

Back to School: Promoting Safe and Healthy Relationships for Youth of Faith

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With
Appreciation
to OVW

Agenda

- I. Welcome and Opening Remarks
- II. Conversation with Interfaith Consortium
- III. Dr. Denise Berte, Peaceful Families Project: Engaging Male Youth in the Muslim Community
- IV. Rev. Charles W. Dahm, O.P., Ph.D., Archdiocese of Chicago Domestic Violence Outreach, Engaging Male Youth in the Catholic Community
- V. Q&A and Discussion

Learning Objectives

- ▶ Understand the importance of involving youth of faith in gender-based violence prevention efforts.
- ▶ Gain insight into the unique experiences and perspectives of boys and men who belong to specific faith traditions.
- ▶ Identify and navigate opportunities and obstacles encountered in this line of work.
- ▶ Explore strategies to align prevention efforts with the values of faith traditions when working with youth of faith.

Consortium Partners



SOJOURNERS



What are the obstacles and opportunities involved in engaging boys of faith in gender-based violence prevention work?

Dr. Denise Ziya Berte , Executive Director of Peaceful Families Project, is a licensed clinical psychologist with 25+ years of experience in forensic psychology, trauma (including domestic violence), and international mental health issues. She holds degrees from Temple University (Bachelors in Psychology) and the State University of New York at Albany (Masters and Doctoral degrees in Clinical Psychology). She has published 17+ articles in professional journals and three book chapters. Dr. Berte is also an international trainer in Mental Health and Trauma, regularly presenting to diverse audiences.

Rev. Charles W. Dahm, O.P., Ph.D., is a Dominican priest and the Archdiocesan Director of Domestic Violence Outreach. He served as the pastor of St. Pius V parish in Chicago for 21 years, where he led the development of the largest parish-based dv program in the U.S. Additionally, he co-founded Parenting for Non Violence. Rev. Dahm is a frequent lecturer and preacher on domestic violence and advocates for parish ministry to domestic violence victims. He has delivered sermons on domestic violence in over 175 Archdiocese of Chicago parishes and established ministry teams in over 100 parishes to raise awareness and support victims.

Peaceful Families Project

Youth of Faith: Complex Conversations

- ▶ ADDRESSING GENDER ROLES, RELIGIOUS IDENTITY, HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND MORE
- ▶ PEACEFUL FAMILIES PROJECT
- ▶ PEACEFUL FUTURES INITIATIVE

Youth of Faith are UNIQUE

- ▶ Cultural complexities are REAL and programs need to be built to meet needs of diverse youth:
- ▶ Collectivism vs Individualism
- ▶ Family Focused Perspectives
- ▶ Structures of Gender Separation
- ▶ Developmental Trajectory
- ▶ Risk Behaviors Expectations
- ▶ Access to information and Services
- ▶ Intersectionality of Language, Culture, Race and Faith

Youth of FAITH
are in
PROTECTIVE
ENVIRONMENTS

- ▶ Families
- ▶ Places of Worship
- ▶ Faith based Youth Groups
- ▶ Religious Schools
- ▶ Public School Systems
- ▶ ** Outside organizations must work within the structures of the faith group, involve family and community members, and be open and honest about any controversial information being presented.

**Youth of
Faith TAKE
FAITH
SERIOUSLY**

Youth are not always rebellious or attempting to escape their faith communities, structures and regulations

Any work with you must be based in a complete understanding and acceptance of the individual's faith group

When addressing sensitive areas members of the individual's faith group should be the model and trainer

Information presented should be from the perspective of the faith models and regulations

Materials should confront alternative models embraced by the faith group

Peaceful Futures

- ▶ Islamically based 8 session curriculum addressing religious identity, Islamic based gender roles, healthy relationships, sexual/social development, family-based violence, diversity, tolerance, and cyber citizenship
- ▶ Age specific (middle school, high school, university aged)
- ▶ Based in Islamic beliefs, models, values, sacred text, and point of view
- ▶ Involved parents, community members, and religious leaders
- ▶ Used diverse trainers (gender, age, race, linguistics, culture, etc.)
- ▶ Housed in familiar settings with known role models
- ▶ Hybrid gender separate groups depending on setting and age

PEACEFUL FUTURES PILOT

Four groups held
nationally

80 youth involved

12 leaders trained

Participants increased
understanding and life
satisfaction

Parent's reported
reduced negative/risk
behaviors and increased
communication

Trainers reported
enthusiasm, passion,
meaning, and a desire
to continue to use the
curriculum (even as
volunteers)

Challenges

Initial permission to run the program

Recruitment

Parental requests to attend sessions

Overscheduled youth had difficulty in attending all sessions

Reports of abuse during sessions

Younger children unfamiliar with discussion format

LESSONS LEARNED

Programs can be viewed with suspicion and criticized even with the highest level of faith community involvement

Initial concern decreased over time and experience with the program

Community relationships were crucial in establishing programs and recruitment.

Youth were open and enthusiastic to enter discussions.

Positive life impact was demonstrated for both youth, families and communities.

The curriculum energized the group of trainers even without payment.



Archdiocese of Chicago Domestic Violence Outreach

Engaging Boys of Faith: Healthy Relationships

- ▶ CDC 2011 started testing and refining a curriculum on healthy relationships in 4 cities, Orlando, Baltimore, Oakland and Chicago to reduce violence
- ▶ CDC published Dating Matters Sept 2019
- ▶ Archdiocese of Chicago Domestic Violence Outreach began implementing this program during the 2020-21 school year, downplaying the phrase “Dating”
- ▶ In 2024, will implement it in 8 Catholic and 7 public schools
- ▶ Goal is to implement it in all Chicago and Illinois schools

“Dating Matters”

- ▶ Available at no cost from CDC and not faith-based
- ▶ 7 classes for 6th and 7th grades and 10 classes for 8th grade
- ▶ Classes proceed progressively beginning with 6th grade
- ▶ ACDVO trains and coaches teachers and social workers
- ▶ CDC provides all materials at no cost (workbooks for students, manual for teachers).
- ▶ CDC asks for pre/post tests from students
- ▶ Teachers and principals love DM because it engages students and changes their behavior and thinking, e.g., vocabulary, interaction
- ▶ Students love DM because it is participative and open for discussion and questions.
- ▶ Swedish government is planning to translate and implement it in all public schools

Challenges

- ▶ Many Catholic religious educational teachers lack knowledge about or are not familiar with gender-based violence.
- ▶ Few faith teachers address or are open to discussing dating violence.
- ▶ The Catholic Church has been remiss in establishing ministries focused on youth, despite leaders' declarations of their importance in evangelization.
- ▶ Most parishes do not have a youth ministry, despite the availability of national resources and declarations emphasizing their significance.

Lessons Learned

- ▶ The CDC has recognized that the term "Dating" in the program "Dating Matters" poses several issues. Consequently, they are currently in the process of replacing it with the term "Healthy Relationships."
- ▶ Our key takeaway was the effective use of Confirmation, one of the Seven Sacraments, to teach teenagers about gender-based violence prevention, with a particular emphasis on dating violence. This approach has demonstrated success in Chicago.

Opportunities

- ▶ Facilitate connections between secular agencies and willing Catholic parishes lacking the necessary funds to directly engage in this service.
- ▶ Leverage bishops' endorsement of teenage confirmation classes spanning two years. This age group and extended timeframe presents an opportunity to incorporate instruction on healthy relationships and gender-based violence prevention.
- ▶ Foster relationships with national groups to initiate introductions and facilitate collaboration.
- ▶ Employ a dedicated counselor at Parishes for effective intervention and prevention measures.

HOPE Family Services

Hope Family Services

- Hope Family Services is a program of The Resurrection Project, a faith-based community organization and economic development corporation. This can serve as another resource for boys of faith.

Services Offered by HOPE Family Services

- Reaches boys in homes affected by domestic violence.
- Offers classes and support groups for parenting.
- Extends individual counseling and support groups for victims of domestic violence and their children.

www.resurrectionproject.org

1. What are the best strategies for a secular group to approach a faith-based entity to explore presenting their Healthy Relationships program to boys?

2. When the secular group is presenting their own curriculum to a group of boys, what issues do they need to be knowledgeable about concerning your faith?



Q&A

Upcoming Opportunities



Office hours: 2nd Thursday of Each Month,
1:00 PM EST – 2:00 PM EST



Next webinar: Promoting Healthy
Masculinity During the Holidays (Tentative
October 26, 12 PM – 1:30 PM EST)