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## **Abstract**

Walnut Avenue is a public benefit organization that provides a variety of services to address the disparities seen in programs that address domestic violence in a way that encourages long term change within victims and survivors and the person who causes harm. Space for Change is a new program based on transformative justice and offers an alternative option for participating in a process with the goal of interrupting cycles of violence and preventing future harm. When searching for programs that address domestic violence in a way that does not include separating from the person who is causing harm, there are limited options. Without adequate options of evidence, informed programs for the person who has caused harm, victims and survivors may not seek services and stay trapped within the cycle of domestic violence. Space for Change addresses this disparity seen within domestic violence programs and aims to reduce the consequences connected to the rates of domestic violence which include homelessness, mental health consequences, and death.

*Keywords: domestic violence, transformative justice, victim and survivor, person who causes harm, transformative programs*

## **Agency & Communities Served**

Walnut Avenue Family and Women's Center (WAFWC) is a public benefit agency located in Santa Cruz California that has been supporting the needs of domestic violence victims and survivors in Santa Cruz county for over 85 years. WAFWC continuously works toward improving the lives of women, children and families by offering a number of strength based services supporting their mission to end cycles of trauma, support lifelong learning, and promote healthy relationships with oneself and others (Walnut Avenue, n.d). Within the many programs Walnut Avenue offers there has been an expressed need by participants for a program that addresses domestic violence in the way that Space for Change does. Space for Change is a new program based on transformative justice offering an alternative option for the victim and survivor as well as the person who has caused harm to participate in a process with the goal of addressing harm that has happened in the past and to prevent it from happening again in the future (Space for Change, 2022). This program will be able to address the needs of the victim and survivor as well as the person who has caused harm in order to provide support and tools that will continue to create lasting change in the community.

## **Problem Model Background and Literature Review**

### ***Problem Statement***

Domestic violence (DV) is common. Current research shows that in the US, 1 in 3 women, 1 in 4 men, 1 in 3 people under 18 years old of any gender, and over half of people who are LGBTQ experience some form of DV at least once in their lifetimes (Burns, 2021). When searching for programs that address domestic violence in a way that does not include separating from the person who is causing harm, there are limited options. There are many reasons a victim

or survivor may not be looking to separate from the person who is causing harm. Relationships are complex and they may not be ready for that point, or they may have ties that will continue to keep them in contact like children, but that does not mean they are not ready or in need of assistance. Without adequate options of evidence, informed programs that provide resources for the person who has caused harm, as well as programs that do not involve factors such as law enforcement, or separation from partner victims and survivors may not seek services and stay trapped within the cycle of domestic violence.

The Little Hoover Commission (formally known as Milton Marks) mission is to investigate state government operations and policies through reports and legislative proposals (The Little Hoover Commission, n.d). In a recent report addressing California's approach to intimate partner violence it was stated that,

The state needs more accurate data to successfully address intimate partner violence. The state does not have a firm grasp of the full scope and impact of intimate partner violence on Californians who are not cisgender white women and whether it is meeting their needs – though conversations with advocates from those communities suggest it is not. It does not even know the effectiveness of its mainstream programs for survivors of intimate partner violence. (The Little Hoover Commission, 2021)

Space for Change is an opportunity to address a disparity that exists in domestic violence services. Successfully addressing intimate partner violence by bringing acknowledgement to the harm that has been done and building long term tools and solutions to end cycles of violence.

## **Contributing Factors**

### ***Distrust of Law Enforcement***

Distrust of law enforcement contributes to the issue of domestic violence victims and survivors accessing help or services. There are many survivors who will not participate in programs if there are mandated reporters involved. This can be because of the standard reaction of law enforcement when domestic violence is the call being responded to. The last update made to the Law Enforcement Policy Center provides a need to know when responding to domestic violence. It includes that law enforcement agencies should develop policies that provide a proactive victim-centered approach. However, it is also listed that the victim should never be the one to state whether or not they want the perpetrator arrested. Domestic violence is a crime and whomever has committed the criminal act will be arrested as long as there is no compelling reason not to arrest such as self-defense. Law enforcement is also responsible in deciding who is the predominant aggressor, this is the individual who is deemed to possess the most serious ongoing threat. It is stated that “This individual may or may not be the one who initiated the conflict”(Law Enforcement Policy Center, 2019). While this approach can be helpful in certain situations by keeping the victim and the officers who are responding safe, it can also be seen why law enforcement may be avoided altogether.

Domestic violence relationships like all relationships are complex, anyone can be a victim of domestic violence and it is important to acknowledge the diversity within communities and the unique roadblocks they may face when seeking services. A factor that Space for Change acknowledges is the historical and present interactions between communities of color and law enforcement. Black and brown communities continue to face fear and distrust when seeking out service from law enforcement. When looking at domestic violence rates Black survivors are disproportionately more likely to be criminalized by law enforcement. Black women face stereotypes of aggression and being able to take on more stress making their claims of domestic

violence invalid (The Women of Color Network, n.d). The National Domestic Violence Hotline conducted a survey and reported that 2 out of 5 survivors said that they had felt discriminated against after reporting sexual assault to the police (Aprill, 2020). Risk of deportation is another issue faced with law enforcement, there are communities who can not call due to the risk of having themselves their children or their abusive partner sent away. A survey done by seven national domestic violence organizations found 78 percent of advocates reported that immigrant survivors expressed concerns about contacting the police for fear of deportation (NNEDV, n.d). It can be detrimental to a situation if law enforcement becomes involved without the permission of the survivor and without other options the cycle of violence will continue.

***Lack of resources/ evidence informed programs for those who have caused harm***

There are a lack of resources and evidence based programs for those who have caused harm. Batterer intervention programs (BIPs) are most commonly the type of programs that are available to those who cause harm. BIPs were first introduced as an alternative route over incarceration. Victims and survivors would come forward saying even though they did want the abuse to stop they did not want their abuser to go to jail. Often court ordered, BIPs attempt to provide persons who cause harm with the tools they need to reduce battering (Jackson et al., 2003). The issue with these programs are the results they yield and that there is little evidence showing the success of BIPs. Two evaluations of BIPs one in Broward County Florida and the other in New York claim they had little or no effect on the reduction of battereing (Jackson et al., 2003). There can be varying reasons why this is true. BIPs are often time court ordered in lieu of jail sentences, however change does not come forcefully. The ability to change comes from the want to change and being able to acknowledge and take accountability for the harm that an individual has caused. The researchers of this study also found that there was a difference in

BIPs that had longer vs. shorter processes. The group that participated in the 8-week program showed no differences but the group that completed the 26-week program had significantly fewer complaints made against them (Jackson et al.,2003). These programs were still difficult to get conclusive results out of because there were participants who dropped out.

## **Consequences**

### ***Death***

When cycles of domestic violence continue victims and survivors face the most dangerous risk of all, death. Individuals of all genders lose their lives to intimate partner each year and in a study done by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime in 2018 focusing on violence against women and girls it was reported that a total of 87,000 women and girls were killed globally, being more at risk in Asia and Africa (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). This was an important study that brought awareness to just how big of a social issue domestic violence really is. However, we still lack data that is specific from the state of California to counties, the accurate data for how many people of all genders and identities die each year from intimate partner violence related homicide is lacking.

The risk of death is higher in domestic violence relationships when there is no adequate intervention available. When looking at why partners do not just leave the people who are causing them harm there are many reasons. Cultural or religious beliefs, strong bonds such as children or family, distrust of the criminal justice system, fear, and legal status (The Women of Color Network, n.d). For these reasons having alternate programs that focus on the need for change within relationships and breaking the cycle of violence can be what significantly reduces the number of deaths each year that are related to domestic violence.

### ***Homelessness***



Homelessness is one of the most common consequences seen within cases of domestic violence “Sixty-three percent (7,728) of unmet requests were for housing. Emergency shelter and transitional housing continue to be the most urgent unmet needs for domestic violence survivors.” (Domestic Violence and Homelessness Statistics, 2016). When fleeing from domestic violence victims and survivors oftentimes do not have support to turn to as there may have been isolation within the relationship. Domestic violence agencies assist with the safety planning of fleeing and there are resources in place such as shelters, and emergency accommodation which may look something like a one night stay in a hotel as the survivor transitions to another place to stay like with a friend or family member. However, in many counties these services are severely impacted. Shelters often work on a first come first serve basis and are not a guarantee. This leaves victims and survivors to live in their cars or tents, exposing them to risk of violence in the street and law enforcement picking them up for criminal activity. Space for Change is going to be available for the population of Santa Cruz county. Within the County there were 3,991 individuals experiencing houselessness in the year 2021, this is an increase from the previous year (Santa Cruz Database, 2021). Even with funding going into new affordable housing units there are still only so many spots available and waitlists can be hundreds of people long.

### ***Mental Health Crisis***

Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is often a result victims and survivors of domestic violence face. This is a mental health disorder in which an individual has difficulty recovering from a traumatic experience. PTSD, often under-recognized in domestic violence can make it so an individual struggles with feeling safe. Having to cope with triggers such as people, places and things can make it so a victim continuously relives an event. Left untreated PTSD can cause long

term effects to mental health such as severe loneliness and depression as well as long term health issues including Type 2 diabetes, heart issue, and high blood pressure (Beaufort Memorial Hospital, 2021).

In situations in which the victim or survivor is not leaving their partner they are caught in the trauma that contributes to their mental health. Stopping violence from occurring is not something that most programs have influence in. When working with an agency, victims may safety plan with an advocate to have a plan when conflict arises, but there is no direct contact with the person who is causing harm. This means that while there are options to give tools and resources to survivors on how to handle conflict there is a disparity in having that sort of contact with an abuser. Research has shown that more active forms of coping skills are necessary before recovery can begin however, it is important to screen for the level of violence exposure. The more violence the more symptoms of PTSD rise (Lilly, 2010). Putting an end to violence long term can bring recovery to PTSD.

<b>Contributing Factors</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Consequences</b>
Factor 1 Distrust of law enforcement	Continuation of DV and survivors not accessing services	Consequence 1 Death
Factor 2 Lack of resources/ evidence informed programs for those who have caused harm		Consequence 2 Homelessness
		Consequence 3 Mental health crisis

## **Project Description**

**Title: Space for Change**

**Project Description**

Space for Change offers an opportunity for people who have experienced domestic violence and people who have caused it to participate in a process with the goal of addressing the harm that's already happened and preventing it from happening again in the future"(Space for Change, 2022). Space for Change is a Transformative Justice project that addresses the need for a program that facilitates not only the victim/survivor of domestic violence but also the person who has caused harm. This program's goal is to help participants work towards change in a way that is not couples counseling. Couples counseling does not work in cases of Domestic Violence because of the unequal power dynamic between partners. Space for Change is a facilitated space in which both participants will with the help of an Walnut Avenue advocate form a support circle made of friends, family and community members that have been screened by advocates to ensure that the most positive progress can be made by both groups. There are currently a few situations in which participants might fit with what Space for Change can offer. Relationships may look like: Two people looking for closure around a past relationship in which violence had occurred, co-parents with shared custody who want to work on interacting in healthier ways with one another, people who have caused harm looking for help in learning how to make safer choices in current or future relationships, survivors wanting to address indirect harm caused by family or friends, or youth wanting to engage with a parent that's caused harm (Space for Change, 2022).

### **Project Justification/Benefits**

The contributing factor Space for Change will be addressing is the lack of resources and evidence based programs for those who have caused harm. Within California there has been a disparity in the number of successful programs that address individuals who cause harm. Space for Change will implement a facilitated space for people who have caused harm along with the victim or survivor acknowledging their need for change. This program is taking a unique

approach to the better development of those who have caused harm. “People are not inherently violent, cruel, or mean; violence is a learned *behavior*, sometimes through unsafe experiences as a child, sometimes through the way our society teaches us what we do or don’t deserve” (Space for Change, 2022). By screening and developing a support circle made up of community members, volunteers, friends, and family; accountability will be at the forefront of paving the way to change. In asking for a long term commitment from all participating members of Space for Change it will be able to contribute to the long term solution of ending violence. Space for change will benefit the community by providing a way to offer support for both parties. The agency will have a new way in which to offer support for those who are not planning to leave their partner. This will give a solution for the cases where survivors continue a relationship with their partner when nothing has changed due to their not being a program for this specific situation. The success of this program will reduce the harm being caused and will therefore reduce the numbers that are seen in domestic violence related deaths, individuals experiencing homelessness, and mental health issues such as PTSD.

### **Implementation Process**

The implementation for Space for Change will consist of the Creative Interventions Toolkit being analyzed, providing important information that supports the base development of this program. During this time the Program Development Intern will also work on tasks that will contribute to the physical resources such as the introduction packet used for survivors as well as some graphic design to promote the program, including naming the program and creating its logo. By May 2022 the creation of the rest of the written resources will be completed. All of those who are involved in Space for Change will have an introduction packet, and access to general resources that can be used throughout and after their time in the process. By the

beginning of summer Space for Change will be ready to be presented to Walnut Avenue advocates, during this time the presenters will be able to collect feedback from the cohort that will be applied to the improvement of the program. The next step will be to co-create the volunteer and advocate training which will be a 4 week 2 days a week Zoom training that will prepare both volunteers and advocates to provide direct service to participants who move forward. August 2022 Space for Change will launch and the goal is to support at least 1 set of participants to move forward in the process. The last few months in the year after launch will be dedicated to supporting participants as well as developing further resources that will be used to support Space for Change participants and Advocates.

### **Assessment Plan & Expected Outcomes**

The assessment plan for Space for Change will span over at least years time for each individual case. The outcome will be measurable based on the goals being reached by participants. These goals are created with participants and advocates and are supported throughout the time spent in Space for Change. The expected outcome is to end cycles of violence by giving participants, especially the person who has caused harm, tools and resources to create long term change. The expected number of participants to move forward in the program within the next year is 1 set. Within the Space for Change support circles there will be a volunteer advocate/note taker for each participant that will attend every meeting. The responsibility of the volunteer advocate/note taker will be to keep detailed notes that track the progress and goals met by each participant. At the end of the program process each participant will partake in an exit interview. The exit interview will provide insight to the participant experience and the overall success of the goals to change. With the completion of this interview

along with the case notes collected Walnut Avenue will be able to provide evidence and present data showing the success of the set expected outcomes.

### **Project Results**

Space for Change will benefit the community by providing a way to offer support for both parties. This will give a solution for the cases where survivors continue a relationship with their partner when nothing has changed due to their not being a program for this specific situation. The success of this program will reduce the harm being caused and will therefore reduce the numbers that are seen in domestic violence related deaths, individuals experiencing homelessness, and mental health issues such as PTSD. The evaluation plan for Space for Change will span over at least one year's time for each individual case. The outcome will be measurable based on the goals being reached by participants. These goals are created with participants and advocates and are supported throughout the time spent in Space for Change. The expected outcome is to end cycles of violence by giving participants, especially the person who has caused harm, tools and resources to create long term change. The expected number of participants to move forward in the program within the next year is 1 set. Within the Space for Change support circles there will be a volunteer advocate/note taker for each participant that will attend every meeting. The responsibility of the volunteer advocate/note taker will be to keep detailed notes that track the progress and goals met by each participant. At the end of the program process each participant will partake in an exit interview. The exit interview will provide insight to the participant experience and the overall success of the goals to change. With the completion of this interview along with the case notes collected Walnut Avenue will be able to provide evidence and present data showing the success of the set expected outcomes. Space for Change is

currently in launch and is expected to have produced the expected results in 2 years time, by 2024.

### **Conclusion & Recommendations**

Space for Change will give a solution for cases where survivors continue a relationship with their partner. The success of this program will reduce the harm being caused and will therefore reduce the numbers that are seen in domestic violence related deaths, individuals experiencing homelessness, and mental health issues such as PTSD. The recommendation for Walnut Avenue moving forward will be ways to promote this new program within the agency and other agencies. Currently to promote this program Walnut Avenue has an informative page for Space for Change on their website that is available to the public. They have also made volunteers of the hotline aware of the new program so they can refer participants if they receive a caller that may benefit from more information. This is currently great to keep staff and current volunteers updated on this new program, but as time progresses and this program proves to be successful, bringing in other agencies will be an important part of supporting long term community change. My suggestion to do this will be to utilize the data collected from the participant sets that have completed the process and create a program presentation to share with other agencies. The goal of this will be to create communication between agencies that serve similar populations and share the evidence that can change the way domestic violence agencies provide support to domestic violence victims and survivors as well as people who have caused harm.



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## Appendix A

### Project Implementation Plan

Activities	Deliverables	Timeline/Deadlines	Supporting Staff
Research of Creative Interventions toolkit	Information that contributed to Space for Change & information packets	Fall 2021	Marjorie Coffey
Developing the Introduction packet (Survivors)	Information packet to be given to survivors that explains program	February 2022	Marjorie Coffey
Graphic design of logo/naming of program	Official logo and name of program	March 2022	Marjorie Coffey
Developing the Introduction packet (Support Circle)	Information packet to be given to support circle members that explains program and their potential role in it	April 2022	Marjorie Coffey
Finding general resources for participants for Space for Change	Useable resources for participants to support their participation in and outside of the program	May 2022	Marjorie Coffey
Participated in meeting to go over Space for Change with Walnut Avenue Advocates	Answering questions/Providing additional perspectives	July 2022	Marjorie Coffey
Launch of Space for Change	The implementation of Space for Change	August 2022	Marjorie Coffey

Finding resources for abusers at risk of causing imminent harm	Useable resources for participants to support their participation in and outside of the program specifically for those who have caused harm	September 2022	Marjorie Coffey
Researching accepting boundaries curriculum	Useable curriculum on how to accept boundaries & rejection from a partner	September 2022	Marjorie Coffey
Creation of accepting boundaries curriculum	Useable curriculum on how to accept boundaries & rejection from a partner	October 2022	Marjorie Coffey
Presentation of accepting boundaries curriculum	Presentation on new curriculum for accepting boundaries	October 2022	Marjorie Coffey
Co-creation of volunteer advocate training for program	Trained volunteers for Space for Change	October 2022	Marjorie Coffey