

BEYOND EQUITY



dvr) **COMMUNITY
WIDE PLAN**

2024-2027

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From the Executive Director

Introduction

Domestic Violence Network (DVN) is grateful to the Central Indiana community for supporting our work as we launch the sixth iteration of the community wide plan, *Beyond Equity*. Recognizing the urgency to prioritize the voices of those forced to the margins, this iteration of the community wide plan continues the work of *Equity: Listening to the Truth, Amplifying Voices, Changing Systems* by focusing on the experiences of Black and African American women.

Moving Beyond Equity

As we launch *Beyond Equity*, we remain deeply committed to furthering our work with Black and African American women who experience violence at alarmingly higher rates than any other group. *Beyond Equity* aims to delve deeper into the root causes of this grim reality, inviting robust discussions, fostering an environment where the needs and solutions of Black and African American women are centered, and channeling our resources to address the systemic issues that leave many behind.

Centering Community Voices

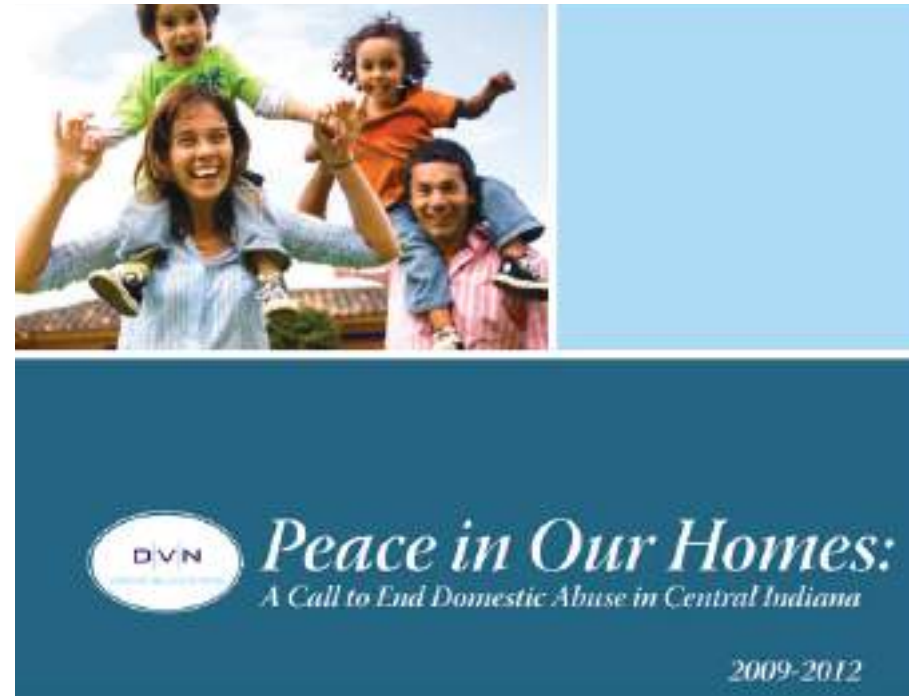
In developing this plan, DVN staff worked diligently with community members, service providers, and survivors to listen to their stories and insights on how to better serve those who have experienced violence. The common thread of these conversations is that the personal histories, preferred paths of healing, and expressed needs of Black and African American women who experience domestic violence are often dismissed and ignored by social systems intended to provide care.

Authentic Partnerships & Relevant Support

Beyond Equity will center the community's perspectives, insights, and solutions through meaningful conversations and training opportunities, which can lead to change. To authentically support the community, DVN will continue partnerships within the 46218 zip code and surrounding areas to provide programming based on the expressed wishes of the community. At the same time, we will create educational materials and organize training events specifically designed for service providers, focusing on delivering culturally appropriate and equitable support to Black and African American women.

History of the Community Wide Plan

In 2000, Mayor Bart Peterson challenged Indianapolis to take an accountable, comprehensive, and culturally sensitive approach to preventing family violence. This led the Domestic Violence Network (DVN) to facilitate the first community wide plan, focused on general domestic violence response and prevention. Learning and building from the early plan, DVN launched the more ambitious three-year *Peace in Our Homes* initiative in 2009, aimed to end domestic violence through strategies addressing key populations - the broader community, survivors, abusers, and youth.



For over twenty years, DVN has been a leader in the community to address issues surrounding the *prevention and intervention of domestic violence in Central Indiana.*

Building on the foundation laid by the previous community wide plans, *CWP 3.0* sought to end domestic violence through bold strategies focused on four key populations: the community, victims/ survivors, people who cause harm, and youth. Launched in 2012, *CWP 3.0* brought together service providers, law enforcement and the community to improve the response to and prevention of domestic violence in Central Indiana.



DVN 2014 - 2018
COMMUNITY WIDE PLAN TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (CWP 3.0)



In 2017, the *Intersections* plan took a different approach - recognizing that to truly end domestic violence, the root societal causes must be addressed. Through education, forums, and events, DVN examined how factors like economics, family life, education, mental health, and substance abuse intersect with and impact violence. The goal was linking community members with social service providers to facilitate understanding, shared visions, resource pooling, and healthier communities.



Equity:
listening to the truth, amplifying voices, changing systems.

Launched in 2020, *Equity's* focus was elevating and amplifying the voices of the most marginalized people, specifically Black and African American women and the LGBTQ+ community.

Training for service providers, community programming, and organizational assessments centered on providing culturally competent care for people who are part of these groups. Dialogue between providers and community members continuously revealed a disconnect between those offering services and those intended to receive them.



Reflections on “Equity”

“Equity” Pivots to Virtual

Launched in January 2020, the plans detailed in the community wide plan, *Equity*, were quickly modified to accommodate COVID-19 restrictions. DVN facilitated training and education events in a virtual setting, finding that attendance and participation increased during this time. Specifically, hosting virtual events like a training series on violence against Black women by UJIMA: The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community, and the Transgender Training Institute workshop for providers serving the transgender community.

Restrictions Lifted, Partnerships Grew

As social restrictions lifted, DVN began a partnership with Brightwood Community Center (BWCC) through in-person events, resource sharing, and meaningful collaboration. Some of the events included the 32nd Annual Commemoration honoring domestic violence victims and community-building events like Galentine’s Day and Friendsgiving.

Meaningful Collaboration

The DVN-BWCC partnership facilitated life-changing experiences through community conversations and workshops about relationships and domestic violence. One woman described her reaction when she realized she was in an abusive relationship. Later, she told BWCC and DVN staff that she made meaningful changes in her life to be free of violence. Her story is one of many who have been affected by the programs developed in this partnership.

47 Training Events
21 Community Events
2,145 Total Participants

“I didn’t know I was in a domestic violence relationship until I came to DVN’s trainings at Brightwood Community Center.”

COMMUNITY MEMBER

A Deeper Dive into “Equity”

Generational trauma and generational cycles of violence were prevalent during *Equity’s* programs, discussions, and evaluation. When developing this iteration of the community wide plan, it became clear that these issues demand examination and reflection.

In keeping with its mission, DVN recognizes that in order to change the culture that leads to domestic violence, we must first look at the structure of the cultures most affected.

Consistently, Black and African American women describe some the structures of generational trauma, cycles of violence inside of the family and community, as well as healing needed not just for the person who experienced harm, but for the person who caused it. To serve this community effectively and equitably, we must take a different approach to service. Black and African American women who participated in *Equity* and the development of *Beyond Equity* shared the following needs: a whole family approach to service, therapy, support groups, conversations, practical self care, and the care for the family beyond the moments of crisis. *Beyond Equity’s* focus is not just on trauma, but on resilience and joy that endure despite crisis.



“Beyond Equity” Development

The Domestic Violence Network undertook extensive research and community engagement in 2023 to develop *Beyond Equity*. An advisory group was formed to evaluate the effectiveness of *Equity*, discuss relevant issues in the community, and conduct focus groups to determine *Beyond Equity's* focus.

By engaging the advisory group for high-level guidance and focus groups for grassroots qualitative data, Domestic Violence Network worked to ensure the community wide plan took shape through a collaborative process centered on community voices. The research methodology focused on intentional engagement through multiple listening sessions and meaningful dialogue with Black and African American community members most impacted by domestic violence. This approach revealed that current models of responding to domestic violence miss the mark in several ways.

Listening Sessions

Led by the Advisory Group

Focused on the experiences of **Black and African American Women**

Sessions conducted centered on **people with identities that include:**

LGBTQ+, Survivors, Advocates, Community Members, Executive Directors/CEOs, People with Disabilities, and High School Students

Professional Development

European Forum on Restorative Justice
Leuven, Belgium
January 2023

Restorative Justice training with
Circles for Social Change
August & December 2023

Restorative Justice Conference
with IIRP
Detroit, MI
October 2023

Advisory Group

Consists of community members, nonprofit partners, and advisors from Brightwood Community Council & Black and African American Women Task Force (BAAWTF)

Listening Session Insights

“Are you okay? should NOT be the first question asked, it should be Are you safe?”

-community member



“I would not go to resources, but to mom’s house, but she has the [mindset] that he’s still the kids’ father.”

-community member

“Be at peace within yourself-self care and love oneself as opposed to taking care of EVERYONE else around you.”

-community member

“I don’t hate my baby daddy [who was abusive], I hate our situation.”

-community member



“Black girls and Black women are not granted GRACE.”

-community member



A Love Letter

from Us

to Us

Black and African American women uniquely navigate systems of oppression that shape and impact how we show up in the world and to ourselves. **Black gentleness is the often unseen and devalued softness, tenderness, and vulnerability beneath the hardening experiences of anti-black racism and gendered domination.**

In a podcast exploring Black gentleness, Ifunanya Nweke imparts, "It can be heard within our language, experienced in our art, and felt in our music. Gentleness can be found in our connection – a shared understanding of even the slightest gestures which Ifunanya perfectly describes as our mutuality. Gentleness is present whenever we give each other the space and safety to be our true selves."

Fellow podcast guest Morenike Elisabeth shares, "Familial gentleness can be found in our shared laughter, expressed admiration, and wholehearted acceptance for one another." bell hooks writes in her essay On Self Recovery, **"Domination and colonization attempt to destroy our capacity to know the self, to know who we are. We oppose this violation, this dehumanization when we seek self-recovery, when we work to rewrite fragments of being, to recover our history."** Black gentleness is rooted in our capacity for wholeness internally and in relationship to one another. When we create opportunities to practice gentleness, another world is and becomes possible:

"Softness is available to us.

Care is available to us.

Rest is available to us.

Intimacy is available to us.

Community is available to us.

Sleep is available to us.

Justice is available to us.

Pleasure is available to us."

– The Nap Ministry

Written with fullest love by Elle Roberts + Rebecca Berry

Listening Sessions

Listening session participants expressed the needs of the community, but, more deeply, the emotional impact of violence prevention, response, and recovery on Black and African American women. **Many shared frustration with current service models, which isolate those harmed from those who caused harm, by treating incidents as individual relationship issues instead of dynamics that impact the family and community.**

Participants described that people experiencing violence most often rely on family members, especially maternal figures, for support. Often, this support network has experienced violence directly and/or indirectly, and those in crisis know that they can seek out this network for shelter.

Professional services are seen as a last resort because the community has too often experienced mistreatment, disbelief, and dismissal of their needs when seeking outside help.

Black and African American women, in particular, feel called to provide ongoing shelter, emotional support, and healing avenues to loved ones affected by violence, even when it is at their own expense. One member shared: "We always make it happen, but sometimes we don't want to have to feel like we always have to make it happen." Through this constant care for others, Black and African American women feel forced into strength roles, yet are labeled as inherently "strong" – itself a trauma. Long term healing occurs when Black and African American women can, as one woman described, **"Be at peace within yourself; self care and loving yourself as opposed to taking care of everyone else around you."**




Black and African American women are often leaned on for care, thus being labeled inherently "strong," layering into their already existing traumas.



BEYOND

EQUITY





“Beyond Equity”
aims to examine why
Black and African American women
experience domestic violence at
higher rates than their white
counterparts and
seeks to reduce these numbers in
Marion County, Indiana.

OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Resources for Service Providers

Research, create, and distribute a series of culturally appropriate resources for service providers to use when working with Black and African American women

DVN will create at least one resource a year for distribution

Training for Service Providers

Host training series for service providers on cultural responsiveness to domestic violence in the Black and African American community

DVN will work through the Advocates Network to provide three training sessions to teach over 100 providers each year of *Beyond Equity*

Resources for the Community

Research, create, and distribute a series of resources for community members

DVN will create at least one resource a year for distribution

Training for the Community

Host training series for community members on the dynamics of domestic violence and resources offered

DVN will provide monthly trainings to 46218 and surrounding zip codes

Black-Centered Care

Create a working list of Black and African American therapists who specialize in domestic violence for distribution in the community

Identify additional care resources led by Black and African American people

Community Programs

Host two community book clubs each year of *Beyond Equity*

Each book club will consist of no more than 20 members and members will meet upon completion of the book to discuss

Restorative Justice Programming

Facilitate two Healing Circles monthly

One group will focus on providing support to those who have been harmed; the other will focus on providing support to those who have caused harm

Healing

The necessity of healing reverberated strongly throughout the conversations and focus group discussions that took place under the *Equity* initiative. For Black and African American women, the call was not merely for generic mental health services but **a plea for deeply understanding, culturally competent care**. They expressed a need for therapists and support groups where they could see reflections of their own experiences, histories, and identities. The conversations highlighted that when services are disjointed from the lived realities of individuals, they become less effective and often detrimental.

Additionally, while many services are aimed at addressing the immediate aftermath of domestic violence, there is a gap when it comes to the longer journey of holistic healing. For many, **simply surviving day-to-day takes precedence, often leaving the deep-seated traumas unaddressed**.

But healing is not just a destination; it is a layered journey that requires the creation of safe environments where individuals can express their vulnerabilities. Even more critically, it demands **a personal journey where one awakens to their inherent agency to confront, acknowledge, and process their experiences - all while withstanding the burdens placed on them by systemic racism, generational trauma, and cultural expectations**.

It is a layered journey which requires the creation of safe environments to express vulnerability.



Equipping the Community

Another recurring theme throughout listening sessions was the frustration and hopelessness experienced in navigating the overwhelming maze when attempting to access resources. The preference to lean on close-knit communities or family members was even more revealing, underscoring the untrustworthy culture of formal service providers and their lack of resonance. DVN recognizes this disconnect and feels a pressing responsibility not only to share these findings with providers but to offer educational opportunities which centers the perspectives of those seeking services.

Teaching community members to effectively engage with providers.

Teaching providers to effectively care for the community.

DVN will develop comprehensive, user-friendly print and online materials, as well as educational opportunities, to help service providers effectively care for the community. Through educating on systemic, historical, and present barriers created to hinder Black and African American women from obtaining care and healing, DVN encourages service providers to shift their care in ways that confront these barriers. Opportunities arise for the community to receive care in ways that they need it when providers confront these barriers.

Ancestral Echoes

Undeniable connections exist between generational trauma (or epigenetics), resilience, and domestic violence as they intersect with the lived experiences of Black and African American women.

Parallel to traumatic experience is the powerful story of generational resilience within Black and African American communities. **Despite the shadows of racism, dehumanization, and violence, radiant light of joy, strength, success, and creativity shine through.** This resilience is not only a testament to the immense capacity to thrive against systemic harm but is also a vital resource in addressing the disproportionate rates of domestic violence experienced by Black and African American women.

Harnessing, celebrating, and weaving resilience into proactive strategies can provide a more holistic and effective approach in the prevention and response to domestic violence.



Plenty are the conversations happening right now about

Black joy.

The power of it.

The necessity of it.

The ways in which this very cultural demonstration of humanity counters mainstream narratives of Black life being solely comprised of trauma and hardship.

-Tracey Michae'l Lewis Giggets



Engaging Systems of Care

A coordinated network of social institutions, organizations, and services that aim to meet the physical, emotional, social, and psychological needs of individuals and communities.



CONNECT WITH SERVICES

People are left to self-assess needs, research options, identify contacts, and appeal for support, all while in crisis. This can be confusing, frustrating, and forces survivors to remain in violent situations.



EQUIP PROVIDERS

Beyond Equity will facilitate training for providers to offer culturally appropriate care to Black and African American women and develop virtual and print materials to address the authentic needs of the community.



UNDERSTANDING THE LEGAL SYSTEM

Beyond Equity will provide training and resource materials to understand the differences between the civil and criminal justice systems, the rights of those involved in criminal proceedings, and the criteria for filing protective orders.



ENGAGING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES

Beyond Equity will develop resources and facilitate trainings to clarify common DCS expectations for parents, learn procedural steps of the investigation process, and understanding the nuances of this system.

Beyond White Feminism Transforming Services for Survivors

Definitions

White Supremacy

the individual, institutional, and cultural practices that center white people and white norms as superior.²

Racism

a form of prejudice that assumes that the members of racial categories have distinctive characteristics and that these differences result in some racial groups being inferior to others.

Racism generally includes negative emotional reactions to members of the group, acceptance of negative stereotypes, and racial discrimination against individuals; in some cases, it leads to violence.³

White Feminism

a specific way of viewing gender equality that is anchored in the accumulation of individual power rather than redistribution of it.⁴

A 2023 study asked women of color what the largest contributing factor was in the low number of women of color in domestic violence services leadership and the inability to maintain a leadership pipeline. The two largest contributing factors were white supremacy and racism. New studies continue to be published on ways the movement against domestic violence centers white women.

DVN acknowledges its role in this as a white-led organization, upholding the oversaturation of white leadership in the movement against domestic violence and contributing to the centering of the experiences of white women. We believe that part of the work in *Beyond Equity* is on our white leadership and staff to address white supremacy, racism, and white feminism and the roles they continue to play within the systems of domestic violence in Central Indiana. We are committed to creating educational materials that dive into the history of white feminism within the movement to end domestic violence, as well as developing workshops that organizations can participate in to address racism and white supremacy in delivering domestic violence services. We cannot fulfill our mission of changing the culture that leads to domestic violence without addressing the history and origins of the movement and working to actively address white feminism, racism, and white supremacy.

Our listening group participants were clear- the services primarily available in the domestic violence community of Central Indiana are not suited to serve Black women - from the lack of representation in mental health care to the hair care products made available within shelter spaces. Through collaborative partnerships with Black women, DVN will work within the current systems to improve the standard of care.

1. Recommended Citation: Nnawulezi, N. (2023) Women of Color in Coalition Leadership Project. National Resource Center Against Domestic Violence. transformgbv.org
2. Recommended Citation: Nnawulezi, N. (2023) Women of Color in Coalition Leadership Project. National Resource Center Against Domestic Violence. transformgbv.org
3. Racism, bias, and discrimination. American Psychological Association. Retrieved from: <https://www.apa.org/topics/racism-bias-discrimination>
4. Beck, Koa. (2021) White Feminism: From the Suffragettes to Influencers and Who They Leave Behind

A Whole Family Approach

Traditionally, the work surrounding domestic violence prevention and response has centered on the principle of separating those who have caused harm from those who have experienced it. Many service models still operate under the premise that “victims” should receive services while “abusers” should be incarcerated. The assumption is often that communication between the two parties should be immediately severed, and the relationship should end. Overwhelmingly, listening session participants expressed that people want an approach that focuses on providing resources for healing and accountability for the whole family.

We don't see
a **domestic disturbance**,
we see a family in pain,
in desperate **need of healing**.

We don't see an
“**abuser**” or “**victim**”,
we see a
child, parent, sibling, a partner.

We don't see **perpetual violence**,
we see terrible actions
committed by people suffering
immeasurable pain and trauma.

We don't want
relationships to end,
we just want
violence to stop.

Restorative Justice

The Domestic Violence Network (DVN), will pilot a fluid and evolving restorative justice model designed to address domestic violence, homicide rates, and recidivism while promoting healing and resilience in 46218 and surrounding zip codes.

Restorative practices are rooted in Indigenous knowledge of **healing and accountability for those who have been harmed and those who have caused it**, with a focus on identifying the circumstances that precede harm. However, modern-day restorative justice programs are based on evidence-based crime reduction research through personal intervention.

Professor John Braithwaite defines the guiding philosophy of restorative practices as **“because crime hurts, justice should heal.”** Rather than punishing the wrongdoer as the state defines punishment, restorative justice involves a **survivor-led process** that brings together the individuals affected by an incident to collectively discuss the harm, its causes, and how to make amends. Restoration can occur when people acknowledge the circumstances leading to harm and accept accountability for it. The process does not erase the pain that was caused, but recognizing a person’s life circumstances can lead to long-term healing.



Key Principles of Restorative Practices

HARM REPAIR

The primary goal is addressing the harm caused by the person who committed it and find ways of repairing that which was hurt

INCLUSION

All parties affected are encouraged to participate at their comfort levels

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation is voluntary with all parties willing to engage in the process

DIALOGUE AND COMMUNICATION

The restorative process often involves facilitated dialogue within healing circles

ACCOUNTABILITY

People who cause harm are held accountable for their actions and **MUST** take responsibility for them

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

In some cases, the broader community may be involved in the restorative process

Programs of “Beyond Equity”

<p>Training Events for Community Members, Providers, & Professionals</p>	<p>Community Listening Sessions</p> <p>Expert-led Workshops</p>
<p>Support Groups</p> <p>Facilitate Healing Circles</p>	<p>Mental Health Advocacy, Resource Curation, and Proactive Communication Strategies</p>
<p>Develop print and digital materials for community members and service providers focused on cultural competency and resource engagement</p>	<p>Protective Order Clinics</p> <p>Book Clubs</p>

thank you ●●●

Honoring Survivors

How do we even begin to express gratitude to each of the vulnerable, strong, and tender Black and African American women who shared their stories of pain, hope, and courage with us all? Words cannot adequately express how thankful we are for each of you. **We are honored and privileged to do this work because of you- the survivors.**

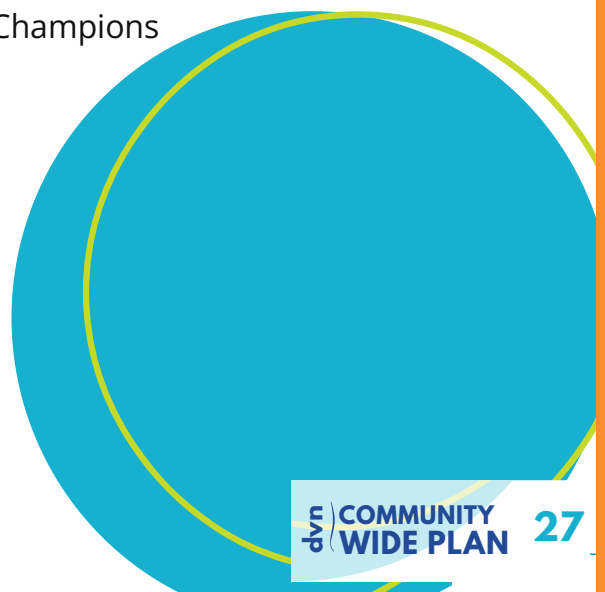
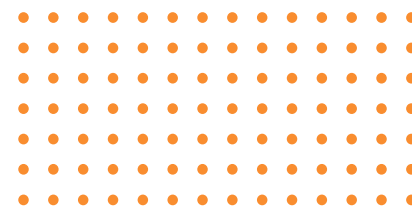
In collaboration with the survivors and their advocates, we can continue to carve a path forward because of these stories/experiences/truths. May we continue toward authentic care, competent services, fullest equity, and deep healing. Thank you for collaborating with us to continue to change the culture that surrounds domestic violence in our community.

Beyond Equity Advisory Council

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Schamonda Allen | Timike Jones |
| Rebecca Berry | Esther Lewis |
| Kim Boyd | Angie Martinez |
| Tammie Carter | Shonna Majors |
| Monica Conley | Kelly McBride |
| Linda Crocheron | Elle Roberts |
| WaTasha Griffin | Amanda Salgueiro |
| Brishaun Hamilton | Danyette Smith |
| Chris Handberg | Ashley Virden |

Community Partners

- Brightwood Community Center
- Coburn Place
- Firefly Children and Family Alliance
- Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- Indy Champions



CVB **COMMUNITY
WIDE PLAN**
2024-2027

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