectively addressing complex social problems in community settings.

*“In one field after another, we are learning that so much of the most promising work in addressing the most intractable social problems is complex, multifaceted, and evolving.”*

*Schorr & Farrow, 2011; p. 22*

The community practices and programs profiled have been identified by at least one peer as being innovative and noteworthy and have gathered some level of field evidence to examine their effectiveness. What these program evaluations may lack in traditional methodological rigor they more than make up for with “ecological validity”, or the extent to which their findings accurately reflect real-world concerns and successes.

The overall goal of the NRCDV’s **DV Evidence Project** is to combine what we know from research, evaluation, practice and theory to inform critical decision-making by domestic violence programs and allied organizations. This Program and Practice Profile should be viewed as one important piece of information to consider, but its inclusion in the registry does not necessarily reflect an endorsement by either the NRCDV or the Family Violence Prevention and Services Program within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which provided funding for this project. Further, there are many innovative and exciting programs occurring throughout the country. The project website ([www.dvevidenceproject.org](http://www.dvevidenceproject.org)) provides a sample, but not an exhaustive list, of these practices and programs, as well as related conceptual frameworks, research summaries and other tools.

## PROGRAM PROFILE: CAMINAR LATINO

**Brief Description:** Caminar Latino, started in 1990, is a comprehensive, culturally-specific, community-based domestic violence program for Latino families in Georgia. The program focuses on including all members of the family who are interested in ending the domestic violence: women, men and children. Separate weekly groups are held for men, women and children ( the same time and location). These groups provide comprehensive services and social support to increase the safety of women and children, and seek to increase accountability for abusive behaviors perpetrated by men. The program was built on specific needs identified by the community.

### Program Description

<b>Program Goals</b>	The goal of Caminar Latino is to create a safe and respectful space for women and their children who have experienced violence by male partners. The program seeks to do this by involving all aspects of the family unit in the process of recovery and healing. This family perspective derived from Latina survivors' insistence that working solely with women on the issue of violence was not adequate nor was it realistic to remove men from women's lives. The goal of the program is to work with all family members to hold abusers accountable and to promote safety and healing. However, it is not mandatory that all family members participate in the groups.
<b>Program Origins</b>	Caminar Latino has been community-based since its inception. The organization was established as a non-profit in 2003, but began their work in 1990. Women's groups started when a catholic nun approached a university researcher/community advocate explaining that she felt many of the Latina women who spoke with her were experiencing abuse in their homes and that they needed to do something to help. Groups for abused women were initially started, and the women often said that their male partners were a key to whether any change would happen in their lives. They also discussed how their partners were a huge component of their lived experiences, and the men needed to get help to stop using violence. Based on this suggestion, men's groups were started. Children were integrated in the same manner. Women felt that their children needed to have a support group because the children were also witnessing what was occurring in the home by their fathers. In response, Caminar Latino staff co-created a curriculum with survivors, and began the children's groups.
<b>Program Components</b>	<p>Each interested family member attends a specific group. The open groups take place simultaneously each week at a church, and individuals are encouraged to attend as often as they would like. Locating the program in a church serves a dual purpose: it increases the validity of the program within the community, and increases the safety for women and children.</p> <p><b>Women's Program:</b> Caminar Latino offers three women's groups. The first group is for women who are in crisis and need to become aware of the resources and possibilities available to them and obtain support to address their immediate needs. This group typically lasts for 12 weeks.</p>

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<b>Program Components</b>	<p>The second group follows the crisis group. The focus of the second group is to identify and work through the issues influencing women’s everyday lives such as, but not limited to, parenting, poverty, health issues, and immigration issues. The time limit for this group depends on how long women want to stay. The third group is specifically designed for women who have used violence against their partners and/or children and are court-mandated or referred by Child Protective Services. This group lasts for 24 sessions. Women mandated to this group work on issues related to their own use of violence at the beginning of the evening and then join one of the other two groups during the second half of the evening.</p> <p><b>Men’s Program:</b> The state-certified program for men (called the Family Violence Intervention Program or FVIP) consists of two levels, each group lasts approximately 12 weeks. The first level group is specifically designed for men entering into the program and focuses on having men identify and take accountability for their use of violence. Men have to pass an oral exam in order to graduate into the second level group. The second men’s group focuses on the specific ways that cultural values, beliefs, and personal history impact the choice to use force. It is not unusual for men to continue attending the group (free of charge) beyond the time mandated by the courts.</p> <p><b>Youth Program:</b> There are five youth groups, specifically referred to as “sharing groups”. The groups are divided by the following ages (0-3, 4-7, 8-11, 12-15, and 16+). A parent must be involved in the program in order for children to participate. All of the groups are open, meaning that youth are allowed to enter at any week in the process. Topics covered in the youth groups involve safety planning, violence in the home, immigration, and other issues that influence children’s everyday lives.</p> <p>Multiple community collaborations take part in the implementation of the groups. Graduate and undergraduate students from Georgia State University and other area colleges/ universities are trained as facilitators in the children’s groups. Under the supervision of a volunteer clinical psychologist, advanced students are able to use specific skills (i.e. developmental issues, potential behavioral disorders, speech problems, etc.) to identify and refer children who may need special services. A local HIV organization provides free HIV information and testing for all adult participants several times a year. Attorneys donate time to help with a diverse array of legal needs and St. Vincent De Paul provides tangible assistance such as food and housing to program participants in need. The Catholic church also provides discounted meeting space to hold the groups.</p>
<b>Target Population</b>	Latino families experiencing domestic violence; not all family members need to participate, but they are welcome.

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## Practice Evidence

<b>Evaluation Methods</b>	<p>Caminar Latino uses a visual “thermometer” evaluation that assesses women’s general sense of safety at the beginning of the session and then 6 weeks into the intervention. Women also fill out 2 brief evaluation tools about the group. The organization is now working on larger scale community-based evaluation of the program.</p>
<b>Evaluation Outcomes</b>	<p>Women and children over 8 who participate in Caminar Latino are expected to have (1) increased sense of safety and (2) safety strategies they can use. Women and children are also expected to have (3) increased knowledge about domestic violence, legal and human rights, and available community resources. They are also expected to (4) have continued engagement in Caminar Latino, as this indicates that the program is serving as a support network and community for them. A secondary desired outcome is (5) the increase in youth ability to see themselves as college material and (6) an increase in leadership capacity for women and children. Men who participate in Caminar Latino are expected to (1) stop the use of physical violence within 2 weeks of entering the program. Men are also expected to (2) have increased knowledge about domestic violence, the types of abuse, and conflict management. The 8-item survey that women complete about the group asks about their general satisfaction as well as the extent to which involvement in Caminar Latino impacted (1) their family circumstances, and (2) their knowledge of and ability to access community resources.</p>

## Organizational Readiness & Future Implementation

<b>Practice Cost</b>	<p>The annual operating cost for this program is approximately \$400,000 (includes in-kind volunteer costs). Annually, Caminar Latino serves approximately 400 – 450 women, 200 children, and 30 – 35 men. Much of the program requires an average of 30 volunteers who can commit 3 hrs a week to co-facilitate the main groups. The children’s group tends to require the most volunteers. There are 5 paid staff members to help run the groups. Men who are mandated by the courts are charged for their participation in the groups; however, they do not have to pay for more than 24 sessions, regardless the length of their participation. Groups are offered to women and children at no cost.</p>
<b>Preferred Language</b>	<p>Spanish.</p>
<b>Training Requirements</b>	<p>A 6-month commitment is required for all youth facilitators in all groups. Male group facilitators need to have participated in the 24-week group and be certified through the Family Violence Intervention Program, which takes a minimum of a year. Facilitators for the women’s group need to participate in the women’s groups for a minimum of 6 weeks, and cannot facilitate group by themselves for a minimum of 6 months. All facilitators for the adult groups are required to be Spanish-speaking and preferably Latina/o.</p>

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<b>Planning Requirements/ Readiness Considerations</b>	Caminar Latino values and operates primarily from community-informed practice. The coordinators emphasize that all communities are different, and in turn, advocates should only implement programming after having gathered a thorough understanding of their own community's needs. Advocates must also be willing and prepared for a long preparation and implementation process due to the length of time it takes to gather the input of multiple community members. Planning includes finding a location for the groups, developing a working relationship with the courts, and finding and training group facilitators.
<b>Caveats/ Cautions</b>	Caminar Latino recommends comprehensive support for all members in the family. Groups can be held simultaneously, but they do not mix women, men and children in the same groups. The location of the groups contributes to a sense of safety for women whose partners do not choose to attend the men's batterer group. The location also increases the validity of the program to men. Program coordinators recommend avoiding the use of labels such as <i>survivors</i> , <i>batterers</i> , or <i>at-risk youth</i> in order to see each family member as a whole person and draw on their strengths and resilience. Although the intent of this program is to involve all family members, it is important to note that very few men participate unless mandated by the court. Annually, the program works with approximately 400 – 450 women, 200 children, and only 30 – 35 men. To date, this program appears promising based on anecdotal evidence from group facilitators and participants, but it has not been systematically evaluated.
<b>Training Tools</b>	(1) Thermometer survey (in Spanish and English) that assesses safety before and after the group; (2) Brief survey (in Spanish and English) that assesses program satisfaction and two outcomes.

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