

through donations and grants, some in collaboration with other agencies.

Asked how the funding picture squares with the Network's avowed support for both cultural competency and extending services to under-served populations, Waterhouse says she's confident that the decisions will be "based on core values and guiding principles rather than on fears about money."

Waterhouse insists that members of the Network "do value SafeSpace's work," and offers as proof their status as "honorary members": Safe Space staff are invited to some Network trainings, and the Network and Safe Space circulate each other's training materials and notices of events.

However, SafeSpace Director Kara DeLeonardis cannot attend Network meetings. "I really want to be able to build closer connections to other programs and directors who are doing the same kind of work that I'm doing," she explains.

Chittenden County Support

Laura Subin, the director of Women Helping Battered Women, says that two issues have come up around SafeSpace membership in the Network: the agency's statewide mission, and its lack of a 24-hour hotline. Subin supports SafeSpace's effort to join the network and supports the agency's work.

"One area where there's a service gap is in hate crimes – we don't address those issues, and Safe Space is the only anti-violence agency that does," Subin says.

Another issue that WHBW might have difficulty with, a gap in services, is admitting gender-variant victims of violence to the shelter. "I think that anyone [being battered] who identifies as a woman should be eligible for shelter," Subin says. But a [woman with a] male appearance could be scary to other residents whose assailants are men. We could offer a safe house as an option, but it's not the same, and 'separate but equal' is a problem for me."

Subin says that in her experience domestic violence occurs at the same frequency in homosexual relationships as in heterosexual ones. "The tactics of abuse may be specialized, for example, using 'outing' as a weapon of control, and there are increased barriers to escape," when there's violence in a same-gender relationship.

"It is important to have an agency focused on this under-served

population," Subin concludes.

All three Chittenden County anti-violence programs – WHBW, WRCC, and SafeSpace – last month held their first joint volunteer training. The state requires a minimum of 20 hours of training for crisis workers. These 50 volunteers – of whom 10 will work with SafeSpace – receive 25 hours, in addition to later training opportunities.

Holding a day and a half of common training together is "a pilot project," says DeLeonardis, a first step toward what she hopes will be a more complete collaboration. One panel discussion incorporated diversity issues, including (among others) assisting a queer survivor of domestic violence or sexual assault.

Cultural Competency

There are "differing levels of [lgbtq] cultural competency in Chittenden County," and agencies are generally supportive and open to working with Safe Space. Across the state, "we all have one overarching mission, ending domestic violence, but all programs interpret that mission a bit differently," says DeLeonardis.

"Some programs interpret that as serving women who are abused by men. I'm not asking them to serve men, but I am asking them to work with us, to let us train them in how to screen an lgbt caller and refer them to us."

All three Chittenden County program directors agree that there should be as wide an array of options for victims of violence to get help as possible. WRCC's Celia Cuddy explains, "For some people it's crucial to have the kind of tailored advocacy they can find at Safe Space. For others, they might feel that the lgbt community is too small for that to be an option. Our commitment is to collaborate."

Cuddy reveals that last year, of the clients calling the Women's Rape Crisis Center who identified their own gender and/or orientation, about five percent were lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. "Cultural competency is a priority for us. The existence of SafeSpace in no way lessens our responsibility to be culturally competent [for the lgbt community] – it underlines it."

As an example of lgbt cultural competency, Cuddy cites raising the gender options on the agency's intake form from two to three: male, female, and trans. Workers routinely offer information about SafeSpace along with other

options. And sometimes, Cuddy says, both agencies are involved in assisting the same client.

Ending Violence

"We definitely all have challenges and successes" in working together to provide services to lgbtq survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, DeLeonardis concludes. She'd like to have the resources to connect with "the furthest reaches of the state." She has worked with staff members at the Clarina Howard Nichols Center in Morrisville (Lamoille County), a network member program. But, she admits, "We've been pretty focused on Chittenden County.

"Our mission is broader in scope, including all forms of bias, both bias crimes and discrimination, which we view as institutionalized violence," she continues. "But because we have an explicit focus, members of the community know that they will talk to other queers, that they won't be judged. Every state – every person in this state – should have that option.

"All of these issues are not unique to Vermont. We are part of a national anti-violence movement that is inclusive – the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs," DeLeonardis maintains. The NCAVP is "a coalition of programs that document and advocate for victims of anti-LGBT and anti-HIV/AIDS violence/harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, police misconduct and other forms of victimization," according to their web site.

"There will always be a need for an agency to advocate for and support queer victims of violence. It's important for us to be able to work closely with any agency – we can't do it all ourselves. But if you say you serve victims of violence, how can you discriminate against some?"

"We want to create a world where anyone can go to their local program and get good services." ▼

SafeSpace has expanded its "warm-line" hours into two evenings a week. The number is 802-863-0003. On November 15, it will sponsor "An Evening of Healing Laughter" to celebrate survivors and raise funds. Contact Safe Space for more information

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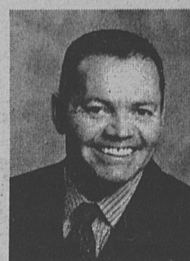
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