

Domestic Violence Organizations Working with South Asian Immigrants and/or Refugees

ASHA (Asian Women’s Self-Help Association) for Women

Website: <http://ashaforwomen.org/>

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2084, Rockville, MD 20847 (Individual counselors/staff work out of their homes/at undisclosed locations.)

Phone: (202) 683-2019

Email: coordinator@ashaforwomen.org

Executive Director: Lakshmi Aiyappa (*vara.aiyappa@gmail.com*; (703) 723-4156)

Program Coordinator: Shaila Kelkar (*coordinator@ashaforwomen.org*)

Programs/Activities

ASHA for Women, founded in 1989, focuses on providing community-based, culturally-competent support to South Asian women and their children who have faced domestic violence in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The organization’s website states that ASHA – meaning “hope” in several South Asian languages—was created in response to the needs of South Asian women who face language, cultural, and social barriers, and fall through the cracks of the domestic violence service system.

ASHA’s services include the following:

Volunteer advocate support, providing women with emotional support, and connecting them with civil, criminal justice, immigration, and social services. Advocates also accompany women to court, shelters, government offices, doctors’ appointments, and hospitals, and assist them in locating housing, jobs, and competent professional help.

Emergency financial assistance to assist women and children with accessing basic needs such as food and shelter. When needed, funding can also be provided for English classes, driving lessons, health care, and legal representation.

Community outreach: ASHA participates in community forums to publicly discuss the causes and effects of family violence. It provides information to create awareness about existing services, resources, systems, and United States laws designed to assist and protect victims of domestic violence. ASHA works in partnership with organizations like [South Asian Americans Leading Together](#) (SAALT) and [CHAI](#) (*see further information on p. 3 below*) to hold community conversations on domestic violence prevention.

Advocacy: As a member of the national [Interfaith Domestic Violence Coalition](#), ASHA partners with the Jewish Women International and other faith-based and secular organizations to develop policy and legislative guidance on domestic violence issues. The Coalition, comprising more than 20 national organizations, advocates for national legislation and policies that protect all people from domestic violence, with particular focus on women and children.

ASHA also pursues cooperative working alliances with other domestic violence and social service agencies and professional groups, especially those serving immigrant and refugee families. They collaborate with organizations including:

- [The Tahirih Justice Center](#)
- [Women Empowered Against Violence \(WEAVE\)](#)
- [The South Asian Bar Association \(SABA\)](#)
- [Ayuda Inc.](#)
- [Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center](#)

Service providers' education: ASHA helps domestic violence and other social service agencies become aware of the specific needs of battered South Asian women and children and the cultural context of violence in South Asian homes. (ASHA's most recent Advocate Training workshop, for current and new volunteers, was held on July 14th, 2012.)

ASHA HELPLINE: 1-888-417-2742

The website indicates that this is a free and confidential helpline through which callers can reach ASHA's Client Services Coordinator, who "will match you with a volunteer advocate that can help you." (**Note:** This is not a "Hotline;" it reaches the same recording as the main ASHA number.)

NOTES: A phone conversation on 8/2/12 with ASHA's Executive Director, Lakshmi Aiyappa, provided further information on available services, current language capacities, advocacy and outreach activities. Lakshmi said that ASHA works with Nepali and Bhutanese clients as well as those from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh; she stated that they have worked with some refugee clients as well. Introductory emails were subsequently sent to Lakshmi and Casey Swegman/IRC.

Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project

Website: www.dvrp.org

Address: A/PI DVRP
P.O. Box 14268
Washington, D.C. 20044

Phone: (202) 464-4477

Email: info@dvrp.org

Director of Programs: Jessica Li (Jessica@dvrp.org)

Programs/Activities

Established as a non-profit agency in 1996, the DVRP was formed by Asian/Pacific Islander women in response to the absence of culturally and linguistically appropriate services available to meet the needs of A/PI survivors of domestic violence in the D.C. area.

To this end, DVRP implements a Bilingual Advocates program that seeks to increase access to resources and improve the safety of A/PI survivors of domestic violence, regardless of income level, immigration status, and English language proficiency. Bilingual Advocates work one-on-one with limited English proficient survivors, providing peer support, court accompaniment, interpretation/translation and referrals to social and legal services. Advocates, who are required to attend a 55-hour (8-day) training, must be fluent in at least one other language. The training workshop covers such issues as safety planning, maintaining confidentiality, helping survivors apply for public services, VAWA, and the processes entailed in seeking protection orders.

NOTES: Email exchanges have been made with Jessica Li, DVRP's Director of Programs, and forwarded to Casey Swegman. Jessica (who in the past worked as IRC's Advocacy/Outreach Coordinator), reported that in 2011 DVRP facilitated a training for IRC staff in Silver Spring, which addressed domestic violence and healthy relationships to the Bhutanese refugee community. She has stated "We would be happy to work with IRC Baltimore to address these issues. Please let us know what we can do to be supportive."

Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center

Website: www.apalrc.org

Addresses:

Maryland office:

11141 Georgia Avenue
Suite 215
Silver Spring, MD 20902
Phone: (301) 942- 2223
Fax: (301) 942- 9222

Washington, D.C. Office:

1012 14th Street, N.W.
Suite 450
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: (202) 706- 7150
Fax: (202) 315- 0375

Email: helpline@apalrc.org

Legal Assistance Helpline: (202) 393-3572: Main Extension 22; Chinese ext. 18;
Hindi/Urdu ext. 19; Vietnamese ext. 20; Korean ext. 21.

APALRC advocates for the legal and civil rights of Asian Pacific Americans in the D.C. metropolitan region through activities in two program areas: Direct Legal Services and Advocacy. The organization currently provides legal advice and representation on various legal matters, including domestic violence and family law, immigration, housing, and employment, to low-income, limited-English proficient Asian Americans in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Northern Virginia.

The goals of the Legal Assistance for Asian American Victims of Domestic Violence project include: conducting outreach to educate victims and potential victims of domestic violence about their rights and available resources; ensuring holistic services by working closely with social service agencies; and providing domestic violence victims with linguistically and culturally appropriate representation on immigration and family law issues.

Counselors Helping (South) Asians/Indians (CHAI)

Website: <http://www.chaicounselors.org/>

Contact information:

Razia Kosi, Executive Director: (443) 615-1355

Mailing Address: 4517 Red Leaf Court
Ellicott City, MD 21043

CHAI is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to provide outreach, referral and educational services to the South Asian community on issues related to mental health and wellness in the Baltimore / Washington metropolitan area. CHAI also works with mental health professionals and social services agencies to increase their cultural proficiency when working with the South Asian community. CHAI is composed of volunteers who are concerned about the mental health and wellness in the South Asian community, and include clinical social workers, and professional counselors, school counselors, and psychiatrists.

Chai's Directory of Mental Health Counselors is found at the following link:

<http://www.chaicounselors.org/resources/directory>

Their Directory is searchable by language (Nepali and Bhutanese are not currently listed). The list includes approximately 20 mental health professionals, including two in Baltimore; others are located in Silver Spring, Columbia, Bethesda, D.C. and VA.

The Directory further indicates that ***“If you are not able to find a provider in your area or have questions regarding a provider, please call the CHAI intake line at (443) 615-1355.”***

NOTES: In response to a message I left inquiring about potential resources for clients who speak Nepali or Bhutanese, I received a call back from CHAI Board member Indira Kotval (LCSW-C, MPH). She speaks Hindi and understands Nepali, and said that she would be glad to help in any way she can—serving as a clinical/“link” and helping in consultative terms (although she would not be able to undertake actual case management). Her number is (410) 367-4352.

She also mentioned another CHAI board member, Swaran Dhawan (LCSW-C) who has been doing much clinical work and is fluent in Hindi and Urdu.

In addition, the “Resources” section of the CHAI website includes valuable information on mental health resources in the DC/MD/VA area, as well as resources for the South Asian community:

<http://www.chaicounselors.org/resources/links>

Manavi

Website: <http://www.manavi.org/>

Address: P.O. Box 3103, New Brunswick, NJ 08903

Telephone: (732) 435-1414

Email: manavi@manavi.org

Programs/Activities

Manavi works with women from South East Asia; i.e., those who identify their country of origin as Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, or Sri Lanka. The organization adopts a holistic advocacy model that provides comprehensive information intended to educate women survivors of violence about options available to them vis-à-vis various systems in the U.S. like law enforcement (police, courts), medical, social security/ welfare, and immigration. Their advocacy is aimed at guiding survivors to reach a point of recovery, self-sufficiency and well-being.

Manavi's programs address the immediate needs of survivors through counseling, advocacy, legal referrals, accompaniment, interpretation, and peer support groups, and also operates a transitional/safe house. The organization also seeks to create long-term social change through community outreach education, trainings and advocacy. By participating in community events, festivals and celebrations Manavi tries to raise awareness and break the silence about the prevalence of violence against women in the South Asian communities in the US.

Manavi provides technical assistance in the following areas:

- (1) Cultural Competency trainings to providers
- (2) Community engagement in various languages
- (3) Capacity-building for other South Asian women's rights organizations.

NOTES: Phone contact (6/7/12) with Harshika Jhaveri, Counseling Coordinator at Manavi,, led to a subsequent exchange of email messages. Harshika has been extremely helpful, and shared several useful resources that have been added to this list.

She described the nature of the trainings Manavi can provide: "We do offer cultural competency trainings to mainstream organizations and in that we talk about DV, the dynamics of DV in the South Asian community, barriers that South Asian women face when contemplating leaving their abusers etc. We also talk about things to be aware of and strategies that can be used while working with this population. From what I know, we haven't exclusively worked with the refugee community. However, we do work with women who are seeking asylum in this country."

She also expressed her readiness to respond to questions/ offer support via phone or email. She can be reached via email at harshika@manavi.org and via phone at (732) 435-1414, extension 16.

Muslimat Al-Nisaa

Website: <http://www.mnisaa.org/>

Address: 5115 Liberty Heights Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21207

Telephone: (410) 466-8686

Email: info@mnisaa.org

Contact information: Asma Hanif, Director and co-founder: (410) 466-8686

Programs/Activities

Muslimat Al-Nisaa, originally established in 1987, seeks to provide culturally sensitive health, educational and social services to Muslim community women and children. In 2005, the program established a shelter program to address the urgent needs of Muslim women faced with homelessness. Residents include Muslim immigrant and refugee women who have experienced domestic violence, and for whom access to the residential program is expedited.

The organization's housing facility can accommodate 50 residents, and contains a learning center for in-house occupational training and education support, a computer room, a physical fitness area, laundry facilities, a food bank, and an on-site office. Muslimat Al-Nisaa Home Center's services, which are exclusively for residents, include counseling for adults, employment assistance, ESOL classes, and programs for children. Residents meet with a counselor once each week, and with a LCSW and case manager once per month.

Through in-house services and links with community and faith-based organizations, the center also helps provide residents access to **medical care**, including primary health services, screenings, and other needed services.

Occupational services include helping residents identify and participate in adult and postsecondary education and skills training, basic computer instruction, help applying and interviewing for jobs, basic time and stress management.

Educational services include ESOL and GED instruction as well as self-help and personal development training and support.

(See also 2011 NPR story on the center:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=120752667>)

NOTES: In a phone conversation (Sept. 2012), director and founder Asmaa Hanif confirmed that Muslimat Al-Nisaa has worked with refugee women as well immigrant Muslim clients. She said that language resources, driven by clients' individual needs, are based on the availability of

volunteer interpreters and collaboration with other services and organizations. She added that clients can either contact Muslimat Al-Nisaa directly or via referrals from other agencies. She confirmed that services at the center are only for residents.

Asma described the program's orientation toward self-sufficiency, with residents developing personal goals in collaboration with case managers. She noted that each client arrives with different needs and may progress towards goals at different rates, and added that there is no fixed time limit for residency at the center.

Raksha

Website: www.raksha.org

Address: P.O. Box 12337, Atlanta, Georgia 30355

Phone: 1 (866) 725-7423; 1 (877) 672-5742

Programs/Activities

Raksha (meaning "protection" in several South Asian languages) is a Georgia-based nonprofit whose mission is to promote a stronger and healthier South Asian community through confidential support services, community education, and advocacy. Founded in 1985 by resettled refugee women, the organization serves clients from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. While primarily dealing with domestic/family violence-related issues, Raksha also seeks to address concerns that intersecting with and contribute to family violence, such as discrimination, immigration, legal and economic issues, immigration and assimilation. Direct services include the following:

Crisis interventions allow for an immediate source of support in urgent situations that clients are otherwise unable to address themselves.

Employment and education services such as referrals, resume development, interviewing skills, application assistance, etc.

Individual and family counseling with adults and children allows clients an opportunity to begin to explore issues of self-esteem, boundaries, healing, etc. as related to the abuse.

Information and referral provides clients with much needed resources that they otherwise would not know how to obtain. Raksha provides referrals to a network of shelters, legal clinics, medical services, social services and social networking organizations.

Legal and general victim advocacy provides clients the necessary backing to begin to find legal recourse for their situations. Raksha's staff and trained volunteers provide assistance in

finding affordable legal counsel and/or accessing community-based legal programs.

Interpretation and translation services help clients to better understand and negotiate the many systems they may have to interact. Raksha staff also provides interpretation and technical support to mainstream agencies and shelters that serve South Asian women.

Monthly support groups allow Raksha clients to feel a sense of solidarity and security in knowing that they are not alone, while learning about empowerment techniques, belief system, parenting issues, survival skills, self-sufficiency, and independence.

Community outreach and education on domestic violence, immigration and its impact on survivors of violence; racial justice and hate crimes; HIV-related stigma and health issues.

NOTES: A very thorough summary of different forms of abuse and domestic violence (including stalking); divorce-related processes, including self-petitioning for U.S. residency under VAWA and gaining a protection order (based on Georgia state law), is provided on their site at:

<http://www.raksha.org/DomesticViolenceandLaw.html>

Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA)

Website: <http://www.rewa.org/>

Address: 4008 Martin Luther King, Jr. Way South, Seattle, WA 98108

Phone: (206) 721-0243

Email: carlin@ rewa.org (Carlin Yoophum, Domestic Violence Program Director)

Programs/Activities

ReWA's Domestic Violence program seeks to increase the safety and well-being of refugee and immigrant women by providing support to victims and increasing awareness of domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking. Through culturally and linguistically competent services, community referrals, comprehensive community education, and support groups, the DV program works to reduce barriers facing refugee and immigrant victims. The key components of the DV program include:

- Comprehensive support services in multiple languages (*see details in talk-notes with Director of DV program, below*). ReWA's bilingual/ bicultural domestic violence advocates work with victims to help them apply for protection orders, develop safety plans, access safe shelters, understand and navigate the legal system, as well as connect them to services providing basic needs.

- Support groups for refugee and immigrant battered women and those at risk of becoming victims of domestic violence and sexual assault
- Community education and outreach
- Consultation and educational training to service providers and law enforcement agencies
- Mental health counseling and consultation
- Referral to community resources for victims of crime (e.g. human trafficking), and victims of domestic violence and sexual assault
- After-hour cellphone helpline crisis calls in several languages.

ReWA's programs include community outreach and education on domestic violence and training services for providers, including cultural competency in addressing DV among refugees and issues related to using interpreters.

ReWA is also the lead agency providing anti-human trafficking services to refugee and immigrant communities in Washington State.

NOTES from 6/1/12 phone conversation with Carlin Yoophum, Director of ReWA's DV program (carlin@rewa.org). Carlin was extremely informative regarding REWA's programs and approach to DV issues in the refugee/immigrant community. She also stated that she is very ready to help provide support/consultation via phone or email.

ReWA provides holistic services for refugee women of diverse ethnic/cultural groups, and in particular with women from South Asia. 37 languages are spoken at the agency. Their programs include domestic violence prevention/response; vocational services/employment; ESL; and a family support program. Newly-arrived refugees are among their clients, including many Bhutanese and Burmese.

Domestic violence services include counseling, support groups, emergency housing assistant/temporary housing. ReWA's language capacity for DV services includes Somali, Arabic, Amharic, Tigrinya, Burmese, Lao, Thai, Russian, Romanian, Mandarin, and Spanish as well as several others. Currently, they have no Bhutanese-speaking staff in their DV program.

Carlin said that they have encountered a high level of violence within the Burmese community in particular. Challenges include the fact that even severe situations are generally seen as a family matter. In response, ReWA hired a former Burmese medical interpreter to serve as an outreach person/advocate within that community. Rather than framing discussion around "domestic violence," ReWA's outreach activities emphasize the importance of maintaining health and safety within the family/maintaining peace within the home. Underlying causes of tension and stress are discussed, such as acculturation issues, changes in roles among women and men, issues of control, and problems in communication. Dialogue explores what would have been done in the home country to address the situation (e.g., consultation with elders, relatives), and emphasizes how violence hurts the entire family, and may lead to lethal consequences. (Carlin noted that abused women who feel they have no way out of a situation may kill themselves; she

also noted cases in which men have killed family members.) Outreach/education efforts emphasize that the aim of intervention is not to break up families, but to ensure that women and children are safe.

Carlin emphasized as well the vital importance of helping clients clearly understand the legal context within the U.S. and the consequences of violating laws relating to domestic violence, as well as family violence/child abuse. (She added that parenting education information is integrated into their ESL classes; they also conduct parenting workshops for clients referred by Child Protective Services.)

In terms of working with individual women, Carlin noted the high degree to which they tend to minimize abuse, and refrain from sharing experiences in general. She emphasized the importance of building a relationship of trust and working with them at their own pace. Once DV/IPV is disclosed, the focus is on helping the women understand what her options are; e.g., what is a protective order, etc. However, it may take considerable time before a woman recognizes the seriousness of her situation and decides to take action.

Helping ensure her safety is foremost. If a woman makes the decision to attend a support group for DV victims, it's vital that a trusted person take her there, that the location remain confidential, and that her partner not know. Support groups provide psychoeducation on domestic violence and sexual assault as well as information on self-care and safety planning. Guest speakers provide information on women's rights and legal issues that can affect their immigration status.

In terms of screening/referrals, Carlin said that most of ReWA's referrals come directly to their DV program. Internally, however, she noted that just a few basic questions suffice the help assess a DV situation; e.g., "Are you afraid of him?" "Are you in danger?"

Carlin said that ReWA can provide training for other organizations (up to 3 hours in length) in cultural competencies in addressing domestic violence among refugee groups. They can hone trainings to specific needs. They can also advise on carrying out community education/outreach activities.
