



“Moving from Complaint to Possibility...from Planning to Implementation”

Communities of Faith

Recognizing and valuing of the sacred breath within each human being is essential to building relationships that ultimately can reduce violence and increase respect and tolerance for oneself and others. Indeed, practicing spiritual disciplines can help people understand the meaning of the suffering and frustrations of others, channel their anger constructively, and reduce violence. Faith communities have an extremely important role to play in the transformation of communities and are, therefore, asked to do the following:

- **Seek** to reach youth and build their spirituality.
- **Institute** a “youth outreach day” in which communities of faith open their facilities, at least once a month, to encourage their members to meet and interact with youth.
- **Interact** with youth rather than preach “at” them.
- **Establish** safe-havens for youth and families to discuss issues and receive Afro-centric treatment for the reduction of causes that can lead to violence. This effort should include the establishment of study centers that would supplement the educational system, with topics such as African American history and civic leadership. With special emphasis on the African American community and its experiences, such centers also should encourage the creation of multicultural non-sectarian youth group activities.
- **Provide** support and facilities for youth with the goal of keeping youth in school and helping them achieve higher educational success.
- **Open** and expand facilities to the community. Support the establishment of safe zone initiatives. Actively communicate the availability of programs for families and youth in the community.
- **Advocate** for youth and families at all levels of government for legislation, regulations and programs, which promote the health of the community.
- **Collaborate** with street level workers, youth, and schools to teach and practice peace and conflict resolution across geographic areas and faith groups
- **Partner** with schools to conduct/teach anger management, mediation, conflict resolution, negotiation skills and for community rebuilding initiatives.
- **Organize** actions at government facilities to petition and pressure our elected officials to be more responsive to community concerns, needs, and aspirations. Where possible communities of faith should partner with community-based organizations and agencies which have initiated positive actions that impact the community.

- **Seek** assistance from foundations and local and national faith organizations to obtain consulting services and leadership training to address violence in the community.
- **Initiate** forums and trainings within the religious community related to violence prevention and intervention that can be shared with and implemented within the community.
- **Provide** classes to prepare young people for marriage and family.
- **Nurture** non-violent communications as a means of self respect and respect for others both in public and private forums. This model of non-violent communication breaks the hostile pattern of irrational and hostile responses which lead to self violence and violence against others.
- **Restore** the rich tradition of African American spirituality and faith as a strong foundation for promoting values that reestablishes the dignity of people, reconstructs relationships, and reinstate mutual respect, trust, compassion and justice.
- **Reclaim** the spirit and culture of making communities of faith welcoming to *all* people and provide opportunities, through dialogue, prayer and service to eradicate the barriers that keep people and neighborhoods divided, Communities of faith can offer a safe haven for people impacted by the violence in our communities.