



## THE CENTER FOR VIOLENCE-FREE RELATIONSHIPS

# From Self-Reflection to Real Results

Soon after Matt Huckabay started his job as executive director, he saw a baby, teen mother, grandmother, and great grandmother arriving together for services at the Center for Violence-Free Relationships. Each of the women had received services from the Center over the years, yet they continued to be trapped in a cycle of violence.

### Is What We're Doing Not Working?

Matt asked himself, "who is responsible for making sure the baby does not become the fourth generation of victims?" As the leader, he knew that he was responsible—for ensuring meaningful, measurable and financially sustainable results for vulnerable people. But he had no way to assess his organization's ability to deliver.

### Leading with Courage

Matt's first step was to rally the board. It could no longer concern itself primarily with financial operations; members had to act as strong, assertive governors and stewards. Staff and board got together to clarify the mission, which became to end the intergenerational transmission of violence. The charge was clear.

Ending the transmission of violence from one generation to the next required working with children for the first time, and with their parents. A children's program was designed based on research about what works to reduce trauma symptoms.

A program to promote healthy teen dating relationships no longer fit the mission and was



## The Center for Violence-Free Relationships

**Location:** El Dorado County, CA

**Field:** Domestic violence, sexual assault

**Budget:** <\$3 million

“ Who is responsible for making sure the baby does not become the fourth generation of victims? It was my responsibility, but I had no way of knowing if we were moving our clients closer to that goal. ”

Matt Huckabay  
Executive Director  
Center for Violence-Free Relationships

eliminated to free up resources. The children’s program needed licensed clinical social workers and counselors. The Center could no longer rely solely on low-cost paraprofessional advocates.

## The Results

The new program reduced children’s PTSD symptom scores by 35%. Though the process had been disruptive—and sometimes painful—this success gave the entire organization new energy. Courageous executive and board leadership was paying off.

Funders were energized, too. Within a few months, the funding for the program doubled and The Center received \$80,000 to increase the capacity of the project. This program continues to flourish and reduction in children’s trauma symptoms is only one of many successes.

*Photos in this story provided by the Center for Violence-Free Relationships.*



### Performance in Action

This story is part of the Leap Ambassadors Community Performance in Action series, which features stories about organizations on the path to high performance—different in size, location, mission, and maturity, but with a shared commitment to getting better at getting better. Find additional stories at [leapambassadors.org/performance-in-action/](https://leapambassadors.org/performance-in-action/)

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