



FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER



FAMILY JUSTICE CENTER COMMUNITY FELLOWS

SURVIVORS' LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

2016-2018



Introduction

The mission of the Contra Costa Family Justice Center (“Center”) is to bring together our community to support the healing of family violence survivors, and to integrate capable partners with a comprehensive service approach to renew individuals and our community from the trauma of family violence. “Community” is an integral part of the Center’s mission, strategies, and day-to-day work. The Center is committed to offering crisis support services to victims of interpersonal violence (IPV, including domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, and human trafficking), as well as providing long-term safety support and number of community-building programs.

The Center piloted its first Community Fellowship project in 2014-2015. Since then, the leadership development program for survivors of IPV has become one of our core programs. The Community Fellowship provides IPV survivors with skills mentorship, training, access to a learning community, a small monetary stipend, and ongoing support as they each develop and execute an independent, self-directed community project. The Center also invites the Community Fellows to participate as partners and equal stakeholders who guide our work. They express and hold us accountable to authentic community needs, while they learn about criminal justice, social service and other systems, grow their networks, and build practical skills.

Working with survivors as our partners through this project has powerfully influenced the Center and changed our perspective about, and our relationships with, the community and clients we serve. We have shifted away from a traditional clinical/professional relationship with clients to a truly client-focused and community-centered perspective. In traditional clinical view, clients come to service providers to solve their problems, and the actions and solutions are thought to come from the service provider – they play a powerful role. The client acts as a passive recipient with little or no power; once their problem is “solved,” they are not expected to return.

However, we now see that the Center’s work is more relevant and effective as an *equal partner* with survivors and clients who bring unique and necessary solutions, strengths, experiences, and insights into the relationship. The Center intentionally and explicitly invited its Fellows to contribute to our programs their best ideas and insight from their lived experiences. Over the past three years, the Fellows’ work and ideas have changed our policies, protocols, and practices to make them more relevant and effective. Their community projects, big and small, have made lasting changes at the Center, and they continue to be key stakeholders and active participants in our work and community even when they no longer need crisis intervention or safety support.



History of Community Fellowship

The first iteration of the Community Fellowship program was in 2014-2015. A small number of community members who had experienced interpersonal violence joined the Family Justice Center for a limited time to work at the office, participate in outreach, and share their ideas and perspectives about the Center's services. *Carmen Flores* was the first Community Fellow and an accidental founder of the program when she showed up at the Center hoping "to help out." She did not have the right job experience or skills to take on a staff position, so she and a few other local residents received mentoring and skills training while helping with office chores one to two days a week. For the first two years, their fellowship was informal, without a set curriculum – but the seed Carmen Flores planted had taken root. After two years at the Center, Carmen moved on to a full-time administrative position at the Youth Service Bureau in Richmond in 2016, where she put to work many of the skills she gained at the Center. She is working there today.

The second iteration of the Community Fellowship program kicked off in January 2016. Now with a program plan and a proposed curriculum, the Center was awarded a grant from the Blue Shield of California Foundation to offer a 10-month leadership development training for a cohort of 10 individuals at the Center's two locations, Central and West. The cohort received formal mentorship and computer skills training, and they were given a small stipend upon completing their community project. A second cohort of nine Fellows had a similar experience throughout 2017. These two years resulted in 19 community projects from 19 emerging leaders, which they designed themselves.

Marisol Martinez was one of the early Community Fellows from 2014-2015 who returned to participate in the formalized Community Fellows program in 2016. She created Project Connect, a monthly community-building and skill-building circle for the Latinx community, which incorporates restorative justice practices (e.g., community building circles). Project Connect draws 16-20 participants at each monthly gathering. Many of our past Community Fellows have also been regular Project Connect members. In 2017, Marisol accepted a staff position as a Project Assistant and Navigation Support staff at the Family Justice Center, and she continues to facilitate Project Connect, which has become one of our core programs.

The third iteration of the Community Fellowship program started in January of 2018. Instead of having a cohort of 10 Fellows, the Center offered a four-month cohort for four Fellows in the spring, and a three-month cohort for three Fellows in the fall. The format of the third iteration was designed so that the Center could sustain the essential elements of the program without a dedicated funding source, and to demonstrate that a less-intensive program could be replicated by other IPV victim service providers. While the 10-month program (with a \$3,000 stipend for each Fellow) allowed for deep learning and connections, it was not sustainable or replicable without dedicated funding. The modified program in 2018 produced desired results -- each of the 2018 Fellows still designed and implemented community projects. Based on its successes, the Family Justice Center will continue to run and support the Community Fellowship as a 3.5-month program where individuals who have experienced interpersonal violence come together as a learning cohort to build leadership capacity, design and implement community projects, and contribute to the Family Justice community.

Leadership Development Framework

Key leadership development tools in the Family Justice Center’s Community Fellowship program were adapted from the work of Dr. Monica Sharma, an author and former Director of Leadership Development at the United Nations. The curriculum is designed to address challenges that are common among individuals who have experienced interpersonal violence and are no longer in crisis, yet who are still traveling the distance between surviving and thriving. It is specifically designed to address:

- ❖ Low self-confidence, or low self-efficacy¹; and
- ❖ The lack of survivors’ voices and insights in conversations about what and how to create effective responses to interpersonal violence.

Often, individuals who experience interpersonal violence lose confidence in their ability to create and lead change in themselves, let alone in their communities. They may doubt that circumstances can be different. Although they have life experiences that could inform improved responses to interpersonal violence and lead to positive change in their communities, survivors may feel isolated and disconnected, and as a result, may fail to share their experience and ideas with service providers and others.

By the end of participants’ Fellowship experience, we expect the following outcomes:

- ❖ Each program participant will complete a community project that is IPV related and that connects to the purpose of the Center;
- ❖ Self-evaluations will reveal that participants experience increased levels of generalized self-efficacy and leadership efficacy;
- ❖ Program participants will contribute to Family Justice Center practices, and will work with the Center and/or its partner organizations on projects;
- ❖ Program participants will each attain new practical skills, and create a new resume.

To make the above happen, the program invites and supports following mindset shifts:

- ❖ A shift from “us versus them” to “we.”
- ❖ Shift from a scarcity mindset of “not enough” to one of “creating from what I know and what I have available right now.”
- ❖ Shift from a belief that “I’m not responsible” to believing “we are all responsible” for the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

¹ Self-efficacy is the belief one has in one’s abilities to meet the challenges and succeed. We used the General Self-Efficacy Scale by Judith Bäßler, Ralf Schwarzer & Matthias Jerusalem, 1993.

Values and Principles

The values on which the Community Fellowship is built include: dignity, courage, inclusivity, compassion, and creative possibility. The project's guiding principles include:

- ❖ *Connection.* We recognize that community problems call for community solutions and that we can do more when we come together. The program connects fellows with the Center's partner organizations and other Fellows, past and present.
- ❖ *Contribution.* Fellows give back to their communities through designing and implementing community projects which are in alignment with the Center's mission. Their human need to contribute is honored and valued as their feedback on our work is embraced.
- ❖ *Celebration.* Fellows celebrate their accomplishments and learning in community. They re-inspire each other to set new goals and stretch further. They get to know themselves not only as survivors, but also as creators of new possibilities for themselves and others.

Basic Program Components

To operate effectively, the Community Fellowship project must have (a) a Program Coordinator; (b) Mentors (each Fellow is assigned one Mentor); and (c) Community Projects. The Program Coordinator is responsible for recruiting and selecting Fellows, training and supporting them throughout the Fellowship, and overall project management. Mentors offer encouragement and constructive feedback to support the Fellows to select and design their Community Projects, prepare action plans to implement them, and decide how to evaluate their projects. In the Center's program, each Mentor was expected to communicate with the Fellows they mentor at least every other week, and to attend the Fellowship graduation.

The Community Project represents a focal point for each Fellow's leadership journey. Out of 26 Fellows, 25 designed and implemented a community project. A full list of the projects is attached, but some examples include:

- ❖ *Project Backspace:* Transforming a largely-unoccupied bare cement walkway outside the back door of West Center into an outdoor sanctuary for clients, partners, and staff.
- ❖ *Project Faith in Action:* Engaging one Fellow's faith community to support the Family Justice Center on an ongoing basis through donations and volunteerism, including a Back to School Supplies Drive, and adding the Center to the church's volunteer roster.
- ❖ *Let's Make a Change:* A workshop for Latino parents about bullying that introduces restorative justice principles to change attitudes about children who commit acts of bullying, and to raise awareness about the impact it has on children when they experience abuse in the home.
- ❖ *Activate Physical Health, Inner Peace and Self-Love:* a 6-week fitness and nutrition class for victims of domestic violence.

- ❖ Breaking Barriers in Education: a Community Diagnostic for Latinx immigrants that seeks to ascertain interest in continuing education and to understand perceived obstacles to taking action on that interest, as well as factors that motivate them to continue studying.

Essential Community Fellowship Elements²

To support each Fellow to develop their community project, the program provides them:

- ❖ Two full days of immersion into leadership training to launch the training (7 hours per day).
- ❖ Fellows' meetings twice a month to support one another to design and implement their community projects (2.5 hours per meeting, after the initial two-day immersion).
- ❖ Basic Computer Skills class (3 hours).
- ❖ Interpersonal Violence 101 training (facts, myths and dynamics of IPV) (4 hours).
- ❖ Support Circles twice a month in-between group meetings (2 hours per circle).
- ❖ Coaching calls with Program Coordinator once a week.
- ❖ Twice a month feedback and assistance from Mentors about the development of their community project, whether by phone or email.
- ❖ Outreach activities (minimum 10 hours throughout Fellowship).
- ❖ An informational interview with a Family Justice Center partner organization.
- ❖ Resume consultation with workforce development coach.
- ❖ *Mentes Positivas en Accion*, a 6-week program (if group is Spanish Speaking) or support group meetings if available.
- ❖ Community Fellow Agreement.
- ❖ Community Fellow Statement of Commitment.
- ❖ General Self Efficacy Evaluation, a self-evaluation completed at the start and end of the program to measure each Fellows' belief in their own ability to succeed and to accomplish tasks and goals.
- ❖ Leadership Efficacy Evaluation, a self-evaluation completed at the start and end of the program to gauge each participants' level of confidence in their knowledge, skills, and abilities to be an effective leader.
- ❖ Support to design and implement a community project throughout the duration of the program.
- ❖ Individual presentations at the Fellowship graduation when each participant speaks about their own leadership journey and their community project.
- ❖ \$500 stipend for Community Fellow participation.

² A tool kit for Community Fellowship Program Coordinator contains information and documents covering these topics and can be made available upon request.

Changes in the Fellows

Using the General Self-Efficacy Scale, we asked Community Fellows to self-report their sense of self-efficacy and leadership efficacy at the beginning and end of their fellowship. Nearly all Fellows in each year of the program improved their self-efficacy by the end of the Fellowship. They agreed with statements such as, “I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort,” and “Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.” They also had improved perception of their own leadership abilities. At the end of the program, they agreed that “I can communicate effectively,” and “I can ‘take charge’ when necessary.”

When they put this into their own words, many of them made statements like: “I can do more things than I think.” “In spite of my insecurities, I know I’m powerful and that I can do anything.” “I have many strengths as a person.” “I am unstoppable.” “If I put my mind to it, I can make a change in my community.” “Nothing is easy but everything can be accomplished.” “I don’t have to be perfect, just present, persistent, and committed to a purpose.”

On their exit evaluations, Fellows reported improving their skills in: networking, public speaking, planning and coordinating events, assessing community needs & existing resources, making presentations, time management, community building, and communicating in English

Another strong indicator of the program’s impact is the ongoing involvement of past Fellows with the Fellowship program and with the Center, and the continued evolution of some past Fellows’ community projects.

Changes at the Center

Community Fellowship program invites the Fellows to give input on the Center’s policies, protocols, and practices. Over the past three years, they provided critical, relevant and useful input which encouraged the Center to:

- ❖ Advertise stories about the Fellows’ and their Community Projects as inspirational news, which led us to make calls to media outlets.
- ❖ Create new outreach opportunities to link their own communities to the Center.
- ❖ Introduce outreach materials at places that many people visit regularly, such as check-cashing facilities and public benefits offices.

- ❖ Shift the Center’s communications with partner organizations on immigration issues and DACA repeal, after Fellows shared their perspectives on these issues.
- ❖ Provide coloring paper and markers for children waiting in the lobby, after Fellows told us they noticed children in the waiting room with their parents were drawing all over the Center’s informational flyers.
- ❖ Attract more traffic to the Center’s table at family-friendly outreach events by providing giveaway items geared toward children. At the suggestion of our Fellows, the Center now gives away small Play Doh containers at outreach events. The containers have Family Justice Center stickers with our phone number. It is effective and low-cost marketing: children swarm around the table, and their parents quickly follow.
- ❖ Greater inclusivity and continuous inquiry about “who is not in the room” for conversations about IPV resulted in editing our handouts to include men and persons with disabilities by name, due to one Fellow’s unwavering commitment to “radical inclusivity.”

The most significant contributions have been:

- ❖ Project Connect, which started in 2015 and now has become a core program of the Family Justice Center. It has also become a launching pad for new Community Fellow projects and a gateway into the Center’s long-term safety programs. These community meetings consist of community building circles and information workshops have been occurring every month.
- ❖ On the recurring theme of the Family Justice Center being about families, one of the first cohort Fellows mentioned that she was sharing with other parents the services at the Family Justice Center “that are not just about helping women.” She said that community members were surprised to hear, for instance, about our parenting classes, which she encouraged others to join. This same Fellow said that the reason more people didn’t come into our Center was that many families, to survive financially, needed the support and contribution of its members, and that “striking out on one’s own” may not be the answer for everyone. She gave examples from her own personal experience about how her marriage had grown and changed over time and wondered why there was no more support for intact families to gain skills in improved family relationships and communication. This feedback impacted the design of 2016 Innovations Conference on

the theme of Restorative Justice. The 2016 Conference featured Mimi Kim of Creative Interventions and sujatha baliga of Impact Justice, two renowned experts in the fields of IPV and transformative/restorative justice. From the conference, we generated enough community interest to start a pilot elder abuse restorative justice project in 2017. Subsequently, the Center was able to obtain a grant under the Innovative Response to Marginalized Victims Program of the California Office of Emergency Services and launched a bigger scale pilot family violence restorative justice project in partnership with five community-based organizations.

Sustainability and Replicability

Over the past year, the Family Justice Center developed a Project Coordinator Toolkit for the Community Fellows program to guide future program implementation, and as a reference for other organizations that may replicate the Fellowship. The Toolkit outlines the methods we have used to develop Fellows' leadership abilities across three domains: (1) personal development and leadership capacity, (2) designing and implementing a project that impacts the community, and (3) interpersonal communication.

The Family Justice Center is committed to continuing the Community Fellowship program after the end of Blue Shield's grant funding for the program. The Fellowship program has impacted the lives of individual Fellows as well as their communities, and has enabled the Family Justice Center to partner with the families and communities we serve so we can meet their needs.

List of Community Fellows and Projects

2016 (10)

- ❖ **Marisol Martinez: *Project Connect***
A monthly community circle where Latino survivors co-create safety in learning and select topics for skill building.

- ❖ **Sindy Juarez: *Project Raise Your Voice***
A step-by-step bilingual Guide for Latino parents of Children with Special Needs.

- ❖ **Nelvis Quintana: *Project Cyber Prevention***
A resource page for Latino parents about cyber bullying.

- ❖ **Aracely Cuevas: *Project Protection***
Decoy cards for Spanish-speaking victims of domestic violence.

- ❖ **Cynthia Altamirano: *Project Faith in Action***
Engaging her faith community to support the Family Justice Center on an ongoing basis through donations and volunteerism, including a Back to School Supplies Drive and the addition of the Center to the church volunteer roster.

- ❖ **Petronila Fernandes: *Project Parents Council***
A survey for Latino parents at Ford Elementary to engage parents in their children's education and to engage the school's collaboration.

- ❖ **LaTonya Germany: *Project Yummy***
Bringing the "Cooking Matters" program to GRIP shelter staff and residents, to increase nutritious and flavorful food choices.

- ❖ **Rosario Aviles Ibarra: *Project MIA***
MIA self-care bags for victims of domestic violence. Rosario presented her MIA bags at the workshop: "Pasando La Voz con MIA."

- ❖ **Mariana Rosales: *Project "Pasando La Voz"***
"Pasando La Voz con MIA," a workshop to raise awareness in Latina women about types of domestic violence and the risks of acquiring HIV.

- ❖ **Vanessa Johnson: *Project Backspace***
Transforming the West Center's bare, cement, largely unoccupied space into an outdoor sanctuary for clients, partners and staff.

2017 (9)

- ❖ **Janell Coleman: *Marsh Creek Community***
Creation and coordination of Family Movie Nights at Marsh Creek Apartments in Brentwood, where Janell and her family live.
- ❖ **Esmeralda Cardenas: *Happy Women***
A crafts class (embroidery and crochet) for Central Center clients that inaugurated at a Project Connect meeting.
- ❖ **Sparkle Stephen: *Pals 4 Change***
Connecting isolated survivors of abuse with shelter pets so they can heal together.
- ❖ **Tiphereth Banks: *Sauti (Swahili for sound or voice)***
Contour Drawing classes for urban youth as a channel for self-expression.
- ❖ **Carmen Alejo: *Active Parents, Healthy Children***
A five-part bilingual workshop for parents of children diagnosed with mental illness.
- ❖ **Adriana Martinez: *Let's Make a Change***
A workshop for Latino parents about bullying that introduces restorative justice in seeking to change attitudes about children who commit acts of bullying and to raise awareness about the impact on children of abuse in the home.
- ❖ **Shani Miranda: *Oya Defense Training (Oya represents the energy of the wind as well as death & rebirth in the Yoruba tradition)***
A self-defense workshop to bring women together who have been victims of a violent crime and build a sisterhood, to move away from isolation.
- ❖ **Kayla Lopez: *Transitioning Foster Youth 101***
A leadership capacity building program for transitioning foster youth and supportive services for social workers.
- ❖ **Teresita de Jesus Escobedo: *Voices of Emerald Park***
A survey for residents of Emerald Park in Pittsburg to rate in order of priority their top concerns in a safe and anonymous way.

2018 Spring (4)

- ❖ **Clara Reyes: *Activate in Physical Health, Inner Peace and Self-Love***
A 6-week fitness and nutrition class for victims of domestic violence.
- ❖ **Silviana Hernandez: *60 Minutes for You***
A 4-week yoga series that started out as an opportunity to bring mothers and teens together.
- ❖ **Mirtha Mackthon: *Consciousness-in-Action***
A dialogue with Rainbow Community Center about HIV testing and LGBTQ inclusion in Latinx communities.
- ❖ **Ceydel Ramirez: *Positive Minds for Youth***
Inspired by the positive impact of *Positive Minds* and by the needs of her own teen daughter, she convinced the program creator to offer the program to youth in English.

2018 Fall (3)

- ❖ **Patricia Muñoz: *Breaking Barriers in Education***
A Community Diagnostic for Latinx immigrants that seeks to ascertain interest in continuing education and to understand perceived obstacles to taking action.
- ❖ **Karla Woods: *BEND JUSTUS***
An online platform for victims of interpersonal violence to share their stories of how they turned their pain to power, and the resources that supported them in their journeys.
- ❖ **Joleen Reutlinger: *Project Passion* (In Progress)**
Envisions changes and improvements to the support currently offered to Human Trafficking survivors.

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