

The points included below serve as general guidelines as we examine our current practices from a culturally affirming perspective. This list is not encompassing of everything that exists, but rather a fluid document that will continue evolving with your ideas and ours.

## Key principles:

- Establish relationships based on mutuality and respect.
- Understand and honor a process that is fluid, where organizations and survivors are constantly learning from one another.
- Seek a deep understanding of the communities in which you work (socio-cultural and socio-political histories, as well as current context, intersections of oppression, trauma, etc). For example, understanding that not only the experience of violence can be traumatizing but also being oppressed, discriminated against, and fighting significant hardships can have similar impact. Understanding the intersections of all these issues is tremendously important.
- Be aware of the tremendous diversity within communities and avoid making generalizations. Be ready to challenge your assumptions.
- Walk your talk. The organizational culture must reflect the work that it is promoting in the communities. The environment should promote inclusion and safety from within. Staff and volunteers feel welcome and part of the team. There is room to voice concerns and share ideas.
- Be humble and engage in ongoing self-reflection regarding your own power, privilege, values, history, beliefs, your personal experience of trauma, etc. to avoid inadvertently recreating the abusive structures that you are trying to dismantle.
- Promote non-hierarchical structures and equal access to leadership opportunities. This approach will help the people with whom you work see alternative approaches to those based solely on education, professional experience, class, etc. The result is a truly empowering setting where all are perceived as agents of change.
- Involve participants (including youth) in updating existing programming in addition to developing new topics, activities, research studies, advocacy, community education, and evaluation strategies.
- Create a mechanism to regularly listen to the communities with whom you are working for ideas, feedback, and collaboration.
- Use cultural traditions and values for enhancing prevention and intervention efforts to end violence, always being careful not to “romanticize” or deify the culture\*. For example, a concept such as “Latino men are *machistas*” is an example where traits present in some men (not only Latinos) are often generalized to erroneously describe entire groups of individuals.
- Make sure that the interventions/prevention efforts reflect the realities of the people who will participate. This requires being involved with and knowledgeable about the local community. It also requires you take into consideration the subgroups present within the community (ex. culturally specific communities, persons with disabilities, immigrants, LGBTQ survivors, etc.)

## Culturally Specific/ Trauma-Informed Overarching Principles

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- Be flexible and honor the concept of *family* as defined by the individual: in some cultures, grandparents, godparents, close friends and others are given equal access within the family structure.
- Understand the origins of trauma including historical, collective, and the inter-generational transmission of trauma. Do not minimize the resiliency, wisdom, and strength of survivors. They have much to teach us about how to heal from trauma.
- Approach the work from a social justice perspective and keep close attention to your practices from this lens. This perspective will radically change your stances, ideas, expectations, and approach to the work at hand.
- Create and maintain strong networks with other agencies, organizations, systems with which you can collaborate to enhance the work for social change and justice.
- Regardless of the specific work that you do, be sure to keep the realities of the survivors and their children central to your work.
- Believe in the power and collective wisdom of communities. Remember that your organization alone will not be able to end violence against women.

**\*Source:** A Community Psychologist's Perspective on Domestic Violence: A Conversation with Julia Perilla, Ph.D. [http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications\\_states/files/0315.pdf](http://www.clasp.org/admin/site/publications_states/files/0315.pdf)

**Note:** This is intended to be a living document, and we welcome suggested additions. For additional comments or feedback please, contact Heidi Notario at: [hnotario@casadeesperanza.org](mailto:hnotario@casadeesperanza.org)