



## Appendix 4.4 Co-Advocacy Overview

### What is Co-Advocacy?

Casa de Esperanza works with partner organizations to offer co-advocacy to support Latinas who are staying in the organizations' shelters or participating in their other programs. We use the term *co-advocacy* to refer to working in partnership with another domestic violence program in an intentional, thoughtful, collaborative manner to ensure that battered Latinas and their children receive quality, culturally relevant advocacy services and support.

Co-advocacy is a collaborative process. It starts with an agreement that advocates and programs will work together to ensure that they are providing appropriate resources and services. It requires ongoing communication and sharing of information, resources and tools between the organizations, as well as working together with the participant to ensure her needs are met. In some instances, each advocate provides a specific type of assistance, and they back each other up as needed. In other instances, our partner organization provides all key support and services and calls upon the Casa de Esperanza advocate for ideas, coaching, and information on other community resources.

### Informal Co-Advocacy Is Not Enough

In the past, Casa de Esperanza advocates have been involved in many instances of informal co-advocacy when our *Refugio* (shelter) was at full capacity. In those situations, we referred Latinas—often immigrant and monolingual Spanish-speaking—to other shelters. We consider these co-advocacy efforts to be “informal” because there was no established protocol or evaluation process. In some instances the end results were positive—Latinas and their children felt welcomed by the other shelter and received quality support from the advocates of both organizations. But in many instances, the results were negative or, at best, challenging.

- Sometimes Latinas left the other shelters within a day or two of arrival because they did not feel welcomed or supported.
- Sometimes monolingual Latinas were not even “accepted” into another shelter, even when there was available space.
- At times advocates from Casa de Esperanza and other programs had initial conversations, but their efforts to collaborate were not effective because an organizational working relationship had not been fully established.
- Although wishing to enhance their ability to serve battered Latinas and their children, advocates in other programs have sometimes voiced frustration, not knowing how to best utilize Casa de Esperanza’s services and support

## **Working in Partnership**

After seeing the results of a lack of access and coordinated response for battered Latinas and after in-depth reflection, Casa de Esperanza recognized the need to develop formal co-advocacy relationships with shelters interested in enhancing their work with Latinas and their children. Casa de Esperanza encourages and expects other programs to create greater access and support for Latinas. By working together, we are better able to meet the needs of the women, children, and families we all strive to serve.

Co-advocacy requires the following from everyone involved—Casa de Esperanza and our advocates and partner organizations and their advocates.

- Flexibility
- Ability to be open-minded
- Time for advocates’ travel and coordination with partner advocates
- Ongoing, effective communication
- Cross-training and networking
- Intentionality and reflection
- Established protocols and evaluation processes

As organizations we must be willing to fully support the advocates and other staff involved in the delivery of co-advocacy services. Casa de Esperanza works closely with our partner organizations to develop and implement the co-advocacy agreements, protocols, and other efforts that guide our joint work and evaluation processes.