

# The Definition of Culture on Domestic Violence Service Provisions

The current policy discussion on domestic violence in Santa Clara County commonly only uses race or ethnicity to describe a survivor who is a person of color. While race or ethnicity is part of the definition of culture, neither addresses all aspects and instead serves to undermine the totality of a survivor's experience. The following definition adopted from the work of Dr. Sujata Warrior<sup>11</sup>; serves to advance this dialogue and seeks to achieve culturally competent services for the survivors of domestic violence.

At the September 2, 2005 meeting, upon the recommendation of its Immigrant Survivor's Committee, the Santa Clara County Domestic Violence Council adopted the following definition of culture:

*"A critical definition of culture refers to shared experience or commonalities that have developed in relation to changing social and political contexts based on Race, Ethnicity, Sexuality, Gender, Religion, Age, Class, Immigration status, Disability status, Language, within the historical context of oppression."*

Cultures differ in their values and beliefs about gender roles and intimate relationships. Working with clients from cultures different from one's own always involves a process of learning about the norms, values, and beliefs of the other cultural group. Cultural difference is not an excuse for physical battering or psychological abuse, which do not correspond with any culture's ideals for intimate relationships.

Warrior, Sujata, Ph.D, Outreach to Underserved Communities, "It's in Their Culture:" Culture, Competency, Outreach and Violence Against Women, March 28-29, 2003 Workshop, San Jose, CA.

---

<sup>1</sup> Warrior, Sujata, Ph.D, Outreach to Underserved Communities, "It's in Their Culture:" Culture, Competency, Outreach and Violence Against Women, March 28-29, 2003 Workshop, San Jose, CA.