





American Indian Family Center (AIFC)

About AIFC

AIFC provides American Indian families with programs and services enriched by traditional American Indian values and culture. Their six service areas support families through a holistic lens based in the foundation of their Medicine Wheel teachings, including mental health, recovery, housing, youth, family, and employment.



www.aifcmn.org 
651-793-3803 

Employment Program Goal

Support participant's Journey to Success (Zuya Wo Ohiya) through financial stability and a rewarding career

Project Focus Population

Domestic violence victims and survivors

Problem Trying to Solve For

Often, employer benefits and internal policies are not culturally responsive to non-white cultures, ranging from enforcing white-centric dress codes to taking personal or unpaid leave for observances outside of commonly observed religious or national holidays. When coupled with the intersectionality of domestic violence, workplaces can become a place of further isolation and powerlessness for domestic violence victims and survivors (DV/S).

Systems Change Focus

Employee resilience

Systems Change Metrics

- Number of employers who have employee assistance programs (EAPs) with services for domestic violence survivors
- Number of employers engaged around culturally-responsive sick time/absence/late policies.

How This Reflects the “Sense of Belonging” Systems Change Metric Category:

Employer policies that support DV/S help them feel truly cared about and accepted and mitigate the very real fear that their abuser's actions, or the impact constant trauma has on work performance, will cause them to lose their job and their hope of financial independence.

What the Research Says

Studies¹ indicate that one of the best predictors of whether a victim will stay away from his or her abuser is the victim's degree of economic independence. However, violence often jeopardizes victims' ability to keep a job, whether because of the need for time off for court appearances or medical attention, or abusers' active interference or sabotage, i.e. preventing victims from going to work, harassment at work, limiting access to cash and transportation, and manipulating child-care arrangements. Accordingly, female victims are more likely than other women to be unemployed, to suffer from health problems that can affect employability and job performance, to report lower personal income, and to rely on welfare.

Based on case study research, a 2020 Center for American Progress (CAP) report describes how successful partnerships between workforce intermediaries and employers have three elements in common:

- Partnership is conditioned by a set of job quality commitments, including hiring with higher wages, fringe benefits, workplace safety training, customized training, and future career options.
- Partnership is intentionally built on a client-centered approach with employers that prioritizes quality job conditions and not just the quality of work.
- Partnership development is constant, making sure employers feel that they had a direct hand in forming their firm's workforce strategy.

In addition to taking a client-centered approach and providing access to employee assistance programs with DV/S services, the following employer allowances could benefit DV/S:

- Access to behavioral health services
- EAP with DV services
- Transit discount/passes
- Free parking
- Paid leave

Finally, workplace practices that can further support DV/S include the ability to screen or block calls; building and/or office security; the ability to flex working hours; HR training on state/Federal protections for victims of domestic abuse; and access to community supports, such as support groups and safe houses.

Who Else is Doing This

A landscape scan did not result in an exemplar program focused on employer policies/supports that were culturally-responsive and provided DV/S supports and benefits to facilitate workplace retention and success. A dated research study in Maine did discuss details the frequency and quality of employer policies and practices that support DV/S but did not discuss any specific workforce programming. Urban Institute recently released an evaluation of **Sanctuary for Families' Career Readiness Training Program**², one of the largest victim

1 <https://www.legalmomentum.org/program/employment-and-victims-violence>, <https://vawnet.org/sc/research-domestic-violence-and-workplace>, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1359178916300891>, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0738059321001954>, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/09500170211035289>, and https://www1.maine.gov/labor/labor_stats/publications/dvreports/survivorstudy.pdf

2 For more information, see Urban Institute's evaluation of their program: <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/An%20Evaluation%20of%20a%20Workforce%20Development%20Program%20for%20Domestic%20Violence%20Survivors%20in%20New%20York%20City%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

service providers in New York City. It is worth noting that like AIFC, they aspire to help survivors be more competitive in better-paying job markets to develop longer-term careers.

Through Workplaces Respond, a national resource center, **FUTURES Without Violence**³ provides free resources and guides for employers who want to better support DV/S through improved policies and practices. **Violence at Work Net (VAWnet)**⁴ also provides resources, model policies—such as paid sick leave and paid safe leave—and tips to help business support employees experiencing or who have survived DV.

3 <https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/>

4 <https://vawnet.org/>