REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS LEARNING COLLABORATIVE: ENHANCING VIRGINIA'S SEXUAL AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAMMING
REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS

Virginia’s Sexual and Domestic Violence Agencies (SDVAs) that receive funding from Department of Social Services (VDSS) or Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), and are members of the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance (Action Alliance), are invited to consider this exciting opportunity to join an 18-month Learning Collaborative designed to build agency capacity to apply a social justice framework\(^1\) to intervention and prevention services and programs.

Applications are being accepted until July 13 for the first cohort, which is designed to include up to twenty SDVAs. Agencies are encouraged to thoroughly read the Project Overview before applying. Participation may be limited by space, geographic representation, and other factors. The Project Overview contains the goals of the Underserved Populations Learning Collaborative (UPLC) and illustrates the changes we want to see.

HOW TO APPLY

APPLICATION PROCESS:
- Complete the questions provided in the [online application](#).
- There will be an informational webinar on June 22, 2018 at 10:00am, [register here](#).

QUESTIONS:
Please direct any questions or inquiries about the UPLC project and/or applications to Katie Moffitt (kmoffitt@vsdvalliance.org) or Quan Williams (qwilliams@vsdvalliance.org); both can also be reached at 804-377-0335.

APPLICATION DUE DATE & TIMELINE:
Applications for the first cohort of the UPLC are due by 11:59 pm on Friday, July 13, 2018.

Screening will take place immediately, and selected applicants will be notified by July 19, 2018. Applications will be screened by the statewide UPLC partners for readiness and indications of UPLC Teams that represent diverse leadership across the state.

Project activities will begin August 1, 2018.

\(^1\) Use a Social Justice Framework: Advocates work with an understanding of how layers of oppression and privilege impact survivors, their experiences of violence, and their access to system-based remedies. A social justice lens allows sexual and domestic violence agencies to seek solutions beyond traditional systems, to build relationships within 3-Tier communities, and to provide holistic responses to survivors who may have intersecting and overlapping needs and identities.
UNDERSTANDING LEARNING COLLABORATIVES:
According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, the learning collaborative approach focuses on spreading and adopting best practices across multiple settings and creating changes in organizations that promote the delivery of affective interventions and services.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS LEARNING COLLABORATIVE (UPLC)
The UPLC is committed to ensuring that all survivors of sexual and domestic violence have access to the services they need regardless of demographic or geographic community. Many factors impact the status of an underserved population, such as systemic, social, economic, and/or community barriers to service. The Women of Color Network identifies many of these factors in their 3-tier system of identifying unserved, underserved, and inadequately-served (hereafter referred to as underserved) victims, but some include: race/ethnicity, immigration status, language of origin, faith-based identity, geographic location, sexual orientation, and gender identity/expression. For more information on the Women of Color Network 3-Tier System, visit www.wocninc.org/toolkit/.

According to the 2014-2015 Virginia Statewide Needs Assessment on Underserved Victims of Sexual and Domestic Violence conducted by the Virginia Partnership for Community Defined Solutions to Violence Against Women: Grants to Encourage Arrest and Enforcement of Protection Orders Program (GEAP), survivors and service providers identified common barriers to services including:

- Personal or historical experience of racism, ageism, anti-immigration policies/attitudes, sexism, and/or homophobia on the part of service providers and systems.
- Lack of culturally representative service providers.

Additional research\(^2\) shows that underserved populations experience sexual and domestic violence differently than the general population which translates into barriers to victims’ access to support and services, and a greater impact on their overall health and well-being. Commonalities among underserved populations include:

- The occurrence of sexual and domestic violence at rates equal to or greater than the general population.
- Systemic and cultural barriers to accessing victim and survivor services including denial of services and/or not being able to access services due to geographic inaccessibility, linguistic barriers, lack of physical access to facilities/services, mistrust of law enforcement, fear of deportation, and/or lack of culturally sensitive services.

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This research highlights the need for a broader array of culturally-specific sexual and domestic violence services with an emphasis on services that reduce barriers.

Concerted efforts to reach marginalized people have increased throughout the nation through unique strategies and new partnerships. Building on this national momentum and increased knowledge about ways to better reach underserved communities, the UPLC will support SDVAs to become stronger allies to underserved populations and to promote access to appropriate comprehensive services.

MISSION OF THE UPLC:
To support local SDVAs to become strong allies to underserved populations and to promote access to culturally-responsive, comprehensive services.

PRINCIPLES OF THE UPLC:
This project is built upon nine foundational principles. These principles express the overarching values that must guide all work in adopting and implementing evidence-based practices in responding to sexual and domestic violence. They are interrelated and work together in a dynamic, synergistic way.

1. Sexual and domestic violence affects all populations regardless of their faith, culture, race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, language, ability, or geographic location.

2. The voices and active participation of underserved populations are critical components in the shift to accessible, meaningful services.
3. Providing sexual and domestic violence services that consider the linguistic, cultural, or other population-specific needs of victims is a trauma-informed method of working with people who have experienced violence.

4. All survivors of sexual and domestic violence deserve access to the highest quality of services that considers the full spectrum of their identities.

5. Child and youth victims of sexual and domestic violence from underserved populations benefit from the same level of focused, culturally specific services as do adults.

6. Services provided in a client’s primary language by a bi-cultural advocate represents the highest level of service provision. Interpretation provided by a neutral, adult, non-family member is an alternative when needed.

7. Collaborations with population-specific organizations invite diverse perspectives, beliefs, and expertise to the table.

8. SDVAs that reflect diverse populations will better serve diverse populations than those that do not reflect the community.

9. The vulnerability of experiencing sexual and domestic violence is enhanced for survivors who are also a member of an underserved population. Their courage in seeking services is acknowledged by all SDVAs.

**APPROACH TO LEARNING:**

The UPLC’s approach to learning and change will be strength-based, reflecting the approach we know works best with the survivors. As part of the UPLC, SDVAs will determine what works well in their organization, what they look like at their best, what’s great about what they are doing, and how to take the best from their past and use it in the future.

Knowledge lives within all of us and the UPLC will be rooted in honoring this knowledge while co-creating new knowledge together with our cohort. The UPLC will also encourage all of us to challenge our own assumptions, patterns of thinking, and ways of doing the work.

The UPLC is committed to:

- Honoring the knowledge, skills, abilities, and experiences of all UPLC participants.
- Creating hope.
- Understanding that people learn differently (some learning styles include: visual, auditory, kinesthetic) and we seek to honor all learning styles.

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Recognizing that mistakes are important steps in the learning journey and are to be expected.

Fostering and cultivating a community where learners feel safe and supported.

Sharing and developing knowledge is a partnership between coaches, subject matter experts, and UPLC participants.

GOALS OF UPLC:

REFLECTION ON INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL BARRIERS

- SDVAs will begin a continuous and evolving process of using internal reflection to inform organizational change aimed at reducing the internal and external barriers that block survivors from underserved populations from accessing services.
- SDVAs will use the tools provided for immediate use and continued growth beyond the 18-month learning collaborative.
- SDVAs will conduct reflection and change at all organizational and community levels.

ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

- SDVAs will incorporate culturally-responsive, population-specific, trauma-informed practices into all programs and services.
- SDVAs will integrate changes at all levels of the agency and will shift the organizational approach toward serving all survivors. Examples include:
  - Comprehend necessary changes
  - Mission
  - Hiring strategies
  - Input/voices of underserved populations

ENGAGING UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES / STRATEGY BUILDING

- Underserved populations will be at the center, informing agency strategies.
- SDVAs will develop partnerships with underserved communities as an integral part of their process of reflection, transformation, and engagement.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of the UPLC, learners will build on and expand their ability to:

- examine how layers of oppression and privilege impact survivors and agency staff;
- examine how layers of oppression and privilege impact people's experience with violence and access to system-based remedies;
- analyze how agency policies and practices may create barriers to services;
- evaluate the extent to which agencies meet the needs of underserved populations;
- apply agency decision-making processes that consider the impact on underserved populations;
- form relationships with underserved populations and culturally-specific organizations;
- identify and allocate resources (people, time, funding, etc.) to support, and be in community with, underserved populations;
- identify or develop effective strategies and services to meet the needs of underserved populations; and
- conduct periodic community needs assessments to gain an understanding of who is being underserved and the services gaps that exist in the community.

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The UPLC is expected to include three statewide learning sessions focused on the learning objectives and spaced over the 18-month project period. Each of these sessions will be followed by a regional debrief and implementation session with other SDVAs in your geographic area. On-site training and technical assistance will be available throughout the entire project. A variety of distance learning and sharing opportunities will be built into the project on topics of interest to cohort participants, including webinars, podcasts, and chat sessions. SDVAs will be asked to identify a UPLC Team of two to four individuals to consistently participate in the statewide and regional sessions; all staff and volunteers (including Board members) are encouraged to be a part of on-site trainings and technical assistance and to participate in the distance learning and sharing offered at your agency.
UPLC PROJECT PARAMETERS & EXPECTATIONS

ELIGIBILITY:
SDVAs (including sexual assault crisis centers, domestic violence programs, and dual agencies) in Virginia that are funded by VDSS or DCJS, and are members of the Action Alliance.

TIMELINE:
Cohort members will participate for 18-months:
August 2018 to January 2020.
(Note: A second cohort, which will have a separate application process, will open in late 2019 and will run from January 2020 through June 2021.)

BUDGET:
Each cohort agency will receive a $15,000 stipend to support participation and travel to learning collaborative events. These funds will be distributed by the Action Alliance in the sum of $2,500 for every three-month period of active participation during the total 18-month period, as detailed in the section below.

PROJECT SCOPE & COMMITMENTS:
Participating SDVAs should complete the following prior to applying:

- Obtain approval/confirmation for participation, if your SDVA policy or protocol requires advance approval or leadership confirmation for participation.
- Identify team members (see below for guidance).

Participating SDVAs must meet the following commitments during the project period:

- Work with UPLC Coaches to complete an assessment at the beginning of the project.
- Complete additional work in preparation for in-person activities (Pre-work Phase).
- Participate in three rounds of the following learning collaborative model:
  - Send the agency team to a two-day learning collaborative training.
  - Send the agency team (and any additional staff) to regional network gatherings.
  - Complete all Action Period assignments.
  - Participate in training and technical assistance with the UPLC Coaches.
- Engage in ongoing evaluation and assessment of the project.

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UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS LEARNING COLLABORATIVE | REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS & PROJECT OVERVIEW
UPLC TEAM STRUCTURE

REQUIREMENTS:
Each SDVA’s UPLC Team must include at least two people and may not include more than four people. (Note: while teams will travel to learning collaborative trainings, all members of the agency will be given opportunities to contribute to the process.)

The team must include the Executive Director, or for SDVAs that are housed in a public or private non-profit umbrella agency, the Director of the sexual and/or domestic violence services and programs.

It’s also important to ensure representation from other key roles within an agency, that may include: crisis response, advocacy, shelter, administration, outreach/community engagement, prevention, or members of the Board of Directors.

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN BUILDING YOUR UPLC TEAM:
The UPLC Team will have significant responsibility for building capacity within their organization. This entails working through challenging processes that include reflection on barriers to access for underserved populations in your community, as well as the development of new strategies, policies, activities, and community partnerships that will support trauma-informed, culturally responsive practices throughout agency work. The UPLC statewide partners ask that SDVAs consider two important factors when selecting UPLC Team members: Leadership and Diversity.

Leadership
Select staff who are both formal and informal leaders within the agency or have connections in the community. Formal leaders may include team or project managers, coordinators, or supervisors. Informal leaders are individuals that people turn to or listen to on issues—in this case, issues related to being truly accessible and in partnership with marginalized members of your community.

A variety of leadership voices can ensure wider participation and adoption of the project by staff and the community.

Diversity
Invite staff who are members of diverse and/or underserved communities to be a part of the team. Consider a wide range of diversity:
- Personal identity (including age, gender identity, race, sexual orientation).
- Personal and family experiences (including immigration, language access, surviving violence).
- Living with different abilities (physical, intellectual, developmental).
- Living with historical trauma.
- Cultural experiences (including faith traditions, geographical communities, ethnic culture).

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When striving to create a diverse team, be mindful of the burden that is often placed upon staff who belong to underserved and oppressed communities to become the "token members" in processes. This is a burden for individuals who are asked to be the "one" to speak for all underserved and oppressed people and/or the "one" to challenge privilege as it appears in the process.

**UPLC PARTNERS:**
This initiative is supported through funding and expertise from VDSS, DCJS, and the Action Alliance. These three partner agencies are jointly responsible for designing the Learning Collaborative and each will be actively engaged throughout the Learning Collaborative, building statewide capacity alongside SDVAs.

Guidance is also provided by the Virginia Underserved Populations Advisory Committee (VUPAC). It is the vision of the VUPAC that sexual and domestic violence services are culturally specific, culturally appropriate, trauma-informed, and accessible to all survivors. This requires the voices and experiences of people who have been historically oppressed and marginalized to be at the center, informing our work.

VDSS and DCJS are supporting a team of staff at the Action Alliance to coordinate the Learning Collaborative and ensure there is sufficient support for cohort members. The Action Alliance team includes several staff (Kristi VanAudenhove, Executive Director; Angela Blount, Member Services Director; Kat Monusky, Prevention Director; Cortney Calixte, Training Institute Coordinator; and Laurel Winsor, Events Coordinator), including two new dedicated positions, UPLC Coaches (Quan Williams and Katie Moffitt), to work directly with cohort members throughout the process.

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