



Agency remains undaunted in quest to ensure that marginalized survivors of domestic violence in California access legal services

“Heightened Commitment to an Equity Lens.”

Family Violence Appellate Project

What was the challenge faced and what accounts for it?

This grantee faced the daunting challenge of identifying which marginalized communities across the entire state of California it was not serving, in order to begin to build bridges to unserved and underserved communities to increase their ability to access services. What accounts most for this challenge is the size and diversity of the State, and the comparatively limited resources of the organization.

What was tried in order to address the challenge? What surprises or obstacles were encountered along the way?

Family Violence Appellate Project (FVAP)’s goal was to use research data to identify underserved communities, identify effective strategies to understand the legal needs of those communities, to evaluate the organization’s cultural responsiveness and overall effectiveness, and increase cultural competency of management and staff.

At the time they began the project, they had never conducted a comprehensive review of demographic and geographic location data of the people who contacted them for assistance. The grantee addressed this by gathering demographic and geographic location data of their current client base, and they wanted to compare that with state demographic data, as well as the demographic data of survivors of domestic violence in California. They were surprised to learn that California courts do not collect demographic data.

Describe the Turning point. What was the culmination of struggle, learning, insight and response that led to the new result?

The turning point was the persistence of the grantee in gathering data and outlining steps they could begin to take to reach marginalized survivors. As they gathered data, they were able to identify certain groups, age groups, and geographic locations that the agency was currently not serving or underserving.

One of the major accomplishments has been the increased awareness of cultural responsiveness in all aspects of their work, and a commitment to monitor how they are doing. For the first time, FVAP compiled comprehensive demographic data about individuals reaching out for their services.

The key was developing a plan and moving through the steps, to begin to make an amorphous problem into a more clearly-defined problem.

What was the result? What is different now and how is that impacting individuals, organizations, and/or communities?

Through this data, they observed a gap in services for the LGBTQI and American Indian/Native American communities. Two other major accomplishments were drafting an Outreach Action Plan to help FVAP understand which communities are underserved and have the greatest need, and how deepen connections with those communities; and drafting four program evaluation surveys to assess the effectiveness and cultural responsiveness of FVAP's services.

What's different now is this grantee has a clearer picture of the problem, and many possibilities to improve access to services for marginalized communities. They are just getting started using this information to build relationships and trust with marginalized communities, but through the process of doing this CROS work, the agency itself is being transformed by new knowledge, as well as their persistence and commitment towards equity in spite of the enormity of the challenge.

What do you want people to do with the information in this story?

I want people to see how powerful discovery through data analysis is in its ability **to improve an agency's "vision," so it can "see" more clearly where it needs to go.**

An ask that could follow its telling is: **Don't be afraid to look deeply into the most challenging problems**—clarifying them will move you more quickly towards action, even if you can only address the needs of only a fraction of what you discover, that still has the potential to positively impact many people and communities.

Also—for a state-wide initiative, data of this nature can open up the possibility for collaborative partnerships or networks to form that can more capably address needs than a single agency can do alone.

