

Supporting Rural Survivors by Working with Local Faith Communities

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santolina
CONSULTING

Learning Objectives

- Unpack barriers rural survivors experience when accessing services or finding safety
- Distinguish how engaging with faith communities overcomes those barriers
- Define how this ultimately supports survivors
- Provide frameworks for engaging with faith communities



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About Me

Bachelor of Arts in Religion & Classics

Master of Divinity

Master of Philosophy in Social Anthropology

Working & volunteering in the movement since
2012

Live in Austin, Texas

Have a cat named Ruthie Blue

Avid native plant gardener

Shared Language

Faith Communities

Churches

Kingdom Halls

Mosques/Islamic Centers

Temples

Synagogues

Religious Centers

Para-church Organizations

Religious Education Institutions

Retreat Centers

Shrines



First Baptist Church
Corrigan, Texas



Islamic Center of Hewitt/Masjid Al-Hidaya
Hewitt, Texas

Survivor

A person who has experienced or is experiencing any form of violence and abuse.

This includes child and elder abuse.

Victim and Survivor will be used interchangeably.

Violence & Abuse

All forms of harm – physical, sexual, verbal, psychological, emotional, financial, and digital as well as stalking and coercive control – perpetrated by one person to exert power over another person to control them.



Rural

All Texas state agencies define a “rural community” as a municipality with a population of less than **25,000**.

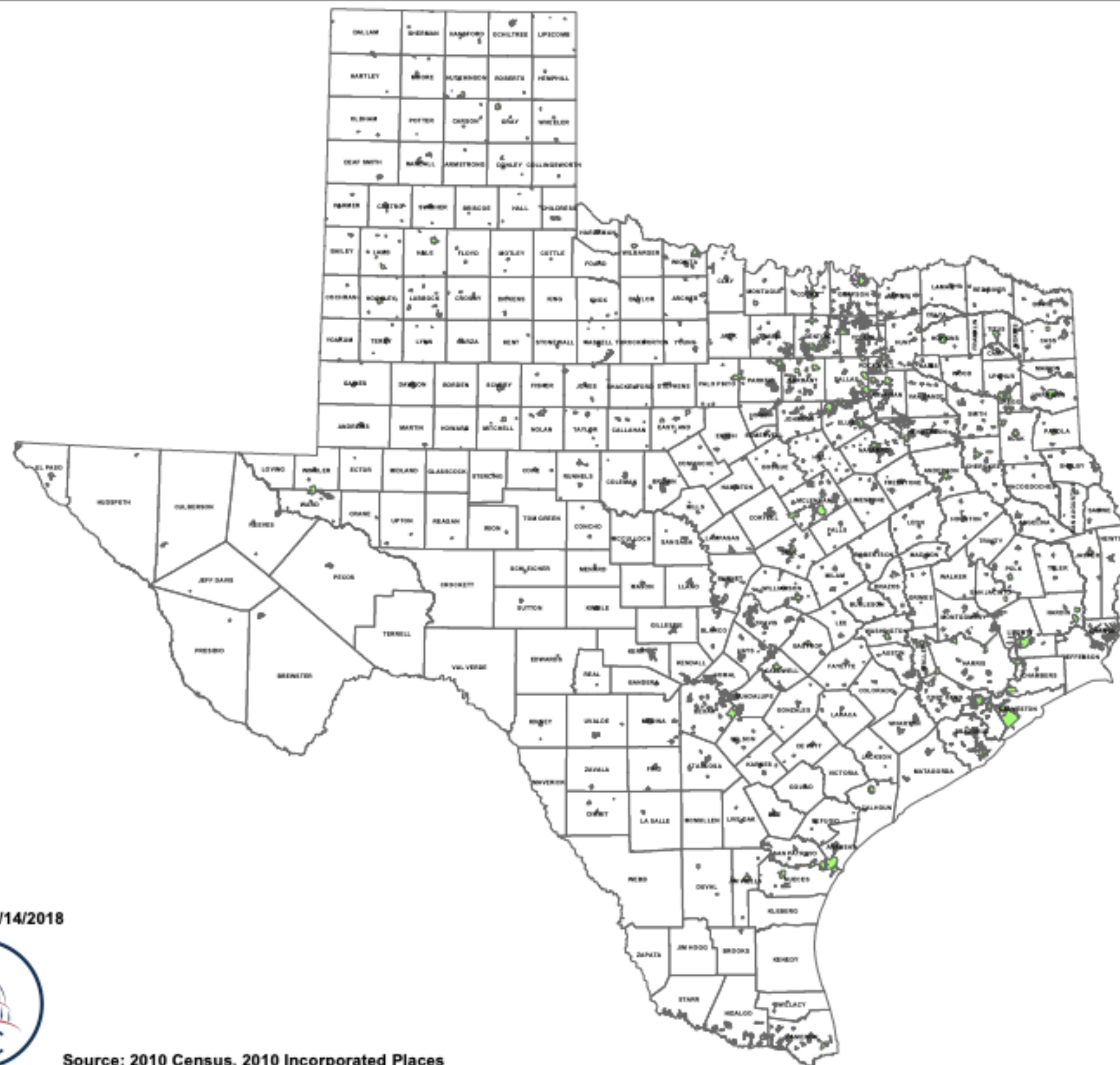
Numbers vary, but a “rural county” has a population less than **50,000**, other state departments will go as high as 125,000 and 150,000.

More than numbers or a government definition, “rural” has a cultural aspect to it.



Rural Community Definition 1

Section 2006.001(1-a), Government Code
All State Agencies (see [Note 1](#) in table)
Requirements for the Adoption of Certain
Proposed State Agency Rules



Section 2006.001(1-a), Government Code, defines "rural community" as a municipality with a population of less than 25,000.

18R32 03/14/2018



Source: 2010 Census, 2010 Incorporated Places

[Back to Table - Definition 1](#)

Map of Texas showing rural counties (population ≤ 50,000) in green. The map includes county names and a legend.

Legend: Rural (county with population ≤ 50,000)

Source: 2010 Census

22 T.A.C. § 297.7(c) provides that, for the purpose of exempting a pharmacy technician who works in a rural county from certification requirements, a "rural county" is a county with a population of 50,000 or less.

Barriers for Survivors

Lack of Resources

- Social Services
- Shelters
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Legal Services
- Childcare
- Technology



Isolation

- Physical
- Social

Transportation

- Distance
- Access
- Public Transportation
- Gas



Awareness

- Survivor
- Law Enforcement
- Faith Leaders
- Community Leaders
- Community
- Minimization & Denial



Culture

- Gender norms
- Coupling
- Masculinity & Femininity
- Shame, blame, & guilt

Perceptions

- Urban Programs
- DV Programs
- Rural Safety



Relational Proximity

- Legal System
- Law Enforcement
- Community Leaders



Religious Beliefs

- Religious Beliefs
- Authoritative Texts
- Interpretation
- Traditions
- Us/them

Racial & Ethnic

- Stereotypes
- LE likely white
- Jurisdiction with Tribes
- Language Access
- Higher rates





Animals

Time

Firearms

Drugs & Alcohol



Economic

- Rates of poverty
- Financial access
- Job opportunities
- Wage gap
- “Starting Fresh”
- Limited housing

Overcoming Barriers

A series of thin, light orange lines of varying lengths and angles are positioned on the left side of the slide, creating a dynamic, abstract background element.

Education

Local Action

Coordination

**How do we utilize
these methodologies
with faith communities?**

Education

- Create a cohesive, expansive definition of DV/SA for faith leaders
- Raise awareness of the scope of violence and harm in their community
- Provide continued learning opportunities
- Encourage education of lay leaders
- Have support materials readily available
- Support community teaching on harm
- Provide service map and nature of service
- Educate young people on healthy relationships



Local Action

- Build capacity & collective action
 - Build off what exists and create new in gaps
- Connect/work with faith based social workers
- Employ advocates from community
- Embed services in community and with ministries already happening
- Aim for inclusion
 - Formal/Informal/Emerging Leaders
 - Denominations/Sects
- Find individual influencers
 - "I know someone...."

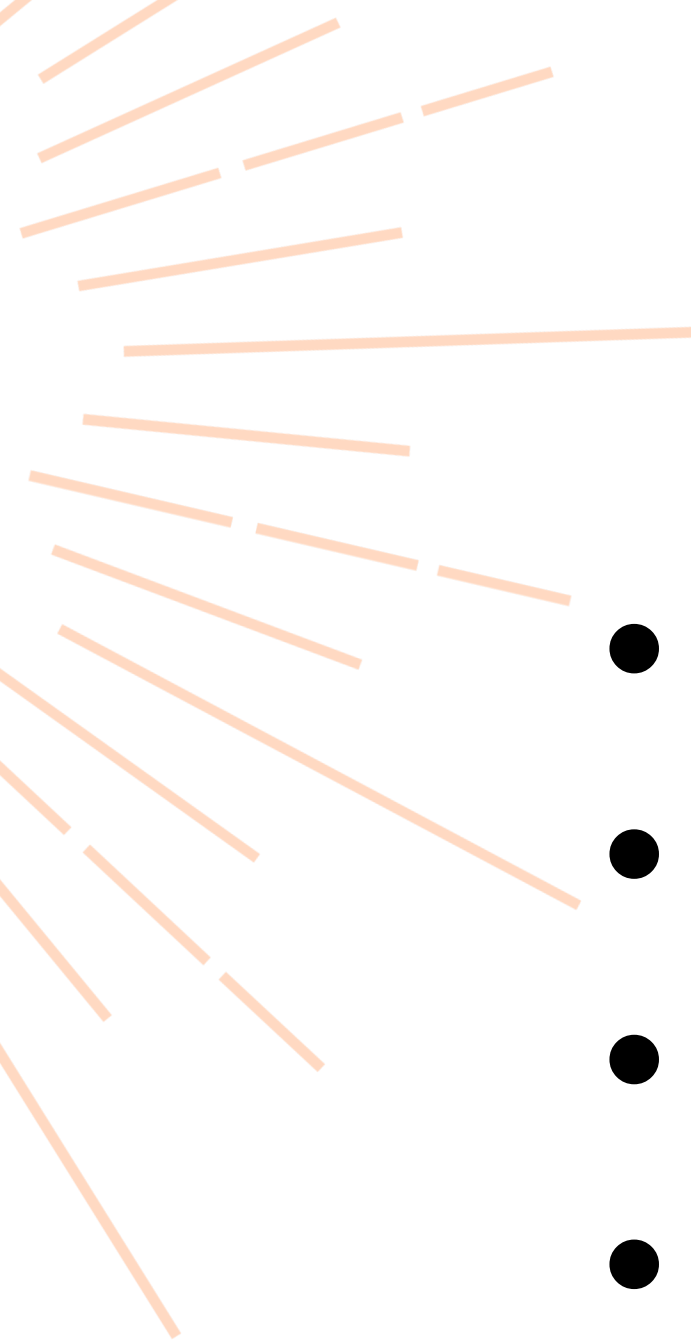



Coordination

- Invite to CCR or task force
- Have more than one faith leader on committee
- Work with ministerial alliances or town/regional associations
- Coordinate services with service map/list
- Coordinate resources
- Prioritize local networks/relationships
 - Collaboration increases creativity
- “Name and Fame”
- Intersectional approach creates structural solutions



Supporting Survivors

- 
- A series of approximately 15 thin, orange lines of varying lengths and angles, radiating from the top-left corner of the slide.
- Awareness of Services
 - Access to Services
 - Seamless, Consistent Services
 - Lowers Recidivism
 - Prevent Harm
- 
- A series of approximately 10 thin, light purple lines of varying lengths and angles, radiating from the bottom-right corner of the slide.

Engaging Faith Communities

Best Practices

**Approach the relationship with intentionality
and consistency**

Build relationships on:

Trust | Respect | Mutual Benefit

Enjoyment | Forgiveness

Common Humanity

**Craft options for engagement for where
communities are**

Approach as a learner with genuine curiosity



Unitarian Universalist
Church of the Hill Country
Kerrville, Texas



Radha Madhav Dham
Austin, Texas

Case Study

Carolyn



Carolyn and Michael are residents of a rural town of around 800 people in a rural county of around 3,000 people.

They attend a local church where Michael is a deacon and Carolyn plays the piano.

Additionally, they are well known in the town since Carolyn volunteers with police department fundraisers and Michael is part of the volunteer fire department.

Their oldest and closest friends are Chris, the local police chief, and Linette, a town council member.

Michael's family is all in the area, but Carolyn's immediate family has passed away and remaining cousin left the area.

Carolyn and Michael live 15 miles from town on a farm Carolyn inherited. The farm is their primary source of income, but both will do odd jobs throughout the year to make ends meet.

Finances were tight before COVID, but Michael caught COVID early in the pandemic and has long COVID side effects, especially around fatigue and breathing. He is unable to work the farm as he used to and is inside their home most of time or at the police station seeing his best friend.

The farm's income has dropped exponentially, and Carolyn is unable to manage it physically on her own. They sold their second truck and most of the farm equipment to pay for medical bills, additional medical treatments, and regular bills. Thus, further reducing the farm's income generation.

Michael always had a temper and would yell at Carolyn when frustrated or angry but would apologize and promise to never yell again. The promises lasted for weeks to months, but since his health issues with COVID, his outburst have grown more frequent and more harmful.

Last week he began throwing things around the house and at Carolyn and even waved around a pistol. It really scared her and when she communicated that his actions were scaring her, he said, "Good, you should be scared of me. I'm the head of this household and you should damn well fear me."

Carolyn tried to talk to Linette, but she said she could not believe Michael would do anything like that and Carolyn should try to not aggravate him since he was ill, not working, and should try to give him space.

Carolyn also spoke with her pastor, but he said that it was her duty to work on her marriage and submit to her husband since she made a commitment in front of God, him, and their family and friends to make their marriage work in sickness or in health.

Carolyn remembered seeing a poster in a coffee shop in the nearest large town, about an hour and a half away, about calling anytime of the day or night if you felt unsafe in your home. She looked up the organization on her phone and called. They asked her to come in for an intake, but the distance and cost of gas led her to hang up without getting any resources or help.

You meet Carolyn randomly due to your role and she shares what she has been experiencing. How would you handle this situation?

Activity

Spend 2 minutes reflecting on:

- **How would you support Carolyn?**

Take 6 minutes writing out:

- **What ideas or actions do you recommend?**
- **What opportunities do YOU see for making progress on challenges for rural survivors?**

Take 2 minutes reviewing and assessing:

- **What key ideas stood out in your reflection on this case study?**



Questions and/or Comments



Resources

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Images:

First Baptist Church Corrigan Texas by Suzanne Holsomback

Islamic Center of Hewitt/Masjid Al-Hidaya Hewitt, Texas from Google Maps

Forested Drive by Laura Zelman

UUCHC of Kerrville, Texas from www.uuchc.org

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