



## Improving Outcomes for Children and Families Experiencing Domestic Violence



Adult survivors of domestic violence love their children and worry about their physical and emotional safety from their partner's violence and abuse, yet feel blamed and fearful of systems like child welfare that are supposed to help families<sup>1</sup>. A survey of 96 adult survivors of domestic violence (DV) found that they do not find child welfare to be helpful in accessing services or resources, nor in holding their abusive partner accountable for the harm they have caused.<sup>2</sup> In another study of more than 3500 callers to the National DV Hotline, half of respondents who were reported to child welfare or law enforcement said that being reported made their situation much worse, while a much smaller group reported that it made their situation a little better (15%) or much better (3%).<sup>3</sup>

In 2016 the Children's Bureau in the Administration for Children and Families funded the Quality Improvement Center on Domestic Violence in Child Welfare (QIC-DVCW) at Futures Without Violence to test an adult and child survivor-centered approach<sup>4</sup> to DV. The approach enlists a network of partners to align their work with families experiencing DV who are involved in child welfare around core principles: collaboration, racial and gender equity, the interconnectedness of adult and child survivor safety, responding to unique circumstances of families, advancing healing and wellbeing, and the reality that survivors are experts on their own lives.

The approach integrates two specific areas of practice:

- Fostering positive change among people who use violence by using the power of both relationships and systems to create accountability for the harm they cause, and
- Building protective factors that lessen the impacts of DV on adult and child survivors and help them to grow and heal.

Protective factors include:



- Safer and more stable conditions (income, education, housing and child care)
- Social, cultural and spiritual connections (friends, faith communities),
- Resilience and a growth mindset (empowerment, purpose),
- Nurturing parent/child interactions (playing together, showing care) and
- Social and emotional abilities (expressing feelings, healthy conflict).

Demonstration projects in Massachusetts, Illinois and Pennsylvania implemented and tested this intervention between 2018 and 2021. Across sites, staff practice improved in both areas – building protective factors and using relational and systemic accountability strategies. In addition, implementation teams at the three sites enhanced key aspects of their collaboration and racial equity efforts. To determine what difference the approach made in practice and outcomes, comparison sites were identified where staff continued with 'business as usual'.

Despite the challenges of COVID-era implementation and research, our results showed:

- For families identified as experiencing co-occurring child maltreatment and DV, across our three project sites the

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## It's Better to Teach than Repair Young Men

Coaching Boys into Men (CBIM) is a comprehensive violence prevention curriculum-based program that inspires athletic coaches to teach their young athletes that violence never equals strength and violence against women and girls is wrong.

Athletic coaches play an extremely influential and unique role in the lives of young men. Because of these relationships, coaches are poised to positively influence how young men think and behave, both on and off the field.

I know that in my own personal experience the bond I developed with coaches growing up is still strong to this day. There were many times I felt more comfortable speaking with my coach than anyone else.

I had the opportunity to speak with Ed Flores, Executive Director of the Hawaii CBIM. He has been associated with CBIM since 2014. Ed started working with teens through the non-profit organization Aloha Kuala. In 2007, the organization considered it a win for domestic violence victims when a restraining order was granted and enforced. Ed longed to do more than just react and was searching for a program of prevention. He had this underlying feeling that to combat domestic violence he needed to reach young men while they were still in the developmental stage. Ed felt it was better to teach than repair!

Ed first learned about prevention from one of his mentors, Coach Windell Say, who has been instrumental in Ed's development as a coach and practitioner of prevention. Sports has a tremendous influence on our culture and CBIM wants to leverage the principles of teamwork and fair play into healthy relationship skills.

The program comes with strategies, scenarios, and resources needed to talk to boys, specifically, about healthy and respectful relationships, dating violence, sexual assault, and harassment.

One aspect of the program that Ed

really likes is that participants are referred to as Champions! Positive reinforcement is something that today's young men are in need of! Many young men are raised in homes that are lacking positive role models and are told by outside forces that you must be this or that to be a man.

Another tenant of the program is that if you see something, say something. It is not enough to not perpetuate violence against women but to be a champion of women. You must be vigilant against any violence. Intervention is a must, not a choice. Athletes are given the tools and vocabulary they need to stand up for respect and influence their

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### Improving Outcomes...

risk of children re-experiencing maltreatment was 38% higher at comparison sites than at intervention (approach) sites, although results were mixed across projects.

- In one project, children at comparison sites who were under the age of 10 and had experienced neglect faced a risk of recurrence that was 36% higher than those served by the intervention site.
- Across the three projects, we saw significant improvement in reunification of children with parents where the approach was implemented vs comparison sites and other state sites. From 2019-2021, intervention (approach) sites reported reunification rates that were 6.8% higher than the comparison sites.

These mixed but encouraging outcomes show the promise of an approach that focuses on helping both adult and child survivors. Families experiencing DV deserve real help, resources and support. First **listen** to adult and child survivors, respect their expertise on their own situations and work collaboratively with them and community partners to lessen their burdens and respond

school's culture. There is no shame among the Champions when there is slippage, because in life we all must continue to rise after the fall.

In 2012, CBIM underwent a rigorous three-year evaluation in Sacramento, California funded by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and conducted by Dr. Elizabeth Miller, now of the University of Pittsburgh.<sup>1</sup> The evidence-based findings are clear, violence never equals strength!

Anthony Queen  
FRIENDS PAC Member

<sup>1</sup>More about the evaluation can be found here: <https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT01367704>.

to their specific requests for help. For more information, visit <https://DVChildWelfare.org>

by Shellie Taggart, Director  
Quality Improvement Center on  
Domestic Violence in Child Welfare  
Futures Without Violence

<sup>1</sup>Final Report of the Quality Improvement Center on Domestic Violence in Child Welfare, forthcoming.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid

<sup>3</sup>The National Domestic Violence Hotline (2015). *Who will help me? Domestic violence survivors speak out about law enforcement responses*. Washington, DC. <http://www.thehotline.org/resources/law-enforcement-responses>

<sup>4</sup>The approach has been re-conceptualized as Bridges to Better: Groundwork for building survivor-centered systems. The QIC-DVCW redesigned website (<https://DVChildWelfare.org>) with all evaluation results will launch by the end of 2022. Read more about the approach here: <https://dvchildwelfare.org/resources/overview-of-the-adult-child-survivor-centered-approach/>



Advancing an Adult & Child Survivor-Centered Approach



## I've Come A Long Way Baby: The Journey from Bondage to Freedom

"Following your heart can get you killed!" What a powerful statement made by Marcela Henao, a FRIENDS PAC Member from New Jersey. As I wrote this article, my hope was to paint a picture of Marcela's journey from abuse to healing as she explains this statement in depth. In sharing her story, Marcela's goal was not to focus on details of her abuse but more on her growth. The tone of this article is meant to bring inspiration, light, and healing to those that might find themselves in an unhealthy relationship.

Marcela did not always view herself as a queen or a fierce advocate, as she does today. She expressed how challenging it was for women in South American culture. She explained that women were taught to be "tolerant" in their relationships, not really having a voice. Marcela shared, in her culture, the man is in control of the family. Marcela was taught to "just love and it will make everything better". When she was exposed to American culture, Marcela expressed how confusing it was to model something totally different. She wanted to be valued and in control of her life but did not have the tools to do so.

Not having the tools to stop being "tolerant" in unhealthy relationships, Marcela found herself not valuing healthy relationships but "shackled to the abuse" that held her down. She would enter yet another toxic relationship and fell back into false beliefs that "love would fix it". Marcela began to realize how deeply rooted the seeds were planted as a child, which made it hard to break away from this belief.

Why did she stay? This question was often posed to Marcela which helped to ignite a desire to search for what love and happiness looked like. She would often lean on her faith in God and what her grandmother instilled in her. Marcela felt as though her heart and mind were in constant battle with each other and this would prompt her to pray knowing that God would protect her and help her through. She started her journey, to love and happiness, through self-development

and self-care. Marcela also started reading books which helped her to understand more about love and happiness, especially learning that it starts within. One of her favorite books, while on her journey, talked about how lessons repeat 7 times before we learn them. This helped her to realize why she repeated the same pattern over, and over again. While reading, Marcela discovered her love for psychology and philosophy.

Having support from her friends and family played a key role on her journey. Marcela realized she could not do this alone. She also sought counseling, which helped her to grow towards forgiveness. Marcela expressed how difficult it was to walk away from what she had been taught but focusing on her son saved her. She knew that one day he would understand that she made a sacrifice to break up the family, in order to save the family.

Marcela expressed that she is now in a very beautiful phase in her life. Her breakthrough came when she realized that even though she stayed too long, she got out alive! Marcela has stopped blaming and has forgiven her abuser and is now on a journey

to understanding that he too had childhood trauma and what role she played. She is now able to be a light to those still in a dark place. Marcela's passion, in being an advocate for children, is to help them understand more about healthy relationships and what that looks like. After learning abuse comes in several forms, Marcela felt that teaching about respect will help in preventing domestic violence amongst all genders.

In Marcela's experience, following her heart could have gotten her killed but she survived by being equipped with more tools to help her along her journey, than ever before. She vowed to hold on to the "pearls" that got her through and to continue to keep growing knowing that every day is a chance to turn it all around. "I've Come a Long Way, Baby!", is one of Marcela's favorite affirmations because of the realization of how far she has come. After reading this article, hopefully you too will be inspired to start a journey towards healing, true love, and happiness that starts within.

by Vadonna Houston Williams  
FRIENDS PAC Member



## New Jersey Men of Courage Community Action Initiative

In 2019, the New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence (NJCEDV) embarked on a journey to engage men and boys as allies in the effort to end gender-based violence. The vehicle for this new movement would be the establishment of the Men of Courage Network.

The network would consist of men from various backgrounds and disciplines who had been identified within their communities as those who have taken an active stand against gender-based violence. One goal was to have these men serve as tangible examples for others who had the same desired involvement. Another was to help equip and activate men as mentors for younger men and boys.

### Community Engagement

Our prevention efforts began by canvassing our state and creating holistic partnerships with programs, state agencies, and national organizations that have expertise in engaging with men.

Together we engaged New Jersey communities through training and community conversations, while providing free resources that would help sustainability of the movement.

### Community Action Initiative

In March 2020, our country faced unprecedented times, the Coronavirus (Covid 19) took our world by storm. Our country saw alarming death tolls and unemployment rates skyrocket, while exposing inequality that had long existed in our most marginalized communities throughout our country and state.

Through the harsh realities that Covid brought to our country and state, we knew that our work needed a new direction.

Traditionally, community engagement work has always been driven by the systems in our social service world. These social service systems are largely driven by analytical data that guide communities, provide resources, and suggest change.

We felt that if true change was going to take place, if we really wanted the lives and welfare of the next generation to have a new narrative, then our prevention efforts needed to be driven by the voices of those in our New Jersey communities, particularly those who live in our most underserved areas. These voices needed to be at the forefront of our work, informing the systems of changes our communities truly needed.

Our new direction began with 5 men from our Men of Courage Network. We established agreed-upon deliverables and goals for the project. We also contracted with the men to compensate them for their talents and time.

These men pioneered this project leading from a community level. Established groups also rooted their efforts within various school systems throughout our state. At the core of their efforts is a quote by Frederick Douglass, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men."

They are intentional about their ef-

forts to engage with young men and boys. They have created courageous spaces for them to share about their challenges and their adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). They are seeking to help these young men and boys create new narratives and reduce community violence.

We are proud to say that our community action initiative is alive and thriving within our state. We have various groups operating in our state, engaging with men in different communities addressing issues around healthy manhood and masculinity. As we continue to keep the voices of those in our communities at the forefront of our work, the project continues to evolve.

If you would like more information about our project, please see our website at [www.njcedv.org](http://www.njcedv.org) where you will find resources and information.

*by Will Dubose, Prevention Manager  
New Jersey Men of Courage  
Community Action Initiative*



## Dealing with the Trauma of Domestic Violence in the Latino Community

I was born and raised in the Bronx, New York, to parents addicted to drugs and alcohol. My older sister was born prematurely due to the drugs my mother consumed while pregnant; my younger brother was born a crack baby. Domestic violence was almost a sure thing every time my parents consumed drugs recreationally; it was prevalent in our home.

A well-known salsa song says, "No le pegue a la Negra." I always wondered why so many people from my culture love this song. The refrain suggests we "don't hit the black girl," but it's almost tongue-in-cheek. It sounds like "ay bendito, don't hit her," as opposed to "don't you dare hit her!"

Indifference to domestic violence is common in Latino culture. Growing up in such an environment was normal to me. I witnessed my father regularly abuse my mother – a fork in her ear, a bat to her right knee, a cracked skull – I could go on.

This was highly traumatic for my siblings and me. Yet we still had to attend our local Bronx community

school the day after such incidents to learn as if nothing had happened.

As a kid, I coped by staying away from home as much as possible. I would tell my parents or grandmother that I was working on a school project while I was riding a bike or taking long walks with friends after school. My friends loved me because I was so daring and adventurous, but I was pushed away and scared at home.

Sometimes the most mischievous children you encounter are just trying to cope with their trauma. Many inner-city Latino kids experiencing situations like mine are simply given an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and placed in special education classrooms. These measures are valuable, but has anyone thought, how can we intervene en la casa? Most issues likely stem from home.

My parents eventually turned their lives around, but the scars remain. As a married man with children now, sometimes the trauma from the past creeps up. I give myself permission to cry or be upset. I go to therapy.



*Pablo Pizarro*

Clinging to my faith and prayer have been pathways out of trauma. I speak to myself and say, "You are not your past. You are not your parents; you are a new creation."

I've discovered my life's purpose through these adverse childhood experiences: to show other families pathways out of trauma. That's why I advocate for Latino families in the inner city and, more broadly, against gender-based violence. I want to mentor young black and brown boys and let them know that I saw it, I lived it, and I learned from it.

*by Pablo Pizarro, Faith Minister*

## PAC on the Move

Parent leaders make a positive impact on child abuse and neglect prevention efforts. In 2022, the FRIENDS PAC welcomed four new members who were nominated during the 2021 annual call for nominations. When David Armstrong and Michael Cupeles (New Jersey), Paula Bibbs-Samuels (Texas) and Annette Johnson (Tennessee) began their term in January they joined a dynamic FRIENDS PAC and hit the ground running by actively demonstrating that parents as collaborative partners make a difference in the lives of children, families and the greater community.

FRIENDS PAC members are instrumental in creating a prevention mindset shift. They serve as consulting partners with FRIENDS' second Prevention Mindset Institute (PMI) cohort while working to create a podcast capturing their experience in both the cur-

rent and previous cohort. The PAC is also increasing awareness on issues related to diversity/race equity/inclusion (DREI) by serving on the FRIENDS DREI workgroup to support our mutual journey of promoting and integrating the DREI values into our prevention work. Activities include hosting discussion circles for staff and PAC and creating an internal newsletter.

When parents co-create or review and provide input, prevention materials are stronger and more relevant to both parents and practitioners. PAC members have served as content and chapter reviewers of the Child Welfare Information Gateway's annual Resource Guide.

PAC members are also instrumental members of the Administration on Children and Families' Office on Early Childhood Development's Federal Parent Think Tank which meets

monthly to provide input and ideas on strategies to promote parent involvement, especially with underrepresented individuals such as fathers. In addition, the PAC elevates the work of individual states by presenting on panels and assisting with capacity building retreats while actively supporting prevention efforts in their own states or among community partners.

Do you have a parent who is on the move in their leadership journey and interested in supporting the work of FRIENDS, CBCAP State Lead Agencies, and Federal Partners? Consider nominating them to the FRIENDS Parent Advisory Council. The 2022 PAC Nomination will open through October and nomination materials are available on the FRIENDS website and must be submitted online. For information and forms please go to <https://friendsnrc.org/parent-leadership/pac-call-for-nominations/>.



## Domestic Violence Awareness Resources

### NCADV–National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

<https://ncadv.org/resources>

Here is a national look at different hotlines and sites that can assist with those who have experienced or currently experiencing domestic violence. There is a wealth of information on this page.

### A Proclamation on National Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention Month, 2021

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/09/30/a-proclamation-on-national-domestic-violence-awareness-and-prevention-month-2022/#:~:text=NOW%2C%20THEREFORE%2C%20I%2C%20JOSEPH,Violence%20Awareness%20and%20Prevention%20Month.>

White House issues a proclamation regarding domestic violence awareness, declaring October as National Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention Month.

### California Partnership to End Domestic Violence

<https://www.cpedv.org/>

California's recognized domestic violence coalition provides information and resources regarding ways to end domestic violence. There are resources to set policy, build capacity among other things.

### Family and Youth Services Bureau – Family Violence Prevention & Services Act Program

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/programs/fvpsa>

This bureau seeks to help end domestic violence, homelessness among youth and adolescent pregnancy. There are several articles that keep up-to-date information on this topic.

### Family Violence Program – Texas

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/safety/family-violence-program>

Promoting independence for both adult and children survivors of domestic violence, this program offers prevention support and training to different Texas organizations.

### Healthy North Texas

<https://www.healthytexas.org/tiles/index/display?alias=IPVResources>

This site provides different hotlines

and resources for those who are currently experiencing domestic violence and wish to seek help.

### Illinois Department of Human Services (Domestic Violence Prevention and Intervention Programs)

<https://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=32315>

Illinois' Department of Human Services give definitions regarding domestic violence along with describing the various types of help that are available.

### Kentucky – Family Violence Prevention Branch

<https://chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dcbs/dpp/fvpb/Pages/default.aspx>

This site provides statistics and information regarding domestic violence, with the knowledge that "domestic violence is a crime without boundaries." Check here for programs and services as well as resources and hotlines.

Compiled by Paula Bibbs-Samuels  
FRIENDS PAC Member



FRIENDS Parent Advisory Council members (from l to r, top row): Marcela Henao, Elizabeth Reddick, Heather Stenson, Vadonna Williams, Antoinette Johnson, Raven Sigure, Anthony Queen (from l to r, bottom row) Eileen Graham, Joanne Hodgeman, Melissa Zimmerman, David Armstrong, Valerie Lebanion, Paula Bibbs-Samuels, and Michael Cupeles..

#### About the PAC

FRIENDS has established a Parent Advisory Council to provide useful overall program direction and guidance to the activities of the National Center. Committee members share their experience and expertise in child abuse prevention and family strengthening through their active participation in FRIENDS workgroups and the annual Grantee's meeting, development/review of FRIENDS written materials, and by providing resource center staff with consultation and advice.

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