

Overview of the Close to Home Approach Domestic Violence Prevention (DVP) Program 2023-2027

Background:

The Close to Home (C2H) approach was developed by Aimee M. Thompson for a project which began in 2002 in Dorchester, Massachusetts, which pioneered the use of community mobilization strategies to foster community wide responsibility to prevent domestic and sexual violence. By combining expertise in violence with expertise in community organizing, C2H was able to draw attention to a seemingly intractable public health problem that is too often considered a private matter rather than part of public life and engages all community members in developing and implementing solutions to the problem.

In 2008, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) partnered with Aimee M. Thompson to develop additional program resources, and to create a peer coaching model for technical assistance and training (TAT) for implementation in California. Since that time, CDPH has funded local community agencies to implement the C2H approach for domestic violence, sexual violence, and teen dating violence prevention. CDPH is now applying this approach to address upstream protective factors for domestic violence prevention, such as strengthening economic security and mobility. The concepts and content related to the C2H approach included below were developed by Aimee M. Thompson for use by CDPH in supporting these efforts.

C2H Framework and Key Concepts:

- For the purpose of the C2H approach, **community mobilization** is defined as: *A participatory decision-making, community-driven process through which members of a community plan, implement and evaluate specific actions designed to improve the health and well-being of the community.* C2H's community-driven process engages youth, adults, and organizational leaders to develop and implement local solutions and strategies.
- The rationale for this mobilization approach is that research demonstrates most people turn to their informal (family, friends, and neighbors) or formal (associative life, faith communities, etc.) social networks when in need of support in their lives and their relationships. This approach seeks to engage social networks in communities to create change around the issue prioritized by the community.
- The community mobilization process is adapted to the selected programs and identified communities in order to:

Overview of the Close to Home Approach Domestic Violence Prevention (DVP) Program 2023-2027

- Build a strong, active network of community members and organizations committed to fostering community-wide responsibility and solutions;
 - Develop local community leadership to identify, develop and implement local strategies and projects; and
 - Transform environmental factors and social norms to support the strengthening of economic security and mobility for Black women and their families.
- Organizations that learn and implement the C2H approach will increase and strengthen their:
 - relationships with a broad base of constituencies in their community;
 - visibility in their local community; and
 - community organizing skills.

Basic Program Components:

The basic program components for the C2H approach includes:

- Orientation Training
Cohorts of community members are recruited and oriented in training topics to build a foundational knowledge and understanding necessary to be able to address, communicate and mobilize community members and partners on such topics as: root causes and intersections of violence; associations between risk and protective factors (focusing on economic security and gender inequity) and domestic violence; healthy relationships; upstander guidance; community engagement; and leadership. Building a foundational knowledge is necessary to be able to address and revisit these topics as community leaders move through the organizing process.
- Mobilization Phases
 - **Assess Phase:** In this phase, the network learns to “see” anew and becomes curious about the community – taking the time and space required to gather, learn, and understand local knowledge. Members engage in a process of inquiry and research to understand the local context, learn about factors impacting the problem, and identify community talents, resources, and assets to mobilize for generating solutions and strategies (community assessments through participatory action research such as mapping, surveys, and one-on-one conversations).

Overview of the Close to Home Approach Domestic Violence Prevention (DVP) Program 2023-2027

- **Talk Phase:** In this phase, the network opens spaces for the sharing of stories and experiences. One by one, these conversations form a shared public analysis of critical issues, while deepening the vision of the changes everyone wants to create. These conversations add energy and attract additional community members to the effort. Leaders convene community members for discussions to raise awareness, foster critical thinking and dialogue, identify solutions, and recruit volunteers (community conversations such as kitchen table conversations, public meetings/spaces, art/storytelling).
- **Build Phase:** In this phase, the network gathers yet more community members in building the teams, plans, skills, and knowledge for designing locally-driven campaigns/actions. This is the practical and detailed work of making bold ideas viable for catalyzing solutions. All actions are tailored to the community and co-created by network members through an exchange of skills and ideas. Leaders facilitate training and team building to support skill and leadership development on key issues related to program development (skill building, network building, project teams, campaign/action development).
- **Act Phase:** In this phase, network members engage the community in various campaigns/actions – bringing community leadership into full view and amplifying the impact of all efforts to date. This phase results in a surge of momentum, with more community members becoming curious, engaged, and ready to act, as an ongoing spirit of social change begins to take form (community campaigns, sustained social change actions).



Credit: Close to Home

Overview of the Close to Home Approach Domestic Violence Prevention (DVP) Program 2023-2027

Trained community leaders organize community activities and events through the four C2H phases to build a network of community members engaged in action and norms change. The duration of the phases can vary greatly depending on the number of people on the teams, how often they meet, how much time they have for planning and implementation, and the complexity of project activities. Phases can and should also overlap with each other and continue throughout the course of strategy implementation; for example, teams can “build” but continue to “talk”.

- Pacing and Timing

The right timeframe for each phase depends on the natural seasons and cycles of the community and what opportunities and needs are discovered throughout the process. However, as a guideline, it generally takes three to four years to sufficiently implement the approach, in a manner that has lasting impact. Within that timeframe, projects will cycle through the phases several times, while experiencing the following exceptions to a typical sequential approach:

- Project teams will cycle back to some phases if needed, such as returning to the Assess phase to collect more information or returning to the Build phase to self-organize around specific projects.
- Project teams may choose to continue some phases while already embarking on the next, such as continuing activities of the Talk phase to gather more momentum in the community.
- Project teams may have different groups working through different phases simultaneously.
- Project teams will cycle around to start the phases anew to deepen and broaden the process.

- Whole Community Engagement

The C2H approach conducts community mobilization by engaging a cross-section of the community. This enables people to develop deep and supportive relationships in which they engage their strongest motivations for social change. Relationships connect people to build power for acting individually and collectively. Three core groups are mobilized to engage with others for the purposes of social change: adults, youth, organization/civic life (that may include other structures and business partners in the community) that touch all levels of

Overview of the Close to Home Approach Domestic Violence Prevention (DVP) Program 2023-2027

the [Social Ecological Model](#) including:

- *Individuals* and their internal transformation
 - *Social networks* and the power of family/friends/neighbors
 - *Local organizations* and the public life of neighborhoods
 - *Societal and governing institutions*
- Network Leadership
Youth and adult leaders, community/organizational leaders, and network members are critical to build networks and movements. Through the community mapping process in the *Assess* phase, key implementers, and influencers such as civic and organizational leaders are identified in the organizing process. There will be varied levels of involvement by network participants. The following are essential elements to the C2H approach:
 - Youth Organizing Team(s)/Network
 - Adult Organizing Team(s)/Network
 - Intergenerational Team(s)/Network (Members from Youth and Adult Teams)
 - In addition, staff organizers will participate actively in community meetings, activities, events, and with organizational partners.
- Network Collaboration and Coalition Building
No one organization, sector or policy can improve economic security and mobility. Policymakers, government agencies, community members, and other entities working together have the collective capacity and responsibility to address the issue. Leaders, network coalitions and partnerships can be best positioned to influence community norms and other community conditions. They can gain greater access to decision-makers and have broader visibility and reach than any single organization could attain on its own. Network leaders and partners bring different approaches and unique strengths to the table, enabling the group to address priority community issues.