

## **Casa de Esperanza**

### **Teaching Note**

This case is designed to document the main leadership decisions made in the life of a nonprofit founded to provide safe haven for Hispanic women experiencing domestic violence. It illustrates how leaders can develop “bi-cultural” organizations that 1) compete effectively for mainstream public and private resources and 2) create new managerial and program elements consistent with a mission based in ethnic community values. It also illustrates the forces which organizations designed to serve women of color must navigate in order to survive and prosper.

*Case A* documents the growth of the organization in the context of the increased public recognition of the problem of violence against women and the establishment of public policy to confront it. It also describes the organizational challenges when a community-based organization becomes increasingly reliant upon governmental funding. The case also explores the competing forces pulling at the organization, between identifying with the emerging domestic violence field led by white women and the growing network of Latino human service organizations. This segment of the case is decision-forcing; it is written to highlight an important moment in the organizational life cycle in which the Board must make a key decision about the organization’s mission—whether it is a shelter or a Latina organization.

*Case B* illustrates the organization’s changes as a result of this decision about mission. As leaders embrace the agency’s identity as a community-based Latina organization, rather than a government-funded domestic violence organization, they must confront many managerial challenges. The case describes the planning and implementation processes, including changes in leadership, programming, and operations. Staff responses to these changes are also stressed, revealing the very human elements of organizational change.

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*Case C* describes the institutionalization of the new organizational identity, including strengthening of organizational programs and operations to support the mission. In this case, the themes of Case A – the agency’s relationship with the Latino community, domestic violence field, and government funders – are revisited in light of the new identity. New actions that were unthinkable before suddenly become realistic in light of the deepening sense of organizational mission and the infrastructure that now supports it.

The case segments can be used individually or in combination, over a number of weeks.

### **Teaching Uses**

This case can be used in many different classes or training venues, including courses about nonprofit and public management, leadership, family policy, women’s studies, social movements, and race and gender.

The following themes are strongly developed in the case materials:

- How public problems become defined and develop into public policy and formal service delivery systems (Case A)
- How nonprofit’s navigate the tensions between responding to governmental priorities and their own organizational missions (Cases A, B and C)
- How agencies led by and serving women of color must negotiated intersectionality. (Cases A and C)
- How organizational change occurs. (Case A illustrates an organization moving through various elements of its life cycle. Cases B and C illustrate, on a more micro-level, how changes in daily operations are accomplished)
- How nonprofit mission can be manifested in all elements of organizational life, both programs and operations (Case C)
- How leaders operate in ambiguous circumstances (Case B and C)

### ***Discussion Questions***

While the particular questions that teachers use will vary, some potential strands of discussion questions further illuminates these themes. These questions can be explored with the whole class, in small groups, or through simulations based on the various vantage points described in the case.

#### Case A

1. How does the larger social conception of domestic violence as a problem and shelter as a solution influence the founding of this organization and its daily operation?

2. Why are the majority of clients served by the shelter not Latinas?
3. What are the benefits and costs for Casa de Esperanza of receiving government money? Why did management fail to seize advocacy opportunities around the *per diem* reimbursement?
4. What, beyond the receipt of government funding, caused the changes within the domestic violence field in how agencies treated victims?
5. What are the forces that propel Casa de Esperanza's Board of Directors to undertake the strategic planning process in 1997?
6. If the board decides to embrace its identity as a multicultural, domestic violence organization, what are the implications for hiring, training, program design, and fundraising? If they decide to embrace a mission as a Latina social service organization that works in the area of domestic violence, what are the implications in these same areas? What effects does this decision have on Casa's coalition partners?

#### Case B

1. How did the management tools of strategic planning and external consultants shape the organizational change process? What other strategies were used to "bring staff along?" What could have been tried but was not?
2. What are the operational implications of the shift of mission made by Casa's Board of Directors in 1998? Was it necessary to make these changes to accomplish the shift in programming?
3. What were the philosophical and practical issues that management needed to weigh in the desire to close the shelter? Which were most salient?
4. Is the government's requirement that all shelters provide shelter to domestic violence victims on a first-come, first-serve basis justified?
5. How did these changes within Casa's operation affect their participation in the wider domestic violence movement?
6. How would you go about developing new programs from the perspective of the Latino communities?

#### Case C

1. How could management work to bridge the differing world views of themselves and front-line family advocates? To what end?
2. How did Casa's new approach differ from that typically used in the field of domestic abuse to serve victims? How did it differ from the organization's own operations before the

strategic planning process? How did it relate to the initial vision of the domestic violence movement that began in the 1970s?

3. How does the Day One mandate resemble the dynamics between the nonprofit and government funder earlier in its life? How is it different? How does the resolution illustrate a new phase of Casa's operation?
4. What activities should Casa's leadership undertake to assure that Day One and the Minnesota Department of Public Safety honor their commitment to working on issues of accessibility? What would be defined as a success of this process for Casa?
5. What dangers does working with the Church and traditional family pose for a feminist vision? Are the risks similar to or different from those posed by taking government funds? Should Casa be more oppositional within the Latino community?