

Domestic Violence Evidence Project

A project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

Program and Practice Profiles

Ujima Project

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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.

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) provides a sample, but not an exhaustive list, of these practices and programs, as well as related conceptual frameworks, research summaries and other tools.

“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

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PROGRAM PROFILE: UJIMA PROJECT

Brief Description: The Ujima project is a culturally-specific, community-based outreach program specifically tailored to meet the needs of African American survivors. The program is focused on raising awareness of intimate partner violence and building capacity within African American churches to support and provide resources for survivors. The project also provides educational classes and support groups to incarcerated survivors of intimate partner violence

Program Description

Program Goals	<p><i>Ujima</i> (meaning collective work and responsibility in Swahili) is a culturally-specific program for African American women survivors of intimate partner violence. The goal of Ujima is to provide services, raise awareness, and build capacity around the issues of domestic violence in the African American community. The “train-the-trainer” approach is a unique aspect of this community-based project. This component builds organizational capacity by providing technical resources, education, and organizational advocacy to train leaders of African American churches on how to support survivors of intimate partner violence within their congregations. An additional component of the Ujima project is outreach to incarcerated survivors. Ujima project staff provide an educational class and support group to women who are currently incarcerated within a maximum security prison. Due to the complexity of help-seeking among African American survivors, the Ujima program works to provide multiple community-based outlets that help African American survivors, even if they do not choose to reach out to a domestic violence shelter for support.</p>
Program Origins	<p>The Ujima project began in 2007 and was based on the staff desires to enhance outreach to underserved communities. The African American community in Ohio faces a multitude of geographic, financial, and cultural barriers that made it more difficult to reach out to mainstream domestic violence services. Support group facilitation training and advocacy training were designed based on: (1) feedback from local African American church leaders; (2) resources from an organization specifically created to provide resources on using a faith-based approach to ending violence; and (3) additional information from the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community (IDVAAC).</p>
Program Components	<p>There are 2 major components to the Ujima program: capacity building with African American churches, and educational classes and support groups with incarcerated women at a maximum-security prison.</p> <p>Capacity-building Trainings: The Ujima project connects with religious community leaders through a solicitation mailed out by organizational staff. Some organizations are also solicited through community referrals. Churches are invited to participate in two types of trainings. The first training is in facilitating support groups. This 24-hour, 12-week training allows congregation members to receive skills that would allow them to facilitate their own domestic violence support groups within their congregation. Members are selected to participate by the congregation leadership and then screened by the Ujima program coordinator.</p>

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Program Components	<p>Once the training has been completed, these members are selected to co-facilitate a support group with Ujima staff within the congregation. The Ujima staff member steps aside as the main facilitator once the co-facilitator feels comfortable and capable to lead the group independently. Ujima provides technical assistance and support for the new facilitator for about 12 – 18 months after the training. Advocacy training is also an option for African American churches interested in building their capacity to support survivors. Similar to the support group facilitator training, church leaders can select key people within the congregation to serve as domestic violence advocates. These church members then go through a 16-week, 34-hour advocacy training that extensively covers the information necessary to provide emotional and tangible resources to survivors.</p> <p>Educational Classes & Support Groups: The Ujima project provides educational classes to incarcerated survivors currently serving time at a maximum security prison. These two-hour, weekly classes last for 5 weeks, and the primary goal is to increase women’s knowledge about domestic violence. Educational classes are closed and prison caseworkers refer women to the class; however, the class is not mandatory.</p> <p>Support groups are open and occur for 1 ½ hours each week. The support groups are modeled like traditional support groups, but are also specifically tailored to the unique needs of incarcerated survivors. For example, there is a particular component about emotional safety planning that was a result of women discussing how abusers utilized written mail to further harm them.</p> <p>Topics for both the educational classes and support groups include: defining domestic violence, understanding the impact of domestic violence, batterers and the cycle of violence, the impact of domestic violence on children, healthy relationships vs. unhealthy relationships, understanding legal options, and safety planning (emotional and physical).</p>
Target Population	The program was specifically designed to meet the needs of African American survivors of domestic violence by working with African American community leaders and reaching out to institutions that have higher populations of African American women, such as the criminal justice system.
Target Setting	The current Ujima program office is located within the local African American community.

Practice Evidence

Evaluation Methods	The effectiveness of the educational classes and support groups for incarcerated survivors are measured using a pre- and post-test design. Survivors are given surveys to assess whether: (1) they had a better understanding of dv and its effects on their lives; (2) they had a greater understanding of the effects of domestic violence on their children; (3) they had developed a personalized safety plan for themselves and their children; and (4) they were more aware of legal options. They also assessed whether they felt the program included culturally-specific values and reflected their culture.
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Evaluation Outcomes	<p>The Ujima project has multiple desired outcomes for the larger African American community. For both programs, Ujima staff hope that long-term outcomes would be to: (a) increase consciousness; (b) increase knowledge about domestic violence; (c) increase community response to domestic violence; and (d) end domestic violence within the church. For example, after going through training with the Ujima project, a church decided to start a hotline for survivors who wanted to access services confidentially. In the short-term, Ujima staff found that 90% of participants increased their knowledge about domestic violence, including cultural concerns, and better understood how to safety plan for themselves and their children. Ninety percent of women also increased their knowledge about the impact that domestic violence had on their children. As a long-term outcome, Ujima staff hopes that survivors feel an increased sense of safety and are well informed about their choices. An unanticipated consequence to this capacity building work is that multiple organizations outside of the African American communities are now requesting these support group and advocacy trainings.</p>
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Organizational Readiness & Future Implementation

Practice Cost	<p>The total program implementation cost of Ujima is approximately \$50,000. At the beginning of the project, there was also money set aside for the development of the training manuals for incarcerated survivors and the churches. Implementation costs include staff time and costs associated with mileage to and from the organization. There are associated costs with mailing letters to local African American churches to make them aware of the services that the Ujima program offers. Refreshments are provided at every training and group meeting.</p>
Preferred Language	<p>There is not a specific preferred language for this program.</p>
Training Requirements	<p>There are three staff and two volunteers who typically participate in each aspect of the program. The requirements for working in the Ujima project are to have some background knowledge and practical experience working with survivors of intimate partner violence. All staff are required to go through a 24-hour volunteer training, and then shadow the program coordinator for 2 to 3 months before working with the specific program. Those working in the prison need to have knowledge about that system as well, including the rules and regulations they and the incarcerated survivors need to follow.</p>
Planning Requirements/ Readiness Considerations	<p>The Ujima project was initiated because of the recognized need within the community, but was further developed through interviews with pastors about what would need to be included in training about domestic violence. Any program that seeks to implement a capacity building, culturally-specific training should talk to members of that setting prior to adapting this model. This will help facilitate stronger collaboration, guarantee that the needs of all parties are being addressed, and ensure effective implementation.</p>

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Caveats/ Cautions	<p>Churches should contribute to the adaption of the program. DV organizations should make themselves aware of any philosophical differences between the domestic violence organization and faith-based communities. However, it is also important to highlight the spaces where there is overlap or similarities. Recognition of what a DV organization and the faith-based community share in common will help nurture the collaborative relationship between organizational staff and religious leaders. For example, the Ujima program coordinator approached the African American church stating that intimate partner violence was a social justice issue, and that the church had been a bedrock for social justice issues for decades. Approaching collaborations from this perspective lent itself to more favorable responses.</p> <p>The prison system is continuously looking for free programming for inmates. This is important because the program could provide resources and information to help women, and possibly reduce the recidivism rates, which is a particularly important outcome for the criminal justice system.</p>
Training Tools	<p>Pre- and post-tests are available for women who participate in the educational classes for incarcerated survivors. Training and additional curriculum materials are available upon request from the organization</p>

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