

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media Contact:

Sherrri Kendall

O: 713-224-9911

C: 281-780-3447

Training First Responders: AVDA and HCDVCC Host “Partnering in Faith: A Multi-Faith Summit on Domestic Abuse”

Summit will Provide Forum for Dialogue and Collaboration on Domestic Abuse among Faith Leaders in Houston

(Houston – July 24, 2015) – In recognition of the crucial role played by faith communities, AVDA ([Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse](#)), a non-profit that provides life-saving services to victims of abuse and their families, and the Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (HCDVCC) will host a multi-faith summit on domestic violence. *Partnering in Faith: A Multi-Faith Summit on Domestic Violence* will be held on September 2, 2015, and spiritual and religious leaders, lay leaders, pastoral counselors, Imams, clerics, and others are invited to participate.

Leaders of faith communities are often the first to be called upon for support and guidance when domestic abuse occurs. The summit, guided by a multi-faith advisory council, will serve as a forum for dialogue and collaboration among faith leaders to broaden their knowledge and provide necessary tools to better assist the members of their congregations suffering from domestic violence.

“Along with schools, religious communities are often the most connected to families and religious leaders are in a place to sense distress in families,” said Reverend Steve Quill. “How to recognize and address it and how to access the needed support is crucial to their being able to effectively work with families experiencing abuse.”

The keynote speaker for the summit will be Dr. Marie Fortune. Fortune is the internationally acclaimed founder of the Faith Trust Institute, a multi-faith, multi-cultural organization providing religious communities with training and education to address faith aspects of abuse. The summit’s goals include: providing attendees with appropriate tools to enhance response to victims and abusers needing assistance, providing resources and best practices to ensure victim safety and identifying warning signs of abuse and learning to make appropriate referrals. AVDA and HCDVCC hope to host the summit annually, with additional quarterly opportunities for dialogue. The summit will serve as a catalyst for collaboration among faith leaders.

“Domestic abuse is a tragic reality in our community, with one in three women experiencing domestic violence in their lives,” said Sherri Kendall, AVDA’s CEO. “Houston’s faith communities are not exempt from this reality, and faith leaders can often play a crucial role in responding to the needs of these victims and their families. The summit is an opportunity to begin a dialogue across Houston’s diverse religious communities to increase victim safety and to promote healthy relationships. We encourage leaders and support staff from all spiritual communities to attend this conference.”

“Victims of domestic abuse often turn to their religious institutions for guidance and support, yet most clergy and lay leaders have very little training on how to respond to such claims,” said Rabbi Steven Gross. “This multi-faith summit will help leaders of all faiths navigate the nuanced and emotional challenges involved with guiding families back to a place of safety and wholeness.”

Advisory Council Members include: Elsa Aguilera, associate director, Family Life Transitions; Barbie Brashear, CEO, HCDVCC; Shariq Ghani, Muslim interfaith activist. Nicole Franklin-Jones, outreach specialist, AVDA; Rabbi Steven M. Gross, Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism; Sherri Kendall, CEO, AVDA; Mindy Lawrence, Reverend/Associate Minister, Unity Church; Sushma Mahajan; Reverend Steve Quill, Living Word; Amy Smith, deputy director, HCDVCC; and Dr. Vernus Swisher, CEO, Career and Recovery Resources.

Partnering in Faith will be held on September 2 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Depelchin Children’s Center, 4950 Memorial Drive, Houston, Texas 77007.

There is no cost to attend. Lunch will be provided. Please contact Nicole Franklin-Jones, AVDA’s outreach specialist at 713-715-6921 or nicolef@avda-tx.org or visit www.avda-tx.org for more details.

About AVDA

Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse (AVDA) has served the Houston community for 35 years to end violence in families by advocating for the safety and self-sufficiency of battered individuals, promoting accountability for those who batter, and fostering a coordinated community response to domestic violence. AVDA provides direct services to families victimized by domestic violence, such as education and legal representation to individuals impacted by violence, battering intervention and services for individuals who commit violence, and educational curriculum to prevent violence in the future.

Visit www.avda-tx.com for more information and connect with us on [Facebook](#).

About HCDVCC

The Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (HCDVCC) was formed in 1996 to increase communication and build cooperation among the agencies who respond to victims of domestic violence.

###