



SAFETY & HEALING THROUGH NETWORKS OF EQUITY

STRATEGIC ILLUSTRATION
Adriana Contreras Correal
on the Right Mind

Safety & Healing in Networks of Equity

Reflections & Learning from the First Seven Years of SHINE

November 2025

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About this Evaluation

Eternal Knot Evaluation has been serving as the evaluation and learning partner for the most recent leg of the SHINE journey, charged with two distinct and reinforcing goals: 1) telling a **retrospective story of the initiative-level journey** to date, and 2) capturing **community-level outcomes and learning** emerging from the efforts of SHINE collaborative partners.

Given the retrospective nature of the evaluation, the approach to answering these questions endeavored to draw upon existing SHINE collaborative data where possible, such as past evaluation and grant reports, newsletters or blogs, program data, or SHINE project documentation. To fill in the story, the evaluation also encompassed interviews with SHINE collaborative representatives and their partners, with a full list of interview respondents captured in Appendix A.

At the foundation of the evaluation approach has been a framework that was developed in close partnership with the Prevention Institute team and SHINE collaborative leads in the summer of 2024. This framework, included on page 7, captures the shared assumptions and underlying values behind the collective work of SHINE partners, the core elements of their collective approach, and their vision for anticipated outcomes from SHINE partner efforts at the individual, community and statewide levels. These outcomes are envisioned to bridge to meaningful long-term change that not only moves the needle on community conditions and systems change that addresses the root causes of domestic violence, but also promotes broader racial, gender, immigrant and economic justice seen as critical for thriving, equitable SHNE communities.

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Dear Partners,

We are grateful and pleased to share this evaluation report reflecting the impacts of the SHINE (Safety and Healing in Networks of Equity) project. We are deeply thankful to our partners and their collaborating organizations, who are the heart of SHINE, for their local leadership and co-creation of this work, including:

- **McKinleyville Family Resource Center and The Center at McKinleyville** (Northern region), with collaborating partners: Trinidad Rancheria Tribal Social Services, Cal Poly Humboldt Department of Social Work, Open Door Community Health Centers, Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services, North Coast Child Support Services, Native Women's Collective, Centro del Pueblo, North Humboldt Union High School District, and Queer Humboldt.
- **We Take Care of Each Other Partnership** (Bay Area region), **comprised of RYSE Youth Center, Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, and The Collective Healing And Transformation Project (The CHAT Project).**
- **Mujeres Poderosas Amorosas and Cultiva La Salud** (Central Valley region), with collaborating partners: Fresno Building Healthy Communities, Dolores Huerta Foundation, Leadership Counsel for Justice & Accountability, Familias en Acción, City of Fresno Martin Park, Lowell Community Development Corporation, Self Help Credit Union, and Citrus Middle School.
- **United Women of East Africa and the East African Youth Collaborative** (Southern region), with collaborating partners: UC San Diego Center for Community Health, Refugee Health Unit, and Masjid Al Huda.

We are also grateful to our funding partner, **Blue Shield of California Foundation**, for their multi-year support, and to the many partners in our larger health equity and justice ecosystem who have shaped, participated in, and strengthened the work.

Interpersonal relationships grounded in safety and mutuality are essential for health, safety, and well-being. Further, the ability to form safe, mutual relationships is what makes lasting collective action for the health and safety of our communities possible. Yet pervasive, interrelated forms of violence, including domestic violence, inflict deep harm and disproportionately affect those who have been excluded from opportunity, young people, and pregnant people. It has significant impacts on the health, safety, and well-being of individuals, families, and communities across generations. These connected harms and possibilities inspired us to create SHINE.

As you dive into the stories and findings in this report, we invite you to hold the larger vision that guided the work. SHINE grew out of calls to action within the movement to end domestic violence (DV) and the public health field to build a larger “we” advancing a vision of safe and equitable relationships and communities outside of punitive systems that exacerbate violence and harm. For decades, families and communities have worked to interrupt cycles of harm, address root causes of violence, and create the conditions for safe relationships. Yet we know we need to grow an even larger and more diverse ecosystem of leaders and organizations committed to the long-haul work of safety, equity, and justice.

SHINE was also shaped by broader movement and field conversations about transformational change, including the recognition that the threshold of prevention is not “programming about violence,” it’s “changing what produces violence.” This guided our focus on strategies that:

- **Promote** relational safety while addressing the community-level and structural causes of DV and DV inequities rooted in inequitable systems of power.
- **Build** durable community power by centering community leadership and decision-making.

- **Integrate** DV prevention into ongoing multi-issue organizing to influence multiple systems and sustain the work through shifts in political context and funding streams.
- **Advance** culturally rooted, asset-based, trauma- and healing-informed approaches that center community-generated language, narratives, and data.
- **Braid** and generate multiple forms of evidence by integrating community members' lived experience and local context with research evidence.

Through SHINE, we have gained a deeper understanding of how community leadership and trusted, culturally-rooted organizations can drive meaningful and sustainable progress. SHINE leaders and organizations advanced solutions beyond existing models, fostered community- and healing-centered ecosystems, and influenced culture, narratives, and systems. We celebrate the people, stories, and change highlighted in this report. And we hope the project and evaluation contribute to broad learning.

This moment calls on us to adapt and learn with courage and imagination, to honor the wisdom of past generations and invest in the flourishing of future ones. We are excited to deepen existing partnerships and expand collective power through new collaborations. We look forward to creating practice labs that advance culture, narrative, and data strategies for safety and healing, and stewarding new Learning to Action communities in California and other regions that support local and state organizing and advocacy.

In partnership,

Lisa Fujie Parks
SHINE Project Director, Prevention Institute

Sheila B. Savannah
Managing Director, Prevention Institute

Introduction

Domestic violence, or intimate partner violence, is a pervasive public health and safety issue directly impacting millions of people nationwide each year. In California, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 7 men report experiencing domestic violence at some point in their lifetimes according to the California Department of Public Health.¹ In 2023 alone, California law enforcement agencies fielded more than 160,000 calls related to domestic violence, or 18 calls *per hour*.² Within these statistics, specific communities are particularly vulnerable to higher rates of domestic violence, as a clear line has been established between violence and oppressive forces like racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and ableism. The ultimate impact of this violence is long-term and expansive, causing physical, psychological and economic harm to survivors, as well as to their families and our broader communities.

Tackling the enormity of this challenge is necessarily layered. In addition to crisis interventions and support for domestic violence survivors and their families, in the last decade, the field has increasingly broadened its approach to focus further upstream on **prevention approaches** to domestic violence, as evidence mounts around the predictive role of harmful norms and gender-based narratives, weak social networks and trust, and forces of economic and housing insecurity in fostering conditions for violence.³ Within this preventative work, advocates and practitioners across the country have also simultaneously advanced a **health equity approach** to preventing domestic and sexual violence that acknowledge how deep-rooted systemic oppression contributes to inequities in health, safety, and well-being, and the importance of directly centering affected communities in solutions to violence.⁴

This intersection of innovation and new learning is where **SHINE (Safety & Healing in Networks of Equity)** operates, with collaborative partners across California engaging in complex, layered, emergent work to uproot the systemic causes of domestic violence and nurture the conditions for people to thrive in safe and equitable relationships and communities. Originally named “Safety Through Connection,” this initiative stewarded by Prevention Institute with support from the Blue Shield of California Foundation granted \$2.2 million to community-centered and culturally- rooted efforts aiming to address the root causes of violence.

With the conclusion of its most recent phase of work, this report endeavors to tell the story of this work to date—SHINE’s overarching approach and outcomes, as well as the emerging learning that might support broader field of community-centered efforts advancing collective wellbeing and mutually thriving communities.

The SHINE Collaborative Partners

The Center at McKinleyville, led by the McKinleyville Family Resource Center

Mujeres Poderosas Amorosas, led by Cultiva La Salud

The East African Youth Collaborative, led by United Women of East Africa (UWEAST)

We Take Care of Each Other Partnership, led by RYSE Youth Center, Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, and The CHAT Project

¹ Injury and Prevention Branch of the California Department of Public Health, <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDCPHP/DCDIC/SACB/Pages/DomesticViolenceIntimatePartnerViolence.aspx>

² California Dept. of Justice Criminal Justice Statistics Center, Domestic Violence-Related Calls for Assistance (2023), as reported by KidsData <https://www.kidsdata.org/>

³ See for example: Niolon, P. H., Kearns, M., Dills, J., Rambo, K., Irving, S., Armstead, T., & Gilbert, L. (2017) [Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Resource for Action: A Compilation of the Best Available Evidence](#). Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Blue Shield of CA Foundation (2019) [A Life Course Framework for Preventing Domestic Violence](#): San Francisco, CA.

⁴ See for example: Prevention Institute. (2017). [A Health Equity and Multisector Approach to Preventing Domestic Violence](#). Oakland, CA; Prevention Institute & National Sexual Violence Resource Center (2021) [A Health Equity Approach to Preventing Sexual Violence](#).

SHINE's Initiative-Level Story & Journey to Date

The story of the SHINE initiative stretches back almost a decade. Its roots lie within the Blue Shield of California Foundation (BSCF)'s portfolio of investments aimed at surfacing effective approaches for multisector and community-centered collaboration to address the upstream factors that specifically influence domestic violence. Initially named "Safety Through Connection" when formally launched in 2018, BSCF's investment was intended to support established community collaboratives to integrate a domestic violence prevention framework to their existing work.⁵ BSCF Senior Program Officer Richard Vezina remembered that time period, "We as a foundation were just a few years into our prevention focus. We were thinking about how upstream can we go with our own work? And how upstream can our partners go?"



We as a foundation were just a few years into our prevention focus [when this work was launched]. We were thinking about how upstream can we go with our own work? And how upstream can our partners go? "

Prevention Institute (PI) was well-positioned to serve as the intermediary stewarding this work given decades of leadership in prevention and advancing health equity through training, technical assistance and consultation. In the years directly leading up to Safety Through Connection's formal launch, BSCF directly supported the PI team to carry out a comprehensive research and practice-based scan,⁶ which ultimately resulted in a framework for an approach for domestic violence prevention that outlined the role of structural drivers that influence community conditions for safe relationships and reduced domestic violence.⁷ Highlighting the importance of community safety and healing, the SAFE (Sectors Acting For Equity) framework emphasized an opportunity for community-centered multisector partnerships as a vehicle for influencing three interrelated community determinants of health—the socio-cultural environment, the physical/built environment, and the economic/educational environment—that ultimately informed the initial design of Safety Through Connection.

The Safety Through Connection/SHINE work has unfolded in distinct phases since its formal launch 2018, with each phase shaped by the evolving context of participating collaboratives and their learning needs. The initiative-level journey to date offers valuable learning, as the phased approach speaks to the necessary components of investment and capacity building involved in collaboratively building a robust foundation for change.

Phase 1: Building Capacity to Integrate Domestic Violence Prevention into Community Collaboratives (2018-2019)

The first 18 months of Safety Connection focused on setting a solid foundation for upstream domestic violence prevention work. Five prevention-oriented multisector collaboratives were selected for funding from a pool of 45 applicants across the state: The Center at McKinleyville (Northern California), Safety Through Connection Allies Against Violence (Bay Area) Mujeres Poderosas Amorosas (Central Valley),

⁵ At the time, BSCF also supported a complementary investment in "Leveraging Collaboration to End Domestic Violence (LCDV), which took an opposite theory of change: investing in established domestic violence groups to integrate a community collaborative approach within their work.

⁶ Prevention Institute. (2017). A Health Equity and Multisector Approach to Preventing Domestic Violence. https://www.preventioninstitute.org/sites/default/files/publications/PI_DV_0726.pdf

⁷ Prevention Institute. (2018) [An Overview of the SAFE Approach: Promoting Community Environments that Support Safe Relationships and Prevent Domestic Violence](#)

the LA Worker Center Network (Los Angeles), and The East African Youth Collaborative (San Diego).⁸ To maximize learning, the organizations that comprised this initial cohort were intentionally “as different as possible,” with each serving different cultural and religious communities, representing various types of lead organizations, and located in separate regions of the state.

A community-centered domestic violence prevention focus was not only breaking new ground for the field, but also represented new territory for the collaboratives as well. Through in-person convenings, community of practice meetings, web conferences, tailored coaching, and video check ins, the early work of Safety Through Connection therefore encompassed Prevention Institute staff connecting collaboratives and their local partners with an emerging body of frameworks and research around preventative and equity-centered approaches to addressing domestic violence and, through learning conversations, fostering shared purpose and language for the collective work to come. Each collaborative also received intensive individually tailored capacity building support as they narrowed in on potential strategies aligned with their local and cultural contexts, strategically expanded partnerships with other local organizations, and established infrastructure for execution. As explained by SHINE Project Director, Lisa Fugie Parks, “We were trying to support the collaboratives in braiding research, contextual, and experiential evidence...to be community rooted, but also to draw on the research base around DV prevention.”

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This phase of work was described as foundational for “setting the stage” for the work that followed. Many reflected positively on what they had learned and their own capacity to in turn lead others. As a former Project Coordinator for the United Women of East Africa reflected at the time, “Finding the confidence to discuss the topic of partner violence with the community took some time, but the more I learned about the topic, what resources are available, and developed sensitive language, the more I felt comfortable with the work.” At the close of this first phase, there was positive engagement across new sets of partners in each region of the state, including community and culturally based organizations, domestic violence service providers, family and children support services, public health departments, and regional initiatives. As shared by one Cultiva La Salud partner from Fresno, “I feel happy to see the caliber of professionals with a huge heart working on this project. I know that the people we are looking to serve will gain access to life-saving tools and knowledge. Si se puede!”

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From the beginning, an intentional and authentic focus on following the lead of community was baked in. As part of this first phase, each of the collaboratives also engaged in community assessments as their respective approaches came into focus. Leveraging trusted community relationships that had been fostered over many years, as part of their funded work, each collaborative engaged in a thoughtfully designed process of authentic listening, tailored to their specific community. Where partners in San Diego elected to conduct a formal survey of over 100 community members to quantify and make visible the factors influencing domestic violence in the East African community, partners in Fresno opted to conduct a series of more intimate focus groups and interviews with local immigrant women and systems leaders to unpack thinking about what it might

⁸ Allies Against Violence and the LA Worker Center Network (in Los Angeles) were a part of the cohort through Phase 2 but subsequently decided to discontinue their participation.

take to stop violence before it starts and ultimately assess readiness to engage in DV prevention work together. Leaders in McKinleyville sponsored a series of well-attended townhalls, panels and small group conversations.



We were able to hold space for people to realize that they are not alone, and it is not unique for them to be angry about the conditions in which we are living. So how do we build community and make things better?"

Reflecting back, SHINE partners underscored the value of investing in upfront community assessments. Not only did the process generate a depth of understanding about how domestic violence was unfolding in their community in the voices of those most directly affected, it also created an opening to begin to introduce a paradigm of prevention by engaging them in a collective reimagining of “what does it mean to stop violence before it starts?” SHINE leaders also emphasized the very act of investing in authentic listening and drawing upon community wisdom to co-create an approach to domestic violence prevention—instead of starting with pre-defined solutions—was powerful for demonstrating a true value for community-centeredness that underlies their approach.

Phase 2: Leveraging Community Power Toward Equitable Access & Opportunity Upstream (2020-2021)

Building upon the foundation laid in phase one, the second phase of Safety Through Connection intended to more intensively focus on implementation of community-driven strategies for intimate partner violence prevention. The launch of this phase coinciding with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020, however, presented an unplanned opportunity to instead demonstrate community responsiveness in action amidst an unfolding crisis with many urgent community needs. As critical anchors within their respective communities, local collaboratives moved quickly to mobilize support, connect community members to resources, and establish virtual spaces where community could continue to be fostered. Their dedicated efforts were described as ultimately strengthening community trust and fortifying relationships across local partners.

The Covid-19 pandemic—and the coinciding racial justice uprising that following summer—shaped the work in other ways. Namely, both laid bare preexisting community vulnerabilities around economic, food and housing insecurity, and emphasized disparities connected to long-standing systemic oppression across race, gender, language, and immigration status that create the conditions for domestic violence. In response, with urgency, Safety Through Connection collaboratives decelerated some planned activities to more actively lean into programming and advocacy focused on promoting equitable access to necessary services, resources, and opportunities in each of their local communities. Reflecting back, SHINE Project Director Lisa Fujie Parks remembers this as a moment where the defining community-centered nature of their domestic violence prevention approach became solidified and the importance of community power building more elevated, with each collaborative putting greater emphasis on organizing with community residents to put pressure on local systems to address crisis level issues of unemployment, housing insecurity and food insecurity.

Throughout this phase, partners also continued to connect with each other through the Safety Through Connection learning community. Responding to the needs and interest of collaborative partners, Prevention Institute arranged various trainings, ranging from a “how to” walk through in video meeting hosting, to building capacity for storytelling about their respective work, to introducing community-driven alternatives to criminal justice approaches to addressing intimate partner violence. The PI team also continued to provide tailored and actionable technical assistance to each group as they executed their prevention programs, and engaged an outside evaluator to help to document outcomes emerging from the work of partners.

As the robustness of their different approaches came into focus, the tail end of this phase also encompassed an intensified sharing of learning with others blog posts, papers, and presentations platforming the work of Safety Through Connection partners through PreventConnect web conferences, a Leveraging Collaboration to End Domestic Violence convening, and the American Public Health Association conference. This time period was one where the California Department of Public Health was undertaking a concerted push to expand community-based violence prevention and care models like Close to Home statewide through the Office of Violence Prevention. State leaders responsible for spearheading this work remember Safety Through Connection offering useful insights about how leaning into community-centered approaches could break down sector siloes, sharing, “We saw [Safety Through Connection] definitely providing things to their funded programs and letting them truly be community-driven....they went in the direction of what these communities felt were a priority and helped them to navigate.”



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Phase 3: Advancing Community-Driven Culture and Systems Change (2022-2024)

The third phase of funded work represented another shift for Safety Through Connection partners. While a part of the approach from the beginning, Phase 3 had a more explicit focus on systems change. An early in-person convening of partners in 2022 hosted by the McKinleyville Center provided an important launching point to reflect on what has been accomplished, formally reexamine and reaffirm values, and discuss future directions. Ultimately, while continuing ongoing work, the collaborative partners decided to leverage the power that had been built to date to think about how to uplift narratives and broaden impact through statewide partnerships and advocacy. This shift was described as a transition from a “learning community” to a “learning and *action* community.”

The PI team had already begun to engage in state-level policy advocacy and systems change around domestic violence prevention in the years preceding this phase. Alongside state partners like the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, ValorUS, the Culturally Responsive Domestic Violence Network, and the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, the team advocated for increased funding for domestic violence prevention and culturally responsive service, as well as state funding to support community-identified, community-led approaches to prevent and respond to violence and promote healing. In 2022, PI and Safety Through Connection collaboratives participated in their first ENACT advocacy day together, an annual event that brings community leaders from across California to Sacramento, to collectively educate decision-makers about opportunities to create healthy, safe, and equitable communities.

Collaboratives redoubled their systems change focus at the local level as well, strengthening community leadership for change, establishing community-centered infrastructure for engagement and advocacy, surfacing urgent community priorities, building community power, and actively advocating for emergency response funds, food, family support, and rent-relief resources, as well as calling for changes in school and local policies to center the needs of their communities. The newly renamed learning and action community amplified this work, as each shared and learned from each other’s advocacy and systems approaches.⁹ Over a 10-month period, the PI team conducted eight in-depth “appreciative inquiry” learning sessions, where speakers inside and outside of Safety Through Connection offered inspiring examples and insights from their work in areas such as community health

⁹ During this phase, three members of the BSCF-funded Leveraging Collaboration to End Domestic Violence (LCDV) cohort joined Safety Through Connection for learning and action community activities.

worker organizing, housing justice, gender justice, holistic youth support, intersectional leadership and intergenerational healing—and the learning community discussing implications for individual and collective work.

To continue to elevate the work of Safety Through Connection collaboratives, during this phase, PI team members also actively brokered opportunities for partners to share the work via conference presentations, publications, and social media. The PI team was also meeting quarterly with with California Department of Public Health’s Injury and Violence Prevention Branch, Office of Policy and Planning, and Center for Healthy Communities to discuss a variety of strategic issues related to safety and violence prevention, supported California Partnership to End Domestic Violence’s Statewide Leadership Team in developing their state action plan, as well as served on CDPH’s Rape Prevention and Education advisory group—all to extend the learning emerging from SHINE collaborative communities.

Importantly, this phase of work also marked an opportunity to fully lean into a community-centered approach, as the Blue Shield of California Foundation and Prevention Institute co-designed the next phase of funded work in equal partnership with Safety Through Connection collaboratives. The trust afforded to collaboratives, not only to define the approach going forward, but to identify and select new partners to join them, was described by partners as tremendously impactful for pointing to their readiness to step forward into their own power to steward change. Two additional collaboratives were ultimately selected to join the cohort in 2023.¹⁰

One the first discussions the partners undertook focused on renaming themselves to better represent their collective work, as well as better capture a shared intention to honor the personal and intergenerational healing necessary for individuals, families, and communities to engage in preventing future violence. In August 2023, **SHINE (Safety and Healing in Networks of Equity)** was born.



Phase 4: Honoring Our Stories & Growing the Future of SHINE (2024-2025)

In the latest phase of work, which stretched from April 2024 to September 2025, SHINE collaboratives have further deepened their collaborative efforts to address the root causes of domestic violence and promote safety and healing, with an eye to sustainability of their individual and collective work. Together, four SHINE collaboratives and the PI team have also continued to advocate for state-level policy change. In addition to again participating in the statewide ENACT advocacy day, SHINE partners lent their expertise and networks behind specific legislation health equity and domestic violence-focused legislation. They have also continued monthly learning and action community sessions focused on joint work and learning, with learning topics drawing from collaborative interests in carceral logics, healing justice, community leadership, and power analysis, as well as held a third in-person convening together hosted by Cultiva La Salud in Fresno where partners shared what they were learning and were

¹⁰ These included We Take Care of Each Other Partnership and Promesa Boyle Heights. While participating in the co-design process, ultimately Promesa Boyle Heights withdrew their participation in SHINE given leadership turnover and capacity concerns.

introduced to integration of embodied leadership and somatic practice in their organizations and approaches.

After seven years and work and investment, SHINE collaboratives were also presented with an opportune window to formally reflect on their collective approach and take stock on what has been accomplished and learned to date. To support telling this story, with the official launch of SHINE in the summer of 2024, the SHINE collaboratives came together in close partnership with a newly selected evaluation and learning partner to articulate an overarching theory of change framework for their collective work shown on the next page. This framework has not only shaped the fund development and communications work in this last phase of work, but also is the frame within which this retrospective evaluation aimed to surface outcomes and learning from the SHINE journey captured within this report.

The SHINE Collaboratives. Ultimately, four collaboratives comprise the current statewide SHINE cohort, whose approaches and outcomes inform this report:

- The Center at McKinleyville, led by the McKinleyville Family Resource Center in Humboldt County
- Mujeres Poderosas Amorosas, led by Cultiva La Salud in Fresno
- The East African Youth Collaborative, led by United Women of East Africa in San Diego
- We Take Care of Each Other Partnership, led by RYSE Youth Center, Alliance for Boys and Men of Color (ABMoC), and The Collective Healing And Transformation Project (The CHAT Project) in Richmond

Each brings with them a trusted leadership role within their communities, histories of strong collaboration, and success in community change on a related community issue or multiple issues. Further, each is deeply committed to integrating a focus on promoting safe relationships and preventing partner violence within their community-centered work. As shared by Project Director Lisa Fujie Parks, “It takes a certain kind of commitment to tackle this issue through the lens of caring for those who are harmed by domestic violence as a community responsibility.”



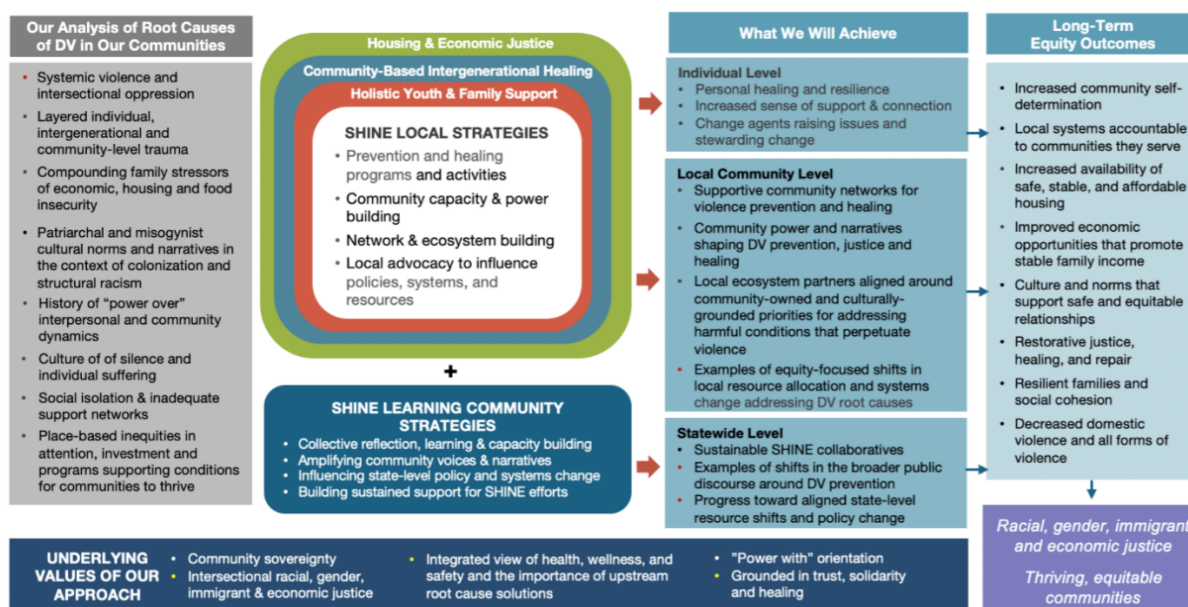
Collection of Safety Through Connection/SHINE Convenings over the Years
(Photo Credit: The Prevention Institute, unless otherwise noted)

In Their Own Words: The SHINE Theory of Change Framework

As shared earlier, when first launched in 2018, the Safety Through Connection approach drew from available expert research and thinking led by the PI team. The launch of SHINE in 2024 offered an opportunity for partners to expand upon that thinking, and—after six years of work together—articulate a theory of change for their work together going forward in their own words and experiences. While remaining true to the conceptual underpinnings offered by the SAFE and Health Equity and Multisector approach frameworks, the framework shown below also integrates new learning and experience gained since 2018. By embedding their work in this way, the framework endeavors to offer a clear throughline from the specific upstream factors influencing violence in their respective communities, to their responsive and place-centered approaches, and ultimately their aspirations for equitable SHINE communities where community members thrive with a sense of safety and justice.

Safety and Healing in Networks of Equity (SHINE)

Culturally-rooted Collaboratives Working to Address the Root Causes of Domestic Violence and Build Equitable Conditions for Safety and Healing



Underlying Values of the SHINE Approach

At the foundation of SHINE's theory of change are the underlying values of the SHINE approach, which have remained consistent since its launch over seven years ago: a shared commitment to community sovereignty and holding the interests of those most affected as paramount; a intersectional approach that seeks to advance racial, gender, immigrant and economic justice; an integrated view of health, wellness and safety that necessitates the critical importance of examining root cause solutions; and an attention to shared power and work that is grounded in trust, solidarity and healing.

Collaborative partners shared what these values have meant to them over the past several years, as they feel deeply supported in their respective work by the PI team and with each other. Despite significant differences in their local communities' contexts and challenges, they have found common ground in a palpable love for their communities and a relentless pursuit of justice and accountability that is rooted in the authentic power of community voice and leadership. A few described their local work as sometimes feeling isolated, and therefore how powerful it was just knowing that others across the state are grounded in shared goals similar approaches.

Leading with values has also fostered an opening for SHINE collaborative partners to enter the SHINE learning and action community in a different way—as organizational representatives, but also as *themselves*. The introduction and emphasis on healing in the most recent phases of work have been especially appreciated given the fortitude required by those on the frontlines of addressing violence. As captured in the quote to the right from one SHINE collaborative leader, “There is something about the way taught SHINE works that gives us room to explore the layers of healing...being with other people who are passionate about the work, and doing it in a healthy, sustainable way.”



It is really easy in the non profit world to only see problems, and to be focused on the violence as opposed to the healing. There is something about the way SHINE works that gives us room to explore layers of the healing...being with other people who are passionate about the work, and doing it in a healthy, sustainable way."

Unpacking the Root Causes of Domestic Violence in SHINE Communities

As captured on the left side of the graphic, the SHINE partners also come together with clarity around an analysis of the community-centered and culturally-grounded factors that contribute to domestic violence in their respective communities and drive their work. Not unexpectedly, aligned with established domestic violence prevention field literature, all SHINE collaboratives raised the realities of systemic violence, oppression and “power over” dynamics that pervade their communities, and the insidious ways that compounding factors of poverty, housing, and food insecurity set the stage for interpersonal violence. Many raised the reality of long-standing place-based inequities in investment—such as limited linguistically and culturally accessible safety net and mental health resources, safe spaces for shelter and support, and access to health care—that ultimately lead to disparities in opportunities for individuals and whole communities to thrive.

This set of partners, however, also offer specific nuance rooted in their specific local and cultural contexts that potentially offer *new* learning for the field. Namely, SHINE collaboratives specifically underscored the role of trauma—individual trauma, intergenerational, and community-level trauma—that exists within each of their communities. In San Diego, for example, partners described intergenerational tension that arises in families, as East African refugee parents hold the trauma of violent political upheaval and loss from their home countries layered with resettlement discrimination, which can lead to hyper-protection of their children who are trying to stretch their wings and navigate American culture. Partners in Humboldt County emphasized the documented trauma faced by their community’s children and youth. Beyond poverty and geographic isolation, the county reporting the highest rates of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in the state, with 70% of the county adults reporting at least one ACE and 30% reporting four or more. Reflecting on what they have heard from young people themselves, partners in Richmond shared how some discussed “coping” with experienced trauma by participating in and or initiating violence against others or themselves - not because they believe it will make them safer, but because it will provide relief, control or predictability, however fleeting.



We asked, what does it mean for stopping violence before it starts? What are the stressors affecting them? And we learned all kinds of things like wage theft, not having a livable wage, the cost of housing, the issues around documentation and the vulnerabilities that that created, mental health... cultural issues too, like machismo and how that continues to sort of perpetuate patriarchy and minimize women's voices in leadership."

Across the board, partners also described deeply embedded patriarchy that lives within culture or religion, and the implications for minimizing the voices of women and girls in their community. In many cases, this dynamic is unspoken, quietly shaping family dynamics where cultural themes like “machismo” or religiously-rooted gender norms have been embedded for generations. Some reflected on the limitations of domestic violence support for their communities, given internalized blame, cultural

stigma and a lack of support networks that leads individuals to “suffer in silence.” Focus groups of immigrant women in the Central Valley highlighted the collective responsibility both men and women hold, as many reflected on how the next generation of young people are inheriting limiting beliefs about their potential in how sons versus daughters are being raised, and how “unknowingly, we are all part of the problem.”

The SHINE Community Approaches

Alongside their analysis of root causes of domestic violence, each SHINE collaborative also articulated the rich assets of the communities where they live and work—the power and persistence of individual leaders, the deep pride in cultural traditions that underscore joy and connection, a deep love each brings for their community’s youth and the next generation. It is here where each collaborative has built upon these assets to co-design community-centered solutions to address the root causes of violence described above.

Entering into the current phase of work, the SHINE collaboratives clustered their local approaches into three interrelated areas: housing and economic justice, holistic youth and family support, and community-based healing for populations most impacted by domestic violence and health inequities. While—as will be clear in the case studies on the following pages—each collaborative’s approach to advancing goals in these areas are extremely different, each encompasses prevention and healing programs and activities, community capacity and power building, network and ecosystem building, and local advocacy to influence policies, systems, and resources. Throughout, collaboratives also make warm referrals for people who, through the course of project activities, disclose experiences of domestic violence and request assistance with connecting to services and support.

Local efforts have been supported by the PI team, who—as described in the previous section—has served not only as the funding intermediary, but as the backbone for SHINE’s collective work and learning. Though purposeful partnership and mutual power, PI and SHINE partners also engage in collective advocacy, fund development, and dissemination of stories and learning from their shared work.

Toward A Vision of Equity

Finally, SHINE collaborative partners remain steadfastly clear on the north star of their collective endeavors, captured on the right-hand side of the graphic on page 8: *communities grounded in equity and justice where individuals, families and communities thrive*. One SHINE leader emphasized how domestic violence prevention is deeply tied to this vision, explaining, “These issues around partner violence, around domestic violence, as really necessary conversations that we need to have in order to help create more liberation in our community and the ability to advance broader goals.”

As such, the SHINE framework anticipates outcomes from SHINE partner efforts at the individual, community and statewide-levels that are envisioned to bridge to meaningful long-term change.

Ultimately, through increased community self-determination and power to hold local systems accountable, SHINE communities are envisioned to have equitable access to safe, stable and affordable housing, as well as economic opportunities for families to survive and prosper. Through sustained attention to root causes of violence and restorative justice, healing and repair, SHINE communities will reinforce culture and norms that support safe and equitable relationships, resilient families, and social cohesion—and ultimately experience decreased domestic—and all forms of—violence.



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The following pages highlight how the four current SHINE collaboratives have uniquely approached these goals in ways that are deeply aligned with their community’s priorities and local context.

East African Youth Collaborative: Bridging Generations and Building Community

In the heart of San Diego's City Heights neighborhood, where East African immigrants and refugees have built a longstanding community, United Women of East Africa (UWEAST) is a beacon of connection. What began as a response to a crisis has grown into a transformative force, creating culturally grounded solutions for healing, empowerment, and systemic change.

A Community at a Crossroads

The East African community in San Diego is a vibrant collage of cultures, languages, faiths and traditions, but it has also faced significant struggles. Many families arrived as refugees, carrying the weight of trauma, leaving their countries of origin and navigating the challenge of resettlement. Intergenerational conflict, cultural dissonance, and structural inequities in health, housing, and employment have compounded these difficulties. For young people, the pressures of navigating two worlds—one shaped by their parents' traditions and the other by American culture—have often felt overwhelming.

The initial SHINE opportunity coincided with a period of time when gun violence, several instances of domestic violence, and the tragic loss of young lives to both violence and suicide had left the community reeling. The community reached a turning point in this moment of crisis. What followed was powerful organizing around a culturally aligned response centered on the youth of the community.

UWEAST began with a simple but critical goal, to create a safe space for the youngest members of the East African community. Their immediate response ultimately evolved into The East African Youth Collaborative (EAYC), where young people could find support, connection, and tools to navigate challenges and gain resiliency for the future.

Honoring Culture, Building Trust

At the core of EAYC's approach is its deep cultural representation and relevancy. The organization's programs are designed by and for the community,

ensuring that participants see themselves reflected in the mentors, therapists, staff, and approaches. This cultural connection builds trust and creates a sense of belonging that is essential for meaningful engagement.

UWEAST's center is intentionally designed to feel like home. It is a safe, welcoming space where young people can gather, learn, and grow. Given the protective instincts shaped by the trauma of displacement, earning the trust of parents has been essential. EAYC works diligently to build that trust by pairing resources with deep cultural understanding. Today, the center stands as a trusted hub, meeting the community's unique needs while honoring its values.

Breaking the Stigma

A critical part of UWEAST's approach is finding ways to destigmatize sensitive topics. In many East African cultures, issues around mental health, substance abuse and relationship conflict are taboo, creating a fear of stigmatization or victim-blaming. UWEAST is changing that narrative.

"People have been conditioned to keep their experiences private in fear of stigma, family shame, and ruining their reputation, which in our culture is similar to ruining your future." explained Fatma Saleem, a UWEAST leader.

Through mentorship, dialogue, and culturally responsive programming, UWEAST is equipping young people with the tools to raise and mitigate the various tensions that can precipitate violence, as well as promote healthy relationships. Mother-daughter dialogues, for example, have helped bridge generational gaps, fostering understanding and connection between parents and children. Young men and women are learning to manage their emotions through practices like journaling and are gaining the skills to recognize and navigate toxic relationships.

The challenge of addressing stigma extends beyond the walls of UWEAST as well. Early on, through discussions and townhalls, UWEAST recognized that religion was an important entry

point for challenging discussions. UWEAST staff reached out to faith leaders in churches, mosques and synagogues to deepen their understanding of domestic violence, encourage domestic violence prevention messages once a month in their sermons, and discuss mental health issues with young men in their communities. Through these conversations they were able to increase young people and their families' openness to conversations that would otherwise be seen as taboo, and point them to supportive programs at UWEAST, including therapy and group activities.

From Crisis to Transformation

In the immediate crisis of violence, UWEAST quickly moved to create spaces of safety, where the community's youth could be safe from harm. What started out as just space to "hang out" or play basketball, has developed into gender-specific spaces for boys and girls to learn, heal, and grow. These spaces became the foundation for a broader approach to violence prevention, one that starts with the individual and extends to families, communities, and systems.

Early on, UWEAST learned that separating the boys and girls' groups helped the young participants feel comfortable and supported as they navigate sensitive topics like intergenerational trauma, toxic relationships, and mental health.

For young women, programs like the Girls Circle provide a space to build social skills and foster sisterhood. In a community where cultural norms often dictate that girls go to school and then return home, these circles also offer a rare opportunity for connection and self-expression. Whether they're journaling, cooking for fun rather than obligation, or working out together,



Above: **Young men cooking a traditional East African fried pastry called Sambusa**

To the Right: **Interns helping students read books**
(photo credit: UWEAST)

the girls find joy, vulnerability, and strength in each other's company.

For young men, healing circles offer a safe space to share their experiences and learn tools for emotional regulation. They learned that having a space and activity like basketball to come together was a quick way to build connection and trust, and provide alternatives for boys who did not want to go home, or were no longer welcome home.

From Personal to Systemic Change

What began as a grassroots effort to address personal and interpersonal challenges has extended into a focus on systemic change. UWEAST has a history of policy and advocacy work, and now the youth-focused work of EAYC that SHINE supported, have evolved to include youth advocacy for policies that influence the upstream community conditions that influence violence.

Refugee and immigrant youth are now leading educational campaigns and tackling issues like healthcare equity through policy advocacy and educating lawmakers. The team is using what they learn through their work to advocate for policies that make sense for their community, and encouraging others to do the same.

A Legacy of Transformation Through Compassion

The East African Youth Collaborative's work has made a difference. Young people who once felt isolated and misunderstood now have a trusted place to turn, where they can be heard and cared for. The violence that sparked the initial response has diminished, replaced by a stronger sense of safety and connection.

UWEAST's story is a testament to what's possible when a community comes together to address its challenges with creativity, resilience, and love. It's a story of young people leading the way, of cultural representation and relevancy, and of a future where healing and hope are passed from one generation to the next.



The Center at McKinleyville: A Community Compass Toward Healing

In Humboldt County, California, McKinleyville Family Resource Center (MCKFRC) is a nonprofit anchored in community. Humboldt County is a rural region on the Northern Coast, home to just 135,000 residents spread across a vast landscape of redwoods and mountain peaks. With a median household income of \$45,528 and one-in-five residents living below the poverty line, the community faces significant challenges. It is a place with a small-town feel, where neighbors know each other, and community ties and histories run deep. It is a blend of both long-time white and Latino residents, and generations of Native Americans where this is their ancestral land and home.

At the heart of McKinleyville Family Resource Center's work is The Center at McKinleyville, which opened its doors in 2022. It is a collaborative hub that brings together county services, community programs, and culturally grounded care under one roof. The Center is not just a building; it is an ecosystem of care designed to meet the evolving needs of the community.

A Compass, Not a Destination

At McKinleyville Family Resource Center, there is a simple yet profound guiding principle: the people are the compass. Rather than creating static programs or one-size-fits-all services, they listen to the community, adapt to their needs, and regenerate their approach.

"For us, the goal is not a specific destination or program," explains Aristeo Saulsbury, Co-Executive Director of McKinleyville Family Resource Center. ***"The purpose of our work is walking with the community and going wherever that leads us."***

This philosophy is evident in the Center at McKinleyville's design and operations. The Center is a collaborative partnership that includes Trinidad Rancheria Tribal Social Services, Cal Poly Humboldt Department of Social Work, Open Door Community Health Centers, Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services, North Coast Child Support Services, Native

Women's Collective, Centro del Pueblo, Northern Humboldt Union High School District, and Queer Humboldt.

This co-location of services allows staff to build trust and connection, breaking down traditional service-based silos. In a rural setting, this creates an atmosphere where people feel safe to come as they are, be welcomed in one door – rather than referred out agency to agency – and be met with care, often connecting with resources they did not know were available to them.

A Community Approach to Domestic Violence Prevention

This is particularly powerful approach within the context of domestic violence prevention. The Center is a place created where people can show up without shame or stigma. Whether it's a parent seeking resources for their family or someone navigating the complexities of a DV situation, the Center offers a safe, welcoming environment.

"The Center is a space where a person can show up, in all their vulnerability, and be able to connect with people that listen, understand, and become a part of their team. We are their allies and partners walking together," says Aristeo.

The McKinleyville Family Resource Center sees domestic violence not as an individual issue, but as a community responsibility. In the region, however, issues of intimate partner violence are rarely addressed head on outside of crisis services. As such, bringing along diverse Center partners to sensitively navigate these issues and see their work as an integrated upstream community-centered approach to domestic violence prevention has required some investment.

Early on, the Center engaged partners around a domestic violence prevention frame and codified a Safety Policy that established a clear philosophy around safety, violence prevention and inclusion of marginalized voices that all departments adhere to and bring to their respective work and events. Center leaders have also heavily invested in fostering an

aligned culture with shared values that support the collective work of all of the Center's different partners, regularly holding all-staff trainings and bringing in speakers that offer insights into and approaches for the communities they collectively serve.

This focus on culture has served to not only foster a sense of connectedness, but has built cross-departmental capacity for meaningfully understanding and honoring community that would not otherwise be possible. As shared by one Center partner, "An individual County Department would not have the funding or capacity [to engage in this kind of community-centered learning.] Through the Center, they can."

A recently established Community Advisory Group offered feedback on the Center's values and goals, cultural inclusion policies, the physical space and future work. They offered specific appreciation for the Safety Policy's emphasis on cultural safety, community learning, health and well-being, nothing that these issues are often neglected in other spaces. According to an evaluation of their feedback, the policy made them feel "heard and acknowledged."

Programs That Build Power, Culture and Connection

Importantly, this culture is leveraged throughout the Center's programming, rooted in the belief that strong social connections and economic stability are foundational to both prevention and intervention. Programs like the Humboldt Income Program, California's only rural guaranteed income pilot, exemplify this. Understanding that pregnant people are at a higher risk of domestic violence, the program provides \$920 per month to 150 pregnant individuals for 18 months, alleviating financial stress and empowering families to thrive. This initiative, paired with the Center's culturally



Eureka Children and Families Mayor's Initiative Event (Photo credit: Mark Larson)

grounded care, addresses systemic drivers of violence such as poverty and inequity.

On the Verge (OTV), is another program that reflects the Center's focus on investing in community members and their priorities. On The Verge develops non-traditional leaders to address educational, social, health, and economic inequities. In 2024, McKFRC facilitated three OTV cohorts: one for local high schoolers, one for BIPOC community leaders, and one for transitional-aged youth who identify as queer or BIPOC. Through meetings and retreats, participants built relationships, acquired new skills, and collaborated on projects that address community challenges.

Another key initiative is the Center's work to revitalize Indigenous languages, traditions, and ceremonies. By integrating cultural practices into its programs, the Center not only preserves heritage but also fosters a sense of belonging and resilience.

A Model of Listening and Accountability

The impact of the Center at McKinleyville is felt emotionally, socially, and systemically. It is a place where people are not just served but seen. It is a model of what is possible when funding, resources, and genuine care come together to build with and for the community.

As Aristeia reflects, ***"SHINE has given me the tools to lead with both strength and care. It's not just about what we do, it's about how we do it, and how we sustain ourselves in the process."***

The Center at McKinleyville is more than a resource hub; it is a testament to the power of community-driven solutions. It shows that when leaders hold the "why" tightly and the "how" loosely, they can co-create spaces of healing, safety, and transformation.



The Center Community Advisory Group (Photo credit: Linaya DiNoto)

Mujeres Poderosas Amorosas: Building Power Through Caring Connection

Located in California's Central Valley, Fresno County is a paradox. It's the agricultural powerhouse of the nation, producing a quarter of the country's fruits and vegetables, yet it's also a region of stark inequities. While agribusiness generates immense wealth, the laborers – many of them immigrant women – face poverty, wage theft, and environmental injustices. Families here often must deal with infrastructure issues like contaminated water, polluted air, and the daily struggle to make ends meet. For Latina immigrant women, these challenges are compounded by cultural norms, limited access to resources, and systemic barriers that perpetuate cycles of vulnerability and harm.

In the face of these challenges, Mujeres Poderosas Amorosas (MPA) launched as a program of Cultiva La Salud. The work is guided by a clear vision for domestic violence prevention initially introduced by SHINE focused on the socio-cultural, physical, and economic environment—or, in shorthand, “people,” “place,” and “equitable opportunities.”

Ultimately, this network of over 150 Latina immigrant women is rewriting the narrative of resilience and empowerment in Fresno County. Through connection, advocacy, and storytelling, MPA is creating a space where women are not only seen and heard but are also leading the charge for change.

From Self-Love to Community Care

Fundamentally, MPA's work is rooted in the voices and priorities of the women it serves. Their approach begins with building individual confidence and social connections to foster collective power.

With a focus on self-love and self-worth, MPA aims to grow participants' sense of self, and the power they have in their own lives, families and communities. Through pláticas (sharing circles), mindfulness sessions, political education, dance therapy and an active online WhatsApp group, MPA has cultivated healing spaces where women can meaningfully connect with each other, share their

experiences, and gain resources in a culturally relevant and supportive environment.

Economic Empowerment as a Pathway to Security

Building on the heart-centered work of growing self-confidence and social connections, MPA supports women to materialize more stable futures for themselves as well.

MPA tackles the stressor of economic insecurity head-on by creating opportunities for women to achieve financial stability. From seed grants for small businesses to paraprofessional training programs, MPA helps women turn their talents into economic independence.

“When you help a woman be successful, you’re building her resilience,” says Genoveva Islas, Executive Director of Cultiva La Salud.

“Reducing stress, advancing wellness, and addressing basic needs like food security and housing stability, all of it contributes to preventing domestic violence.”

One of MPA's flagship initiatives is its collaboration with the Fresno Unified School District to create a pathway for Latina immigrant mothers to become paraprofessionals. This program includes childcare, English language training, and cultural resources, ensuring that women have the support they need to succeed. For many participants, this is more than a job, it's a chance to build a solid future for their family.

MPA also supports women entrepreneurs through grants and business incubation programs. From catering businesses to jewelry-making ventures, these initiatives empower women to build small businesses that contribute to their communities. The organization's recent purchase of a building to house a community kitchen is a testament to its commitment to creating infrastructure that supports economic growth.

Advocacy and Organizing for Systemic Change

MPA's impact extends beyond individual empowerment to broader systemic change. The women of MPA have become powerful changemakers, rallying for affordable housing at City Hall, influencing school district policies, advocating for resources that benefit their communities and meeting directly with lawmakers in Sacramento. This experience has not only fostered individual leaders but also further fortified a foundation of collective strength and resilience.

“For many women, it is the first time our voice and concerns feel heard,” shared an MPA community partner. ***“There is such power in storytelling and advocacy work. Our story isn’t just being told, it’s changing perspectives and building solidarity.”***

Over the past several years, MPA has convened a “kitchen cabinet” of community leaders, as well as regularly engaged place-based partners that address upstream factors that influence domestic violence, such as issue-based advocacy groups, the local community development corporation, public park departments, and schools.

The stories and expertise of the women have influenced the directions and decisions of these partners as well, as their experiences offer nuanced insight into issues that might not otherwise surface. Whether it be elevating issues

of school nutrition, or park safety, or shaping rental policies for housing run by the local community development corporation—their voices reframe dominant narratives, affirm the strength and contributions of immigrant women, and create better conditions for themselves and their families.

A Ripple Effect of Transformation

By challenging harmful cultural norms, advocating for safer housing, and building strong networks of support, MPA is reshaping what’s possible for Latina immigrant women in Fresno County.

The impact of MPA’s work is profound. Women who once felt isolated and powerless are now leading efforts to improve their communities. They are transforming themselves, their families, and the systems around them.

“Our work is not just about providing services, it’s about creating a movement where Latina immigrant women feel seen, heard, and supported in their journey toward safety, well-being, and empowerment,” says Deglis Delgado, Project Coordinator of Mujeres Poderosas Amorasas.

For the women of MPA, this work is not just about policies and programs. It’s about building a foundation of love, trust, and lasting collective power.



Mujeres Poderosas Amorasas Meeting in Fresno
(Photo credit: Cultiva La Salud)



Mujeres Poderosas Amorasas Meeting in Fresno
(Photo credit: Cultiva La Salud)

We Take Care of Each Other: A Paradigm Shift in Healing from and Preventing Violence

Over the generations, people who have historically, unjustly been cut off from resources and investments have found ways to come together in mutual aid and solidarity. Even when there are strong networks of care, the pressure to make ends meet, and added pressure of systems that exclude or even target communities can result in violence that takes many forms.

When people look for support and resources for healing, the systems purportedly meant to protect families often perpetuate harm through forced separation and punitive measures. For Black and Brown communities, it too often includes navigating police violence and surveillance as well.

We Take Care of Each Other Partnership (WTCOEO), based in Contra Costa County, is a collaborative that takes a bold, restorative approach, using community-identified solutions to address interpersonal and systemic harms facing residents. They work across gender, race and class spectrums, including legal system-involved youth, LGBTQ youth and adults, people living on low incomes, with housing insecurity.

As the final collaborative to join the SHINE cohort, and prior experience working together, the WTCOEO Partnership brought their perspective, practices and collectivized work to the table to share with the other SHINE collaboratives.

Centering Healing at Every Level

WTCOEO Partnership is rooted in a shared commitment to healing, restorative justice, and community solutions. The partnership unites three organizations that work at family, community and state-wide levels: The CHAT Project, which facilitates restorative justice and collective healing for domestic violence and family violence; RYSE, which empowers youth through healing-centered services and advocacy; and the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color (ABMoC), which focuses on engaging men and gender-expansive individuals in creating healthy

relationships and systemic change through policy advocacy. Together, they build pathways for healing, power, and belonging across Contra Costa County and the state.

“We are informed by our community folks and our grassroots partners, providing healing solutions to address and prevent violence, and move away from punishment and state violence,” explains Gustavo López from AMBoC. ***“The [government] typically responds to violence with more violence, by incarcerating people, by forcing them into programs that are focused on shame and punishment, and that are not creating healing or safety for anyone involved.”***

A Bold and Nuanced Approach to Prevention

WTCOEO’s approach to address and prevent violence is deeply nuanced, and operates from a deep clarity that all violence is state violence. Explains Kanwarpal Dhaliwal from RYSE:

“Violence is structural, generational, historical, political, institutional, relational, and embodied. So then must be our healing.”

They are honest about the complexity of working to repair relationships that have domestic and intimate partner violence, and that risk and harm in relationships are directly connected to social and structural determinants.

“Our goal is to bring in anyone and everyone who is willing to reduce violence, even if they’ve enacted harm before, and help people do healing work,” says Chelsea Miller, a leader within The CHAT Project.

WTCOEO Partnership works with survivors, people who have caused harm, and those who occupy both identities, as well as their families, friends, and communities. This approach acknowledges roles of “victim” and “perpetrator” can blur depending on the day or situation.

“What is difficult for some to accept and address, is that there are also so few resources for people who have caused harm,

and prevention needs to include helping people who are using violence, to change their behavior,” explains Chelsea.

Doing this level of nuanced work of healing and restoration from harm requires a paradigm shift from top-down or institutional models, to ones that center the people involved, and honor their autonomy and choice. By sharing their model and approach, WTCOEO Partnership is expanding the possibilities for DV prevention and intervention. Their restorative justice framework is being disseminated to other communities, offering a new way of thinking about care, accountability, and healing.

Innovative Programs That Redefine Care

WTCOEO Partnership’s work is illustrated through their innovative initiatives including: their restorative justice practices, the ABMoC’s partnership with the Call for Change helpline and RYSE’s youth-led participatory action research project.

WTCOEO Partnership’s restorative justice practices include dialogue and facilitation led by The CHAT Project, with family units impacted by interpersonal and sexual violence. They create spaces for survivors and those who have caused harm to engage in healing conversations, supported by their extended networks of friends, coworkers, and community members. This work is proximate, addressing harm at its roots and fostering accountability without shame or punishment.

ABMoC also partnered with Growing a New Heart to expand their Call for Change helpline to California. The helpline is a nonviolence resource for people who have caused harm in their relationships and want help stopping that violence. Callers speak with responders trained in trauma-informed and transformative justice principles. These responders engage in respectful, compassionate conversations that help callers recognize patterns of control, manipulation, and violence, and guide them toward taking responsibility for their actions. The helpline offers a confidential and anonymous alternative to the criminal legal system, providing a critical resource for those seeking to change without fear of judgment or shame.

“Other than the helpline, there’s no resource that’s available that’s confidential and anonymous for people who are causing harm who don’t want to submit themselves to the legal justice system,” shared Jordan Thierry, a consultant for the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color. This initiative is spearheading a new way of addressing intimate partner violence that prioritizes healing over punishment.

At RYSE, the “How Many Times Do We Have to Say It?” campaign exemplifies their commitment to centering youth experiences and leadership. In recognition of adults consistently asking young people what they need without listening to their answers, this participatory research project puts young people in charge of asking, listening and responding. Through focus groups and a photo voice project, youth participants have shared their experiences of neglect from systems and adults, lack of resources and spaces, and the need for trusted adult guidance as they transition into adulthood. Their reflections are shaping the next steps from this campaign to begin developing solutions.

What’s Possible When We Flip the Script

WTCOEO is not just about doing the work, it’s about reshaping what it means to address violence. Their approach challenges the status quo, moving away from punitive systems that often exacerbate harm and toward community-based solutions that prioritize healing and care.

At the grassroots level, WTCOEO’s partners The CHAT Project and RYSE provide healing and restorative practices to address violence in ways that are culturally relevant and community-informed. At the systems level, ABMoC advocates for policies that support restorative justice and resource community organizations doing transformative, community-rooted work. This dual approach ensures that their work is both deeply rooted in the realities of the communities they serve and capable of influencing broader systemic change.

WTCOEO Partnership’s commitment to care, truth-telling, and community-designed solutions are a powerful reminder of what’s possible when we are bold in our accountability to each other.

Looking Back: What has Been Collectively Accomplished?

Although the individual stories of each SHINE collaborative offer powerful case studies of the SHINE approach in action at the local level, it is also useful to step back and reflect on what the SHINE partners have *collectively* accomplished over the past several years. To what extent have SHINE partners accomplished the types of individual, community and systems-level changes articulated in the SHINE framework, which are envisioned to lead to their long-term health equity and domestic violence prevention goals?

Tangible Milestones of Community-Level Progress

Especially when working far upstream, population-level impact such as incidence of domestic violence is not the best indicator of progress given the many contributing and confounding factors that influence the occurrence of violence. As such, the SHINE framework offers clarity about more aligned measures of community-level progress seen by partners as most connected to their prevention efforts and where they anticipate having the most direct influence. This is where, over the past several years, SHINE communities have gained meaningful community resources, community-centered shifts in policies and practices, and community investments aimed at improving the upstream factors identified as most connected to partner violence.

Established Places of Safety & Connection. Fundamentally, where SHINE partners have been most successful has been in fostering spaces of safety of connection within their respective communities. This has most clearly materialized in McKinleyville, where the Center serves as a physically and procedurally integrated one-stop location to increase access to public and private resources for rural and tribal communities in the region. As captured in the case study, with SHINE's support, the Center has intentionally invested in valued-based leadership and community-centered infrastructure to integrate an inclusive approach and strength of partnership to ensure cross-agency referrals and care. A 2024 evaluation of the Center found that not only do organizations housed at the Center feel a sense of alignment and shared values with each other, a majority of surveyed community members themselves agree that the Center a “safe and nurturing” place where they can “easily access services.” As one McKinleyville partner described it, “the ability for anyone to walk in the door any time of day and know it’s a safe space and that you can connected with the right people has really made a difference. It is making a big difference in people’s lives.”



Me encanta porque es un grupo de mujeres donde me siento desahogada y liberada. Aunque nos conocemos bien existe el respeto. No me siento juzgada. (I love it because it is a group of women where I feel relieved and liberated. Although we know each other well, there is respect. I don't feel judged.)

Over 150 women in the Central Valley have also found a sense of connection through an online community and in-person weekly pláticas sponsored by Mujeres Poderosa Amorosa that offer emotional wellness, resource sharing, and organizing to build influence and power. Pláticas were described by participants as “sacred space” for vulnerable sharing and healing—as well as for joyful connection—where participating women can offer support to each other and “not feel alone.” As captured in the case study, the programming at UWEAST in San Diego has similarly created spaces for East African boys and girls to separately and safely explore issues of identity, gender and healthy relationships. Referring to the spirit of connection as a “sisterhood,” program staff shared, “They really enjoy having that space where they are able to vulnerable and have people understand and see them. They feel heard.”

Finally, while not a *physical* space, the expansion of the Call for Change helpline into California described in the WTCOEO case study represents another important place for safety and connection for an overlooked group—those causing or considering causing harm in their personal relationships. The

anonymous and confidential intimate partner abuse prevention helpline continues to be held up as a valuable resource in the state.

Increased Resources for SHINE Communities. Increased community investments have been another outcome of SHINE collaborative efforts that have served to stabilize families and provide opportunities for economic mobility. The most direct example of this took place in the unfolding crisis of Covid-19, where SHINE collaboratives all successfully advocated for emergency response funds, food and family support resources, and rent-relief resources for East African immigrants and refugees, Latina monolingual Spanish-speakers and seniors, rural Humboldt County residents, and workers in low-wage industries in Los Angeles seen most at-risk for intimate partner violence. Recognizing the danger facing the elder population, Cultiva La Salud, in partnership with the Central California Food Bank, launched a “Save our Senoras” program to make weekly deliveries to approximately 6,700 free food boxes to up to 200 women ages 65 and older in Fresno. This effort, which started as a rapid response \$10,000 effort, grew ten-fold to a \$110,000 program.

Outside of emergency response, SHINE collaboratives also report successfully leveraging additional funding aimed at directly and meaningfully addressing forces of economic insecurity facing women in their communities. In McKinleyville, the Center received \$2.5 million through a California Guaranteed Income grant and additional funding, which allowed them to provide 150 pregnant individuals with \$920 a month for 18-months. While a formal evaluation is forthcoming in 2026, anecdotally, the program has been described as “transformative” for participants who dedicated these extra resources to making ends meet or affording safe housing. In Fresno, with support from the Mujeres Poderosas Amorosas Project Coordinator, over 20 women applied for and received over \$100,000 in locally-funded small grants to launch or grow existing small businesses; one woman used the funding to apply for license and permits to cater an event and is now an established caterer in the Fresno area, another successfully grew her handmade cultural jewelry business, and still another created her own business selling Venezuelan food as a mobile vendor.

Advancement of Upstream Community-Centered Policies & Programs. Over the years, the advocacy efforts of SHINE collaborative have also translated into some tangible shifts in local policies that directly address upstream factors tied to domestic violence such as housing, economic and food security. Immigrant women leaders in Fresno successfully advocated for meals to be made available to students during pandemic-related school closures and for school meals to be made available to young siblings who are not yet of school age. Partners of the East African Youth Collaborative in San Diego, advocated to change affordable housing regulations to accommodate the unique challenges faced by refugee populations during the pandemic and to support refugee populations in understanding, navigating, and accessing housing assistance. In Fresno, the women of Mujeres Poderosas Amorosas met with local parks and infrastructure leaders to support community safety and successfully advocated for the unlocking of school gates in park-poor neighborhoods, resulting in safer places to play for the community’s children.

New local programs have also been launched that directly address upstream factors that influence violence. Cultiva La Salud (home to MPA) received a grant from the Sierra Health Foundation to support a cohort of women interested in pursuing a paraprofessional pathway within Fresno public schools. Through what was described by one participant as a “life changing” experience, the program successfully advanced economic mobility pipeline for immigrant women for long-term careers in education. After successful advocating for English fluency requirements to not serve as a barrier for hiring, ultimately, four new Spanish-speaking paraprofessionals have filled open positions within Fresno Unified School District to support the district’s multilingual learner population. UWEAST



Getting [women] excited and involved in economic opportunities, whether it was a small business or going back to school or a career pathway. It was all those upstream things that helped create the resilient assets that prevent the violence, right, that help to minimize their exposure to violence.”

supported the San Diego Wellness Collaborative and San Diego Refugee Communities Coalition received a BUILD Health Challenge grant to improve housing stability for refugee populations in El Cajon through upstream advocacy, cross-sector community education about housing regulations and the unique challenges faced by refugee populations.

Strengthened Community Capacity & Power for Sustained Change

Beyond these concrete community-level milestones of progress, each SHINE community reports perhaps less visible, but equally powerful, shifts in community capacity over the past several years of work together. Importantly, while this strengthened capacity is foundational for continuing to deepen and advance domestic violence prevention work in SHINE communities, this capacity transcends any one issue and, as such, can be leveraged across a broader set of community-driven change agendas.

Growing Base of Community Leaders. A powerful outcome of the past several years that runs across all SHINE collaboratives has been the leadership being fostered within each community. Importantly, we see dozens of non-traditional youth and community leaders stepping into their own power as leaders in this work across the state—from cohorts of leadership fellows from underrepresented groups (e.g., transitional-aged, BIPOC and queer youth) in Humboldt County, to young people in Richmond defining a youth-centered agenda for change, to immigrant Latina women in Fresno becoming a visible force in local policymaking in Fresno on behalf of their children and families, to East African young people who have graduated from SHINE-supported programming and returned after college to serve as staff and mentors. Formal evaluation surveys and anecdotal observations from SHINE program staff consistently report increased knowledge, skills and civic engagement among program participants.¹¹ As one emerging leader shared, “I didn’t realize how much power I had, but On the Verge [the leadership program out of the McKinleyville Center] helped with this. And I can use it to effect change.”

Importantly, the type of leadership being fostered through SHINE transcends traditional notions of positional leadership and external power, instead focusing on notions of embodied leadership that emphasizes self-awareness and presence, integrating mind, body, and emotions to show up authentically and effectively. An evaluation of the On the Verge program in McKinleyville highlighted participant feedback that encapsulated a more expansive understanding of what a “community leader” is that echoed across SHINE collaboratives—it’s not the business leader or the politician, but really “anyone who is willing to listen, speak out, and act on behalf of community.” This leadership, rooted in “self love” and “self worth” was described as offering important resilience to the stressors that precipitate violence.

As framed by representatives of SHINE collaboratives, the impact of this investment is not confined to the individual leaders—the benefit extends to the broader community, as these change agents continue to advance equitable change and foster new leadership going forward. Community leaders in each of the SHINE communities are raising voices at local actions, sitting on various panels, participating in roundtables and listening sessions, sitting on leadership councils and advisory boards, and directly engaging in local narrative change and storytelling. Young people at the RYSE Youth Center are engaged in a comprehensive PhotoVoice Project, telling the story of their local community. Young people in San



Mujeres Poderosas Amarasas leaders at a Fresno Housing Protest (photo credit: Cultiva La Salud)

¹¹ See for example: Central Valley Health Policy Institute. (2021). Safety Through Connection Evaluation: California State University, Fresno & The Center at McKinleyville Evaluation Report (2023). California Center for Rural Policy, Cal Poly Humboldt.

Diego are calling out anti-Muslim contexts in their local schools. Women leaders in Fresno are sharing their experiences with local community development corps and housing partners to ensure that local housing policy integrates considerations rooted in the cultural and economic realities of potential renters. “This work is bigger than one person,” a participant shared. “It’s about the ripple effect, how we empower others to lead, to heal, and to create change in their own communities.”



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Cultivation of Community-Centered Networks. By design, each of the SHINE collaboratives was selected because they represented trusted organizations with deep relationships within their local areas. The early years of SHINE explicitly focused on bringing multi-sector partners to the table around community-centered domestic violence prevention work. Early SHINE collaboratives were comprised of a mix of community partner organizations, tribal groups, city and county departments, social and health services, schools and school districts, and local foundations—all of whom engaged in a process of understanding and unpacking the conditions that influenced violence in each of their communities and crafting solutions to address them. Evaluation reports during that time suggest that many participating representatives gained new understanding about issues of intimate partner violence within their respective communities, and, in the words of one public system partner, leveraged that knowledge toward “a shared vision to create a supportive community.”

An important outcome of fostering these networks has been a re-framing of domestic violence. Whereas historically domestic and intimate partner violence have been viewed as requiring individual or interpersonal intervention, the efforts of SHINE partners have effectively shifted the paradigm of partner violence prevention to be a *community* issue. While this was challenging making the case in the early phases of the work, a concept of community responsibility and community accountability is one that seems to have taken hold. As shared by one SHINE leader, “We’re really seeing ourselves as all interconnected in creating a safer community, and that includes lowering rates of domestic violence.” As another shared, “We’re building a culture where everyone’s treated with dignity and care and compassion.”



We’re really seeing ourselves as all interconnected in creating a safer community, and that includes lowering rates of domestic violence.”

While the explicitness of a named focus on domestic violence prevention varies, these partners continue to align around a range of community-driven priorities that represent upstream factors influencing domestic violence. As captured in this report’s case study, this is most evident at the McKinleyville Center, where co-located partners have not only found a rhythm of collaboration and warm referrals, but—through investments in shared learning—have also arrived at a set of community-centered values that guides their service delivery and operations. As it grows its reputation as a community hub, regional partners outside of the Center are increasingly leveraging Center staff as network weavers across diverse sectors and community groups, further embedding an inclusive frame in the region. Other SHINE partners also offer examples of more inclusive community-centered networks; in San Diego, original Safety Through Connection partners continue to advocate together around community priorities, and in Fresno, the local Community Development Corporation shared that they consistently engage the wisdom of leaders within Mujeres Poderosas Amorosas, describing them as “a really critical community group in our neighborhood.”

Strengthened Anchor Organizations to Steward Community-Centered Change. Perhaps SHINE’s most clear and sustainable impact has been, not just on the community-level outcomes described above, but on the organizations and leaders that stewarded those changes.

Each SHINE lead organization has grown in capacity over the past several years of SHINE by traditional measures. Some report examples of almost tripling of organizational budgets over the course of SHINE, gaining visibility to successfully leverage substantial funding from new foundations, expanding and launching new programs, being profiled in prominent journals and health equity convenings for their work. Each offered examples of them serving as “go to” organizations within their respective communities, as funders, local officials and school district leaders, chambers of commerce, and county agencies have reached out for collaboration or support. Individual leaders hired specifically to lead SHINE work over the past several years especially, report being transformed through the experience. Each reported gaining new skills, new knowledge, and new ways of thinking through their SHINE experience, and that they show up differently within their organizations and communities as a result.



“As a leader, SHINE has given me the tools to lead with both strength and care. It’s not just about what we do, it’s about how we do it, and how we sustain ourselves in the process.”

SHINE lead organizations also offered powerful relational indicators of growth by virtue of their participation in SHINE. For example, long-time partners from We Take Care of Each Other reported how critical it was for them to simply have space to articulate a shared framework for their collective work. Multiple SHINE lead organizations spoke emotionally about what it has meant to be a part of a statewide network of organizations and the sense of “family” that has been cultivated that has helped them feel less alone. A few specifically shared that they were deeply touched finding connections in cultural traditions and a fierce love for their respective communities. Rural leaders in McKinleyville talked about how they have been able to leverage the statewide community in their local work, “When I’m working with folks...being able to say, ‘Yeah, there’s this statewide group of organizations that all believe the same thing, that share the same value set. We’re not the one crazy progressive organization up here on our own in Northern California. And I think that’s been able to add some legitimacy to the way that we are talking about things.”



Each collaboration serves different groups and cultures, yet coming together in once space with a shared understanding of our values and whom we serve has been incredible.”

Sustaining Progress Going Forward

Collectively, what has been accomplished over the past seven years represents strides forward in shifting the upstream conditions that influence domestic violence and healthy equity for SHINE communities, and the impact of shifts in local policy, resources and programming will continue to have ripple effects in the years to come. Furthermore, the *community power* that has been cultivated and exercised through the work of SHINE has been, not just a vehicle for change, but an important outcome in and of itself.

At the same time, the sunset of SHINE funding in 2025 comes at a time of federal funding cuts to community programs, intensified immigration enforcement and detention, rollbacks to civil rights protections, and sweeping changes to health and social benefits—all of which threaten to exacerbate the root causes of domestic violence that SHINE is aiming to mitigate. With resolve, across-the-board, SHINE collaboratives share that they remain committed to the local partnerships that have been cultivated through SHINE, as well as to maintaining a domestic violence prevention frame as they continue to engage in programming and advocacy focused on addressing the root causes of violence and inequity. In the months to come, SHINE partners report planning to continue producing community education video blogs and leading restorative justice healing circles; fighting for equitable economic, housing and transportation policies; cultivating youth leaders to lift up issues of place-based inequities and religious discrimination; and advancing alternative narratives of accountability away from punishment and toward one grounded in community, healing, and transformative justice. Most meaningfully, as an indicator of the value of what’s been built, the SHINE partners have also re-committed to seeking out joint funding to continue their statewide learning and collaboration together.

The Influence of The Prevention Institute's Funding & Support

Reflecting on the journey, SHINE partners were specifically asked about the role Prevention Institute played as an intermediary, as well as which aspects of the approach have supported them the most and have catalyzed their progress. Some common themes emerged that might offer insight to other similar efforts.

- **Entering in a spirit of trust.** By far, the number one factor that has facilitated the success of SHINE collaborative work has been the spirit of trust and partnership that has been extended to them through the interactions and engagement of the PI team. As one partner shared with confidence, “We are all trusted to be coming at safer, happier, healthier communities from our own direction.” True community-centered work requires an authentic belief in the wisdom and power of communities, not in the theory of any funder or even the experience of community organizations. “We were able to serve community better and build additional trust with them [through SHINE],” one partner explained. “And we are only able to do that because we were *given* trust.”
- **Flexibility in funding.** Related, multiple SHINE collaboratives specifically called out the benefit of SHINE’s flexibility in funding that was neither project-specific nor deliverable-based. This was particularly critical given their focus on upstream factors of domestic violence that could encompass a range of issues and sectors, and the attention required to not only do the work, but strengthen partnerships and processes to support it. Partners juxtaposed the flexibility of SHINE funding with the rigidly siloed nature of public and philanthropic funding, which sometimes can box in community-centered approaches and outcomes. “[Domestic violence prevention] work is complex,” underscored one partner. “It requires funding partner who deeply understand how this work unfolds in community.” Another shared, “Things happen. A pandemic happens. Sometimes we have to stop our agendas for a minute...having a partner like [Prevention Institute], it helps you to show up with your community. It changes the whole dynamic to have that human flexibility throughout the work.”
- **Learning-centered approach.** Most collaboratives appreciated SHINE’s front and center approach to learning together. Some specifically shared that that they benefited by being exposed to different conceptual frameworks and thinking through trainings provided by PI and invited guests, with a few describing how they were able to take information back to their communities and networks. All stressed gaining from sharing and learning from *each other* and their different locally-based responses. “Participating in a learning community like SHINE has been transformative,” one partner shared. “It has provided us with a space where we can share experiences, challenges, and strategies with other community-centered collaboratives that operate from shared values and frameworks. This sense of collective learning and mutual support has reinforced our work, making us feel less isolated and more empowered to create meaningful change. And knowing that these changes are happening throughout different parts of California make it even more meaningful.”
- **Investing in in-person convenings.** Finally, while recognizing the heavy financial cost required for multiple days of in-person convenings and the burden placed on hosting agencies, this aspect of the SHINE experience was raised by all collaborative partners as a valuable aspect of their participation because it deepened the relational aspect of SHINE. Many talked about the benefit of being in community together without the day-to-day distraction of program work, where individuals could immerse their full selves in learning and connection. Travelling to each of the SHINE regions and seeing the local context and communities firsthand offered “incredible insight” into the work. As one leader described it, “You become a different person when you hear other people’s stories, how they navigated through...and after every meeting, every interaction, I see myself motivated. Inspired.”

“

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“

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Looking Back: What Have We Learned?

Within a growing field of domestic violence prevention, the experiences of SHINE collaboratives offer valuable learning given their specific focus on community-centered health equity and domestic violence prevention. As SHINE partners have reflected on what has amplified and challenged their progress, their insights serve not only to actively shape their own journey going forward, but also offer important learning for other collaborative endeavors focused on any range of violence prevention efforts endeavoring to support collective wellbeing, relational health, and mutually thriving communities.

1. **Trust as a catalyst for community-centered engagement.** SHINE was pioneering in its funding support for established community-centered organizations and networks to address upstream causes of domestic violence—as opposed to centering traditional domestic violence stakeholders who hold specialized expertise in this area. While this approach did require an early investment in socializing SHINE collaborative partners to a domestic violence prevention frame, this decision created a different entry point for community engagement on a potentially sensitive topic. Especially in places where cultural stigma, fear of family separation or deportation reprisals, or negative past experiences with violence response efforts shape engagement around this issue, organizations with long histories of offering valuable service within their respective communities came to this work with a foundation of deep community trust.

Early on, SHINE partners were able to meaningfully leverage this community trust to broker early partnerships, as well as quickly organize community listening campaigns where a “domestic violence prevention” frame could be introduced with important nuance and ultimately embraced. Amplifying a sense of trust, throughout the seven-year journey, the staff and volunteers of SHINE lead organizations were a part of the communities that they served, all bringing familiarity with culture and context—as well as a level of personal investment and relationships—that shaped authentic programming and engagement in their SHINE work. As one leader explained, “It’s not six degrees of separation. It’s six degrees of connection...this builds a lot of kind of social capital to be able to say things and to get them to trust that I actually know and understand.”

2. **Flexibility offered by an upstream approach to address domestic violence.** Reflecting back, SHINE partners agreed that an upstream focus to domestic violence prevention has been well-aligned with community-centered values and approaches. By focusing upstream and diving into the root causes of violence, SHINE collaboratives were able to expansively focus on multiple arenas that affect individual and community safety. As a departure from the issue-based siloes that philanthropic and public systems typically operate within, according to partners, the SHINE approach created an opening to start with what *communities* need to feel safe and the flexibility to pursue equity-focused agendas nuanced to the specific geographic, intergenerational, or cultural stressors that impact health equity and violence prevention for them.

Using a prevention frame, each SHINE collaborative was also able to sensitively navigate how explicitly to name domestic violence as an issue, depending on the culture and community that they were working within and the proximity of different groups to experiencing violence. In some cases, this took the form of working more proximately with those impacted by violence to increase safety and repair to reduce future conflict. In others, prevention activities centered on instilling a sense of agency and economic opportunity among those most vulnerable as a means of promoting resilience, or promoting models of healthy relationships through support for socio-emotional development with individuals and families. “We have [historically] not found real success in addressing intimate partner violence head on,” one partner explained. “[The



{The prevention frame} allows us to connect the different initiatives going on in our community... really see ourselves interconnected in creating a safer community.”

prevention frame] allows us to connect the different initiatives going on in the community...really see ourselves as all interconnected in creating a safer community. And that includes lowering rates of domestic violence.”

3. **The imperative of consistently holding the “so what” of upstream work.** A corollary to the two learnings above is what one SHINE partner referred to as a “double edged sword.” Namely, the same flexibility offered by a prevention frame and the same trust afforded community-based partners can also lead to drift unless a lead partner intentionally and consistently holds the broader domestic violence prevention frame. As experienced by some SHINE partners, “domestic violence” can otherwise become so much of an undercurrent of the work that the throughline can be lost and the impact and learning more diffused. Especially within multi-sector collaboratives where partners are accustomed to working in siloes, the “so what” of coming together can be lost over time without reinforcement, as collaboratives focus on a multitude of upstream issues. Multiple leaders talked about their role in connecting the dots, with one explaining the challenge: “There is a disassociation. When you help women to be successful, people don’t automatically equate that to building resilience against violence. We don’t talk about food programs a domestic violence prevention. We’re not necessarily conscious all the time about the importance of investing socio-emotional support as a way of healing to reduce trauma because children are witnessing and experiencing trauma in their homes...and so part of our work is building consciousness [and connecting the dots].”



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Especially given the propensity to leap to crisis support with issues of domestic violence, other partners described experiencing a similar imperative to intentionally hold a “prevention” frame as well. “As soon as people hear domestic violence, they immediately think to interventions to once the violence has already happened,” one shared. “To this day, it’s hard to recenter conversations [with partners] that are just about the prevention end.”

4. **Balancing multi-sector collaboration against community-centered change.** Over the course of the last several years—while important individual partnerships continue to be sustained and leveraged—the “multi-sector collaborative” approach has notably fallen away within most SHINE communities. The Covid-19 pandemic was an early catalyst of this shift, as collaboratives put greater emphasis on community organizing and power building to put pressure on public systems, as opposed to investing energy into cultivating multi-sector tables of institutional partners where community representation is inevitably minimized due to power differentials. Notably, this shift coincided with a growing acknowledgement within the public health field about the importance of cultivating and leveraging community power in addressing social determinants of health, as well as emerging critiques of multisector and collective impact approaches as disproportionately benefiting participating institutions versus learning to transformative change.

Each SHINE collaborative continues to actively seek out and successfully work with local sector partners, they just emphasize the importance of flexibility in partnerships--particularly within domestic violence prevention approaches where a multitude of upstream issues are being tackled. As they have increasingly leaned into community-driven agendas over time, they found that meaningfully advancing change requires flexibility to strategically bring various sector partners—such as public health, education, housing, transportation, etc.—“in and out” depending on the specific systems change issue of focus. One helpfully distinguished “multisector collaboration” from formal

multisector “*collaboratives*,” with the latter seen as a potentially limiting structure for advancing authentic community-centered change.

5. The reciprocal relationship between systems change and *individual* safety and connection.

The focus on policy and systems change more emphasized mid-way through the SHINE journey in recognition of the importance of advancing broader solutions that could be scaled and sustained. As one SHINE leader explained, “We wanted to demand and secure the things that our communities need, not just surviving current conditions, but getting ahead of the conditions to be able to change them.” The focus has led to important systems-level wins in the last several years. As funders continue to place emphasis on broader systems change outcomes from their investments, an important learning has been the reenforcing and critical goal of simultaneously fostering *individual* safety and connection.

A clear outcome from SHINE has been the level of sense of safety and connection fostered in each of their communities. Especially in communities with a history of neglect and divestment, it has been important to offer identity-based support, affirm injustices, and foster a sense of support and connection. This was described as an important prevention outcome in and of itself. It was also described as a necessary *precursor* to the leadership and advocacy that has surfaced through SHINE, and that continues to ensure meaningful policy and system change rooted in the lived experiences affected communities.

- 6. The resonance of honoring healing.** A turning point in SHINE’s journey was the elevation of healing as a counterpoint to the layers of interpersonal and systemic violence taking place. Across the board, SHINE partners bore witness to the transformative power of personal healing and self-love offering resilience to individuals, and of relational healing and restorative justice as culturally-resonant strategies for diffusing tension across partners and within families. Given the violence of systems oppression and colonialism, many spoke about engaging in and preserving cultural traditions such as traditional dance and poetry, food and gathering, and rites of passage ceremonies as a particular form of healing that offers a foundational sense of connection and safety. “Violence is occurring, trauma is occurring,” one SHINE leader shared, “and so to do this more vulnerable, open, relationship-centered work, there has to be space to name that and to work with that skillfully...and then not staying with the healing, but also moving to the culture-building and the systems change.”



Violence is occurring, trauma is occurring,” one SHINE leader shared, “and so to do this more vulnerable, open, relationship-centered work, there has to be space to name that and to work with that skillfully.”

Finally, another category of learning lies in the SHINE journey itself, and what can be achieved through sustained and phase resourcing of community-centered agendas across statewide partners. The SHINE journey also underscores that power of values-based approaches that enter with humility, root deeply in community, and prioritize relational health and healing. As one SHINE collaborative leader reflected, “Participating in SHINE has been transformative. It has provided us with space to share experiences, challenges, strategies with other community-centered collaboratives that operate from shared values and frameworks. This sense of collective learning and mutual support has reinforced our work, and more empowered to create meaningful change.”

Looking Forward

As this phase of the SHINE journey comes to a close, the partners find themselves once again looking inward and charting future directions together. While the funding support of The Blue Shield of California Foundation has encouraged a specific focus on domestic violence prevention, the basis of local and statewide trust and expertise that has been built over the past several years serves as a

potential springboard into a range of community priorities to equitably advance their health and well-being.

The urgency of the moment is clear, as issues of gender-based violence are continuing to pervade headlines amidst a seeming resurgence of toxic masculinity and patriarchal norms, and where communities across the country are facing increasing violence and abuse from divestment and concentrated power. The SHINE collective's approach to building community power, advancing systems of care and repair and amplifying narratives of collective well-being through the leadership and lived experiences of community offers a powerful path forward. As reflected by a member of the PI team, "I do think that in the time of the level of destruction that we're seeing and violence that we're seeing, the people who really do hold the both-and of healing and prevention, compassion and advocacy, you know that there's a unique and valuable place for approaches like SHINE."

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