USU Hosts Experts from the International Women's House

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Dr. Blau instructing service providers during professional workshop

USU Social Work’s Transforming Communities Initiative (TCI), in partnership with the Family Communication & Relationship Lab, the Mountain West Center for Regional Studies, and Fight Against Domestic Violence, were pleased to host Dr. Anna Z. Blau and Laura M. Mora from the International Women’s House.

Dr. Blau and Ms. Mora have over 60 years of combined experience in nonprofit work, the majority of which has been in the domestic violence field. The International Women’s House, based in Metro-Atlanta, provides a safe haven and supportive services to women and children who are the victims of family violence, sexual abuse, and human trafficking, with a focus on immigrant and refugee women and children. Dr. Blau is a former refugee and Ms. Mora is an immigrant; together they use their unique professional and personal background to offer advice on interacting with diverse populations.

Currently developing research about service provision for refugees and immigrants experiencing domestic violence, USU’s Drs. Jessica Lucero and Kristina Scharp were instrumental in bringing these two women to campus. Dr. Blau and Ms. Mora provided information on best practices in serving refugees in the domestic violence sector during a research consultation, which will inform a survey that will be distributed to all the resettlement cities for refugees that have domestic violence shelters. Utilizing their expertise this research will provide a snapshot of what domestic violence shelters are doing to serve refugees on an individual, staffing, and organizational level. The three largest themes that emerged from the research consultation are that shelters must provide reliable and unbiased translation services, increase length of stay past 30 days to help refugees navigate paperwork and heal, and increase cultural sensitivity at all levels.

Research shows that immigrants and refugees may be hesitant to reach out for help in fear of deportation or lingering distrust of their original nation’s government. These barriers are particularly concerning in situations of domestic violence – where strong and effective relationships between clients and service providers are a matter of personal safety. Dr. Blau and Ms. Mora informed social service professionals about refugee and immigrant experiences and how to overcome barriers to effective service provision during a workshop entitled “Domestic Violence in Immigrant & Refugee Communities: Opportunities and Challenges for Practitioners.”

Community members also had the opportunity to hear from Dr. Blau and Ms. Mora during a keynote address entitled, “Making A Difference: What We Do Matters.” Their keynote touched on their personal stories of overcoming domestic violence, their professional work in serving refugee and immigrant victims, and how we can make a difference in our community. Dr. Brisa De Angulo also addressed the audience that night and shared her experience as a survivor of sexual abuse and what her foundation, A Breeze of Hope, is doing to end violence against women and children in Bolivia and globally. Both keynote addresses were recording and can be viewed following the provided links.

Dr. Brisa De Angulo: A Breeze of Hope Keynote Recording

Dr. Anna Blau & Laura Mora: Making A Difference Keynote Recording