

CHAPTER 3 -- CROSS-CULTURAL INTERVIEWING

Chapter Highlights

Communicating effectively in a cross-cultural setting is a challenging skill to develop. However, possessing this skill ensures that battered immigrants will be able to obtain crucial domestic violence assistance. This chapter suggests the following strategies for facilitating this process:

❑ **ADDRESSING BARRIERS AND CLIENT CONCERNS (FROM CH. 2)**

- ✓ Acknowledging immigration status concerns by the client.
- ✓ Identifying resources and allowing clients to choose which services to utilize.
- ✓ Understanding fears that the client has about the police or the court system,
- ✓ Screening the client for additional trauma and counseling needs.
- ✓ Recognizing the difficulties that immigrant clients may have when accessing the legal system.
- ✓ Developing culturally appropriate safety plans.

❑ **COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES**

- ✓ Asking open-ended questions that allow the battered immigrant to identify her needs, concerns, and fears from her own cultural context.
- ✓ Practicing active listening and being aware of nonverbal cues by the client.
- ✓ Respecting the client's decision to continue residing with her abuser and offering her access to protection orders, support groups, and safety planning.

❑ **LANGUAGE ISSUES**

- ✓ Hiring staff who speak the immigrant client's language.
- ✓ Communicating with immigrants who have limited English capabilities.
- ✓ Creating an interpreter program (through volunteers, on-call staff, or AT&T).
- ✓ Special considerations for the advocate when working with interpreters - confidentiality issues, training, selection, and techniques for speaking through interpreters during client interviews.

CHAPTER 3

CROSS-CULTURAL INTERVIEWING

by Leslye Orloff, Rachel Little, Magdalena Spiewla, and Megan McKnight

INTRODUCTION

Cross-cultural communication is defined as the process through which staff and clients of different cultures exchange information in a respectful and equitable manner. In an agency setting, this involves staff determining how domestic violence has affected a battered immigrant and then working with her to develop solutions. Communicating with battered immigrant women requires the development of certain skills which should be learned in conjunction with cultural competency training. In many cases, foreign language skills are crucial. This chapter will first review some of the material from the previous chapter that will play a role in client intake sessions and meetings. Secondly, it will explain helpful interviewing techniques that build trust between the staff member and the immigrant client. Finally, language issues will be explored in terms of building staff language skills, communicating with clients with limited English abilities, and hiring interpreters.

ADDRESSING BARRIERS AND CLIENT CONCERNS

While meeting with a client for an intake or to do case management, it is important that staff be mindful of the information that they received during cultural competency training. It is helpful to use the following checklist:

- 1) **Immigration Concerns:**¹
 - Discuss with the battered immigrant client your program's confidentiality requirements and explain to her that shelter programs are open to her regardless of what her immigration status is. Assure the client that your agency is not required to ask about immigration status and does not report information disclosed by battered immigrants to the INS.
 - Allow the client to decide whether to self-disclose her immigration status. If she discloses that she is undocumented, determine whether she qualifies for VAWA immigration relief or a battered spouse waiver and explain these laws to her (See Chapters 2 and 8 for more information).

¹See Leti Volpp and Leni Marin. *Working With Battered Immigrant Women: A Handbook to Make Services Accessible*. Family Violence Prevention Fund. 19-20 (no date).

Let her know that your agency can work in conjunction with a pro bono immigration attorney to assist her.

- Some clients may be afraid to tell the truth to you about their immigration status even after receiving reassurances from you. It is therefore a good idea for the advocate to review the primary immigration options open to battered immigrants (including VAWA, the battered spouse waiver, and gender-based asylum) so that the client is aware of all options and rights that she may have. Offer to refer her to an immigration attorney who can fully explore these options with her.
- Explain to her that if she already has legal permanent residency or citizenship, neither her batterer nor anyone else can have the INS take this status away.
- If the client fears that her batterer will report her to the INS, contact an immigration attorney willing to consult with her, explain her rights, and help her develop a safety plan to protect her if the INS arrests her.
- Explain to her that many forms of help are available to stop the violence without regard to her immigration status. These remedies include protection orders, child custody orders, criminal prosecution of her abuser, shelter, community-based emergency services, emergency medical care, and other community/church-based resources.

2) **Resource and Referral Information:**

- Keep your resource and referral list close by so that you can use it during safety planning and help immigrant clients find assistance that your program may not provide.
- As your client explains what is going on, make a list of problems that the client identifies. In making this list, initially concentrate on hearing and listing problems, fears, and barriers that the client identifies. If potential solutions come to mind, jot them down. Review the list with the client and help her identify possible solutions for each problem, fear, and barrier.
- Draw upon assistance available from the legal system, your program, general social services available to help battered women, resources that may be available from programs serving immigrants, church resources, and community resources to help with food, clothing, and shelter.

- Work with the battered immigrant to identify resources and support persons she may know who could help her. This is very important because it can help empower a battered immigrant to recognize what resources she brings to your program that can help her. This may include her friends, family members, co-workers, or church community.
- Allow your client to choose which resources she feels would most adequately meet her needs and make sure that she can access immigrant-based services if these are available in your community.

3) **Be honest with the client about the rights and risks she faces if she involves the police or court system.**

- Inform the client that she has the right to obtain protection from the police and the court system regardless of her immigration status.
- Explain that she may seek a protection order, custody, child support, and a divorce from the civil or family courts, and that such actions will not result in either her or her abuser's deportation.
- If your client is in danger, encourage her to put her safety and that of her family first by obtaining a protection order or calling the police. However, respect her decision not to pursue legal remedies if she does not feel that she is ready or does not feel she can do so safely.
- Explain how a police report can help her obtain legal protection, custody of her children, and possibly legal immigration status.
- Find out how police, judges, or prosecutors in your community treat immigrant crime victims. If a member of the police department or a member of the judiciary chooses to inquire into the immigration status of victims rather than prosecute abusers, you should be aware of this and advise clients accordingly. Such practices are contrary to the intent of the Violence Against Women Act (see Chapter 13 of this manual for strategies to counter this problem).
- The client should also be informed that her abuser could be arrested if she calls the police. If he is convicted of a crime and is a non-citizen, this conviction could lead to his being placed in deportation proceedings.²

²Unless the abuser has been previously ordered deported by an immigration judge, he will first be entitled to an immigration hearing concerning his deportation. It can take months for a deportation hearing to be scheduled and for the abuser to potentially lose his lawful permanent residency status. A VAWA-eligible battered immigrant should nonetheless file a self-petition as soon as possible so that her petition

She should also know that if her abuser is a legal permanent resident, a domestic violence conviction could cause him to be deported or make him ineligible to become a citizen (see Chapter 10 for more information).³

4) **Screen the client to identify whether she might benefit from mental health counseling or treatment.**

- A battered immigrant may experience psychological harm both related to the domestic violence and potentially to her migration to the United States, to post traumatic stress disorder, to political oppression in her home country, or to issues such as female genital mutilation.
- Let the client know that anything she shares with you is confidential and that you want to help her heal herself.
- Explain to her what counseling options are available to her so that she can take advantage of them when she is ready. Identify interpreters to help her access these programs. In some countries, counseling and mental health services may be reserved for those persons who are considered to be mentally ill. Thus, it is useful to explain to the client what counseling is and what it can help the client accomplish. Let her know that if she qualifies for VAWA relief, participating in counseling may strengthen her case (she can submit affidavits from her counselor and therapy may improve her ability to recall incidents of violence to include in her petition).
- Work with the client to determine what effect witnessing or experiencing violence had on her children. Explain to her that her children can also be referred to counseling programs that will help them.

5) **Be aware of the difficulties that a battered immigrant women may experience when obtaining legal assistance.**

- Explain to her what a protection order is and how to obtain one so that she is prepared for what to expect when she goes to court.
- Explain that she can obtain a protection order even if she plans to continue living with her abuser.

can be approved before her abuser loses his status and renders her ineligible for VAWA relief.

³ *Assisting Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Abuse: VAWA Immigration Relief, Public Assistance, and Other Important Concepts*. Centro Legal. 2 (1998).

- Explain the standard and creative relief that she can seek in her protection order (see Chapter 9 for more information).
- Explain to her what a mutual protection order is and the steps that she will need to take to ensure that a mutual protection is not issued in her case. This is particularly important if these are issued frequently in your state (see Chapter 9 for more information).
- Explain that she can file for a protection order without having to pay any fees. If there are legal or filing fees associated with her immigration or family law case, help her work out a payment plan to cover these costs if fee waivers cannot be obtained.
- Explain to her that obtaining a protection order may take a long time because the court will have to arrange for and perhaps wait for an interpreter.
- Seek out low cost transportation possibilities for her if she has difficulty getting to the courthouse or INS on her own.⁴

6) Develop effective safety plans with the client:

- Make sure that long and short term safety plans that are geared toward immigrant women are available so that the client knows what important papers and items she should try to take with her when she is ready to leave her batterer.

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

When a battered immigrant arrives at your shelter or program, it is important that you be nonjudgmental, that you explain all options clearly, that you allow her to decide which options she wants to pursue, and that you respect her wishes. Your client may feel extremely apprehensive about disclosing private and what she considers to be shameful information by admitting and describing the abuse she experienced. Reassure the client that the information she shares with you and any agency interpreters will be kept confidential.

As a survival mechanism, most women tend to minimize the abuse that they have suffered at the hands of their spouse. If battered immigrant women receive culturally sensitive encouragement, they will volunteer more information to the

⁴*Overcoming Cultural Barriers in Working With Battered Immigrant Women*. AYUDA, Inc. 4 (1998).

interviewer. The more information an advocate has, the more likely it is that appropriate remedies for the battered immigrant will be identified. There are several techniques that can be used to gather this information while building trust.

First, encourage women to speak extensively of their experiences by asking open-ended questions. This gives a woman the freedom to describe what she needs and fears from her own cultural perspective. Be sure to ask follow-up questions aimed at helping her identify problems she would need to overcome if she left her abuser and wanted to establish a safe independent life for herself and her children. Do not ask questions beginning with the word "Why?" as these may be perceived as threatening and judgmental by the client.

Examples of open-ended questions include:

What do you want?

What are you afraid of?

What are your concerns about your partner's reaction?

Do you want to try to leave?

Under what conditions do you think it would be the most safe for you to leave?

If you were to leave, are there things that would make it difficult for you to leave?

What are your safety needs, fears, concerns while you continue to live with your partner?

What are your safety needs if you plan to leave your partner?

What are the methods your partner might use to get you to return to him?

What are the means your partner might use to continue to control your life?

How do you want me to help you?

Second, advocates should ask battered immigrants about specific actions the abuser took against her. Abuse comes in many forms: physical, economic, psychological, sexual, and emotional. This method of questioning helps identify all forms of abuse a woman may have experienced. Women of different cultural backgrounds may not necessarily label certain actions as abuse, even if they have in fact suffered them. Domestic violence and its vocabulary may be unfamiliar to them, so that if asked about spousal abuse, women will understate or omit actions that qualify as abuse. Asking about specific actions will avoid this dilemma. Be sure to follow up positive responses with questions that will provide the battered immigrant with the opportunity to describe fully what happened. Your goal should be to obtain a full history of the violence, power, and control, and to help the battered immigrant work through potential solutions.

Examples of questions about specific actions include:

Were you ever told you were stupid?

Has he ever embarrassed you in front of others?

Has he neglected you when you were sick?

Has he threatened to harm someone or something you care about?
Has he threatened to kill himself if you didn't do what he wanted?
Has he destroyed things in the house?
Did your partner ever harm your pets?
Has he ever hurt you?
Has he ever hurt your children?
Has he blamed you for the behavior that hurt you or your children?
Has he denied incidents of abuse?
Has he told you that no one would ever want you?
Did he tell you that you could never make it on your own?
Has he tried to control you?
Has he claimed that no one would believe you?
Has he tried to keep you away from other people?
Has he checked on you or followed you?
Did your partner ever show you, use or threaten to use a weapon?
Did your partner ever threaten to have you deported?
Did your partner ever threaten not to file immigration papers on your behalf?
Did your partner ever threaten to take your children away?
Did your partner ever hit you, hurt you, or pull your hair?
Has your partner ever forced you to have sex with him when you did not want to?
Has your partner ever forced you to have sex with another person when you did not want to?
Are you afraid of your partner?

During an interview with a battered immigrant woman, the advocate should carefully and empathetically listen to her answers and involve her in developing solutions to her situation. This may be a challenge for women who have never had the opportunity to make their own decisions, but encourage the client to set her own agenda. Be sensitive to the client's feelings and pay attention to the manner in which she speaks. Practice reflective listening by repeating what the client has said for clarification, rephrasing statements, and reflecting ideas and values. Be aware of nonverbal cues that the client provides. Take some time for silence if the client needs a break. Help clients to calm down as it may be harder to understand them if they are upset, but do allow the client to vent her feelings, especially if she has had to repress them for a long period of time. Remember that you may be the first person to hear about the abuse she has experienced and remind her that it is not her fault.⁵

After a battered immigrant woman tells her story, it is appropriate to share the potential remedies that may be helpful to her, including civil and criminal legal options. If the client feels that she is in immediate danger, she should be encouraged to obtain a temporary and/or civil protection order. If the client decides to proceed, make sure

⁵See Intern Training Manual. AYUDA/Clinica Legal Latina. Updated Summer 1998.

that the protection order is crafted in order to address as many potential areas of ongoing conflict between the victim and the abuser as possible.⁶ Listen to the woman's needs, fears, and concerns to identify appropriate forms of relief.⁷ (See Chapter 9 on the Creative Use of Civil Protection Orders for more information).

It is important to note that a client may sit and listen to you, but not understand what you are trying to explain to her. Out of politeness or fear, she may not ask questions or ask for clarification. You may be seen as an authority figure to the client and questioning authority is often frowned upon in many countries. To counter this problem, ask the client to repeat what is being said and stop frequently to gauge her comprehension. This is particularly important when explaining a client's legal rights, which may be difficult concepts for the client to comprehend as the U.S. legal system may differ dramatically from the legal system in her home country.

Finally, many immigrant women who come to your shelter or domestic violence program may not be ready to leave their batterers. In many cases, it is more difficult for a battered immigrant to leave an abusive relationship than it may be for other women. She may fear the social stigma of leaving her spouse more than the violence itself. People she trusts and turns to for help may encourage her to be a better wife and endure her suffering. She may be financially dependent on her abuser and may fear his anger toward her if she flees. She may be dependent on her abuser for immigration papers and may in fact have a case in which it will be much easier for her to obtain her immigration relief through her spouse. This will be particularly true for battered immigrants who have difficulty proving that they will experience extreme hardship if forced to return to their home countries (See Chapter 8 for more information).

Domestic violence advocates should validate these concerns and be aware of the difficulties that the battered immigrant faces. If she chooses to return to her batterer, work on safety planning strategies with her and assure her that your program will be available to provide legal and social services to her whenever she is ready. These safety plans should be used by the battered immigrant if and when another incident of abuse occurs. The client should be encouraged to identify whom she can turn to for help, be it friends, neighbors, or your agency. The client should decide where she will go if she does decide to leave and learn about what she will need to take with her. By having this information, the client is empowered to decide when and how she will leave a violent relationship if she has not already decided to do so.

⁶Leslye E. Orloff. *Effective Advocacy for Domestic Violence Victims: Role of the Nurse-Midwife*. 41 J. NURSE-MIDWIFERY 473, 484 (1996).

⁷See Leslye E. Orloff and Vonetta Brown. *Use of Creative Protection Orders to Better Help Battered Immigrant and Migrant Women*. (no date).

LANGUAGE ISSUES

For many immigrant women, communities without multilingual services for domestic violence victims are simply communities without services. To ensure that battered immigrants can access your services, agency staff need to be prepared to speak the client's language (if possible), use simple English (if the client has some knowledge of English and feels comfortable using this language), or work with a n interpreter. In this section, all three options will be discussed.

Whenever possible, it is highly advisable that staff be available who can speak the battered immigrant's language during interviews.⁸ If the client sees that she has a connection with a staff member through a common language, she will often be more willing to share information and will feel more comfortable about seeking help. The fastest and least expensive method for ensuring this is to hire bilingual staff as it is much easier to train someone about domestic violence than to teach them about a new language and culture. We recommend that as vacancies open in your agency, you place a priority on hiring staff with language skills who will help you to better serve significant language minority populations in your area. Until you can hire bilingual staff, consider developing the basic language skills of existing staff. Pay for language classes for your current staff members or provide paid leave time so that staff can enroll in language classes during business hours. Invite a language instructor to conduct classes at the agency. The choice of the language can be determined by the volume of immigrant clients and the number of current staff who already possess language skills. You may also want to have a volunteer come in and teach the staff basic language skills and "survival" expressions as an intermediary step.

As language skills take time to develop and interpreters may not be available on a 24-hour basis, staff and volunteers should be trained to communicate with persons who have limited English skills. Many battered immigrants, particularly those who have been in the United States for a longer period of time, understand rudimentary English. To try to get your message across:⁹

- Communicate visually by using pictures, signs, diagrams, and symbols.
- Demonstrate what you want to communicate.
- Slow down your speech and pause frequently.

⁸Leti Volpp and Leni Marin. *Working With Battered Immigrant Women: A Handbook to Make Services Accessible*. Family Violence Prevention Fund. 9 (no date).

⁹This section adapted from Gardenswarz and Rowe. *Managing Diversity*. (1993).

- Summarize often.
- Keep your message simple.
- Avoid slang, jargon, and idiomatic expressions.
- Repeat your main message. Use different words and check if further clarification is needed.
- Recognize that a client's limited English capabilities are not reflective of her mental capacity.
- Speak in short sentences and omit unnecessary words.
- Do not raise your voice or speak louder. This will not help and may make the battered immigrant feel uncomfortable or afraid.
- Smile often, but don't laugh as it might be perceived as an affront to the client's dignity.

If a service provider and client cannot find a common language, the program needs to solicit the services of interpreters. Moreover, while some immigrant women may be proficient in English, they may be overwhelmed by the emotional difficulty of having to relate their story and may feel that they need to use their first language. Recruiting multilingual interpreters makes this possible.

To develop an interpreter program at your shelter, program staff should first decide to make funds available to pay a core staff of professional interpreters or a staff of native speakers who are recruited and paid as needed on an hourly basis.¹⁰ If funds are not initially available, seek funding to pay for interpreters. In the meantime, volunteer interpreters can be an excellent resource. To locate interpreters, call professional interpreting services in your community to see if members of their staff are willing to do volunteer work for your shelter.

Investigate the language resources of universities, law schools, community colleges, and the local American Red Cross. Make a list of all the organizations that work in your area or within the state with linguistic, racial and cultural minority populations. These could include churches and religious organizations, cultural organizations, language associations, community medical clinics, pregnancy programs, high-risk family programs, youth programs, ESL classes, legal advocacy agencies, women's organizations affiliated with religious congregations or cultural/ethnic community centers, immigrant associations, homeless shelters, GED programs, mental health programs, and community organizations. You may also look to individuals with technical or specific language expertise such as nurses, doctors, police officers,

¹⁰The Asian Women's Shelter hires interpreters through its Multilingual Access Model (MLAM). Through MLAM, bilingual participants are recruited and receive intensive domestic violence training. They are then placed in an on-call pool and are paid by the hour to translate as language needs arise. This model should be replicated by other programs.

emergency dispatch staff, child and adult protection services staff, social workers, educators, and attorneys.

If resources are limited in your area or if a battered woman seeks assistance from your program who speaks a language that is not common in your community, ask for the assistance of state domestic violence or immigrant coalitions. Interpreters can be utilized on a speaker phone during intake sessions and meetings if this is your only option. The AT&T Language Line provides translation services in 160 languages, 24 hours a day as well. These services can be used for hotline needs or can be used to assist with in-person interviews. The Language Line can be very expensive as AT&T charges by the minute and interpreting in more esoteric languages costs more. If your program does not have the funds to pay for this type of assistance, try to utilize the potential local interpreting resources discussed above.

- Call (800) 752-0093 to reach an AT&T Language Line account manager in order to discuss your specific interpretation needs.
- To listen to a free recorded demonstration of AT&T's language line services, call (800) 321-0301.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline has bilingual Spanish-speaking advocates taking calls at all times and has contracted with AT&T language line services to communicate with non-English and non-Spanish speaking women. If your program provides shelter services and a woman arrives with whom you absolutely cannot communicate, the operator at the National Domestic Violence Hotline can speak directly with the client and provide her with basic information in her native language. The Hotline can also assist with referrals and provide brief translation so that the advocate can identify the emergency needs of the client. **However, the Hotline is not equipped to offer professional interpreting services and cannot translate for your agency during entire intake sessions or client meetings.** The phone number for the Hotline is (800) 799-SAFE (7233).

The battered woman's children or her companion **ABSOLUTELY SHOULD NOT** be used as interpreters. This is extremely dangerous for the client. The woman's companion may in fact be her abuser, in which case his/her acting as an interpreter could be dangerous to her. If the interpreter is a friend or a child, s/he may not be reliable or the client may be too intimidated to speak about her situation in front of her/him. Even if the companion is not the abuser, this person may be biased and filter the dialogue with the victim through his/her own perceptions. The victim may edit the conversation or be inhibited from speaking because she fears gossip, wants to protect her children, or is concerned that what she says will be repeated to the abuser. Children should not be used as interpreters because the woman may wish to protect them by censoring and editing their conversations. Children of immigrant abuse

victims, just as all children of abuse victims, may also be traumatized by the abuse or fear punishment from the abuser for helping the victimized parent.¹¹ If a victim has brought someone with her to translate and the shelter or program has no translation services of their own, advocates should consider calling the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Over the hotline, they can seek brief interpretation assistance to ensure that the interpreter is someone who the client is comfortable with and feels safe with.

When interviewing potential interpreters, ask screening questions to make sure that they are sensitive to domestic violence issues, are impartial, and are willing to sign a confidentiality agreement. This is particularly important if the immigrant community is small and if your agency is going to use volunteer interpreters. On a case by case basis, determine whether the interpreter has any relationship with the victim or the batterer to prevent bias or conflicts of interest.

Once interpreters are selected, they should receive the type of intensive training on domestic violence you provide to agency staff and volunteers. This will ensure that interpreters are comfortable in a shelter or agency setting and have experience with the vocabulary of domestic violence and the laws that apply to this issue. They should also receive training on basic immigration law provisions that affect battered immigrants, and become familiar with community resources that the agency uses to supplement its services to battered women. Interpreters may be asked to accompany immigrant clients to social services and counseling appointments, so it is helpful for them to understand how these programs operate.

During actual client interviews, the advocate should:

- Try to select an interpreter from your volunteer pool who is appropriate in terms of gender, age, class, etc.
- Look for interpreters who speak the same dialect as the client in order to avoid misunderstandings.
- Clarify to the client that both advocates and interpreters are bound by agency confidentiality rules.
- Speak through the interpreter using simple, jargon-free sentences to make translation easier.

¹¹See *Improving Accessibility of Your Program's Services to Battered Immigrant Women*. AYUDA, Inc. (1998).

- Avoid colloquialism, idioms, slang and similes as they are confusing and often impossible to translate.
- Look and speak directly to the client as the interpreter translates. In most cases, eye contact is crucial in creating trust and a connection that encourages the battered woman to share her story.
- Speak slowly and pause often to allow the interpreter time to translate.
- Ask the battered immigrant to answer questions slowly, to break after every few sentences, and to concentrate on what she plans to say next while the interpreter translates.
- Listen to the client as she speaks, even if the advocate does not understand the language. This shows respect and allows the advocate to note the immigrant client's body language.
- Have the interpreter ask the client to repeat the information communicated if you do not understand what has just been translated or need clarification. Allow plenty of time for interviews with clients and interpreters as these may take longer to complete.¹²

Although the above suggestions are effective for immigrant clients from most cultures, this list is not universally applicable to all immigrant women. For example, in some cultures, maintaining eye contact with the client may be viewed as disrespectful. If there is any question as to how to interact with a client from a particular culture, it is advisable to contact the anthropology or sociology department of your local university, immigrant rights groups, or area cultural organizations for advice. The travel sections of bookstores or libraries may have helpful books on customs for various countries as well.

It is important to note that interpretation is a difficult skill. Just because a person is bilingual does not mean that he or she can necessarily interpret. Untrained persons may filter what they hear and interpret concepts instead of the actual words spoken. This can change the connotation of what is being said. Statements may also lose meaning if the interpreter is not conscious of differences in vocabulary that may exist in a language. For example, the Spanish spoken in Cuba may differ greatly from what one would hear in Spain. To minimize these problems, use professional interpreters whenever possible and repeat back to the battered immigrant key information communicated to ensure your proper understanding.

¹²See Rohini Anand and Laura K Shipler. *Cultural Considerations in Assisting Victims of Crime*. National Multicultural Institute. (no date).

Interpreters who are well-trained and supportive of your agency's services are a valuable resource. In conjunction with advocates, they provide important services, ensure that the needs of clients are being met, offer support to immigrant victims, and protect them from further violence. Finally, the presence of interpreters informs the immigrant community that their domestic violence needs can be addressed and are recognized by your organization.

CONCLUSION

Bridging the communication gap with a client from a culture that differs from your own is both challenging and rewarding. Not only does your agency benefit from the increased cultural diversity of residents and staff, but advocates are empowered to help save the lives of traditionally marginalized battered women. If an immigrant woman knows that she can come to a shelter where her language and decision-making skills will be respected, she will be less likely to return to her batterer. Shelters and domestic violence programs are therefore encouraged to increase their language and cross-cultural communication skills. Use creativity and ingenuity if resources are not readily available in your community and share your language resources with other agencies. Partner with a local immigrant services organization to jointly seek funding so that both programs can better serve battered immigrants. In this manner, battered immigrant women will never have to worry about being unable to access desperately needed domestic violence services.