

## **Mission**

The mission statement outlines the ongoing purpose of an organization. A mission statement provides board, staff and volunteers of a healthy organization with a sense of focus. The mission statement guides the choices and opportunities an organization faces.

### **Why Do We Need A Mission Statement?**

Every organization needs to define its fundamental purpose, philosophy, and values. The mission statement clarifies the reason for the organization's existence. It describes the needs the organization was created to fill and answers the basic question of why the organization exists. Without guidance, it is difficult to establish programmatic priorities.

A mission statement has both internal and external uses. Internally, it provides a unifying force for bringing the energy of board members, staff members and volunteers together to focus on achieving the same general purpose. Externally, it defines the major parameters of the organization and distinguishes it from other nonprofit organizations in the eyes of funders, collaborative partners, community leaders and the general public.

Consultants differ about the length needed to achieve clarity with internal and external users. Some consultants recommend that it be short such as a motto or slogan. Others recommended a couple of sentences to a paragraph in length. At a minimum it should state the organization's general purpose, use clear language (as opposed to jargon known only to individuals in that service field) and be easy to remember.

The mission statement provides the basis for judging the success of the organization and its programs. It helps to verify if the organization is on the right track and making the right decisions. It provides direction when the organization needs to adapt to new demands. Attention to mission helps the board adhere to its primary purpose and helps during conflicts by serving as a touchstone for every decision. The mission statement can be used as a tool for resource allocation.

An organization's mission statement needs to be consistent with its Articles of Incorporation. An organization cannot have a more expansive mission or purpose than what is defined in its Articles. If circumstances have changed for an organization such that its current purpose needs to be broader than stated in its Articles, the organization should seek legal assistance.

*Source: The Oertel Group © 2003*

---

### Mission Statement Worksheet

A mission statement should quickly and clearly convey to readers what is unique about the organization—what distinguishes it from other nonprofit organizations. Therefore, some consultants recommend that it should contain the major parameters that define the organization's operations. This worksheet provides a tool for board and management/staff to agree on general concepts.

Note: Writing a formal mission statement is not a good use of group time. If a group is used for the task, the resulting mission statement generally does not flow. It is generally recommended that 1-2 people draft a statement which is then reviewed by board and management. Even at this point, the group should probably not edit the statement but make suggestions that the writer(s) will consider and adjust.

- **Why?** The purpose or essence of the organization; the change that will occur because of the existence of this organization.

---

---

- **What?** A brief description of the services of the organization that lead to the change or impact.

---

---

- **Whom?** The target population that the organization serves.

---

---

- **Who?** The staff and/or volunteers who deliver the service—outlining any distinctive characteristics.

---

---

- **Where?** The geographic parameters that define your service area.

---

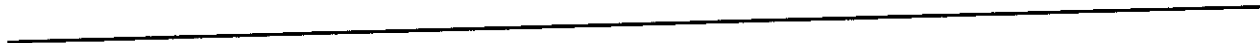
---

- **How?** The method by which the services are delivered.

---

---

Source: Originated by Patty Oertel, Center for Nonprofit Management/Southern California  
© 1985. Updated by The Oertel Group © 2003.



## *Mission Statement Samples*

### **Relevancy of Organizational Characteristics**

The mission statement will reflect certain key characteristics of an organization such as population served, geographic service area, agency organizational structure, etc. The samples included in this material have been selected to represent a wide array of organizational characteristics. For example:

- Domestic violence agency, direct services – Su Casa Family Crisis and Support Center
- Domestic violence agency, prevention and direct services – Human Response Network
- Rural agency – Human Response Network, Plumas Rural Services, Inc.
- Large, multi-service agency – Interface Children Family Services
- Chapter based agency – YWCA of Monterey County
- Agency serving a specific population – Asian Women’s Shelter (Asian American); Community United Against Violence (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender)
- Dual purpose agency, domestic violence/sexual assault – Project Sanctuary
- Dual purpose agency, domestic violence/homelessness – Building Futures
- Public health perspective on domestic violence – Sutter Lakeside Community Services, YWCA Monterey

### **Building Futures with Women and Children (Alameda County)**

*We seek to end homelessness and domestic violence by providing community education, outreach, housing and supportive services to help women become independent and capable of caring for themselves and their children.*

(Note: This mission statement also includes a reference to the organization’s vision.)

### **Community United Against Violence (San Francisco)**

*Community United Against Violence is an anti-oppression, multicultural agency whose mission is to prevent and respond to violence against and within our diverse lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning communities. We accomplish this mission through support services, advocacy, education and organizing.*

(Note: This mission statement also includes a reference to the organization’s values /philosophy.)

### **Asian Women’s Shelter (San Francisco)**

*This mission of the Asian Women’s Shelter is to eliminate domestic violence by promoting the social, economic and political self-determination of women.*

*The Asian Women’s Shelter recognizes that domestic violence stems from the oppression of women and is further compounded for Asian women as it combines with racism, homophobia, classism, ableism and ageism. The Asian Women’s Shelter is committed to every person’s right to live in a violence-free home and has a specific focus towards addressing the cultural and language needs of immigrant, refugee and U.S.-born Asian women and their children.*

*This perspective is reflected in our broad strategy that integrates culturally competent and language-accessible shelter services, educational programs, community organizing initiatives and advocacy.*

(Note: This mission statement also includes references to the organization’s vision and values/ philosophies.)

### **YWCA of Monterey County (Monterey County)**

*The YWCA of Monterey County will advance societal change through education, collaboration, and leadership. We are dedicated to creating comprehensive, long-term solutions to end domestic violence and prejudice, and to promote healthy women, their children, and families.*

(Note: This mission statement also includes references to the organization’s vision and values/ philosophy.)

**Su Casa Family Crisis and Support Center** (Los Angeles and Orange Counties)

*Su Casa Family Crisis and Support Center serves women and their children who are victims of domestic violence with services focused primarily for residents of Los Angeles and Orange Counties.*

**Project Sanctuary** (City of Ukiah, Mendocino County)

*The mission of Project Sanctuary is to provide a safe environment for physically, emotionally and sexually abused people in our community. We are committed to providing the resources and direction necessary to insure safety, healing, the prevention of further violence and the integration of people back into the community. These services include shelter for women and children, counseling, legal direction, advocacy, and community education. Our goal is to end domestic violence and sexual abuse in our community with the intention of creating a safer world.*

(Note: This mission statement also includes a reference to the organization's vision.)

**Marjaree Mason Center** (Fresno)

*The mission of the Marjaree Mason Center is: working to eliminate domestic violence and homelessness in our communities through prevention and intervention, including education, counseling and shelter.*

(Note: This mission statement also includes a reference to the organization's vision.)

**Human Response Network** (Trinity County)

*Recognizing the special vulnerability of children, the mission of the Human Response Network is to better the lives of all people in Trinity County through advocacy, education, and programs that promote personal empowerment, peaceful co-existence, mutual respect, and access to needed services.*

(Note: This mission statement also includes a reference to the organization's values.)

**Plumas Rural Services, Inc.** (Plumas County)

*Plumas Rural Services, Inc. is dedicated to improving the quality of life by promoting the health, education and well-being of local residents and families.*

**Sutter Lakeside Community Services** (Lake County)

*Sutter Lakeside Community Services is committed to intervention, support, education, and prevention programs to improve total health status and family wellness for all residents of Lake County. It is our purpose to serve children, their families, and the elderly to achieve a sustainable healthy community.*

(Note: This mission statement also includes a reference to the organization's vision.)

**Alternatives to Domestic Violence** (Riverside County)

*Improve the quality of life and create hope by ending the cycle of violence through services and education for residents of Riverside County*

(Note: This mission statement also includes a reference to the organization's vision.)

**Interface Children Family Services of Ventura County** (Ventura County)

*The primary purpose of Interface Children Family Services of Ventura County is to (a) organize volunteers, professionals and community resources into affordable and accessible counseling, intervention, education and shelter programs for youth, families and organizations in Ventura County; and (b) to develop coordinated community-based approaches to unmet family, youth and community needs.*

*Source: The Oertel Group and Interface Children Family Services © 2002. Developed in conjunction with the Institute for Organizational Health, a technical assistance project funded by California's Department of Health Services for domestic violence organizations. Each organization referenced provided permission for the display of its mission/vision statements.*

### ***FAQ – Frequently Asked Question – How can an organization increase staff and board member familiarity with its mission statement?***

In some organizations, board and staff members when asked to describe the purpose of the organization convey it in a more narrow or out-dated manner than the one adopted by the organization. This limits the effectiveness of the mission statement. While this condition may be caused by a mission statement that is too long or not-well-worded, it can also be caused by lack of familiarity with the organization's mission statement.

Strategies for increasing familiarity with the final version of the mission/vision statement include:

- wall signs
- board and staff meeting agendas
- fax cover sheets
- e-mail replies
- new employee orientation
- brochures
- letterhead
- human resources handbook

*Source: The Oertel Group, © 2003*

---

## Vision

The vision statement articulates the change or outcome intended from the work of an organization. The vision statement can be ongoing or be more time-limited for the period of a strategic plan. Similar to mission, a vision statement provides the basis for mobilizing the organization's human resources (board, staff and volunteers) and drawing their commitment to their work. The vision statement helps to streamline decision-making processes around strategies and opportunities.

There are different expert opinions about the format and extent of vision statements. Some experts suggest that the vision or change that an organization is intending to address with its services be included in the mission statement of the organization. Other experts prefer a separate vision statement. Others suggest that the vision be linked to the timeframe of the strategic plan; in other words, what will be different in the community because of the effort by board members, staff and volunteers in implementing the strategic plan.

For many organizations in the field of domestic violence, the vision is to eliminate violence from their communities. This, though, may not be likely to be achieved in the span of a single strategic plan. Therefore, the organization may want to develop a vision statement that articulates the ultimate end state of a violence-free community as well as the change in the community envisioned for the end of the strategic plan. It may also be helpful to develop a vision statement describing how an organization will need to be different in order to accomplish the proposed ultimate or community vision. The sample from Catalyst contains all three of these elements: ultimate vision, community vision and organizational vision.

Some organizations also choose to present their philosophy or guiding principles along with their mission and vision statements. Philosophy statements outline the beliefs of the organization around their work and frequently articulate a theory of change (i.e., how will families develop violence-free lives). For domestic violence organizations, the vision statement should reflect whether its philosophical underpinning is more one of public health or one of a justice orientation.

### Your Organization's Development of Materials

Like the development of the organization's mission statement, the development of the vision statement should be a key part of the organization's strategic planning process. The process should involve all key stakeholders (board, staff, and volunteers), and group time should focus on development of key concepts and components of the vision, rather than writing the statement itself. Drafting of the wording of the vision statement (and organizational values/philosophy) should be an individual activity, while the final review and approval of the statement should be a group effort.

### Catalyst

*Ultimate Vision:* Eradicate violence in Butte County

*Community Vision:* By 2002, Butte County will have significantly reduced the overall incidence of domestic violence through the leadership of Catalyst working with the Council, community leaders and service providers.

*Organization Vision:* By 2002, Catalyst will be and be perceived to be the professional and efficient organization necessary to accomplish the community vision. Catalyst will have strong administrative and information systems, have a diverse and representative board of directors and be fiscally sound.

---

## **STAND! Against Domestic Violence**

### ***Vision Statement***

Affirming that domestic violence is a community issue, STAND! envisions itself as a strong collaborator, utilizing its core competencies in both prevention and intervention, to provide clients services and build community-wide awareness, understanding and commitment which will foster progress toward the elimination of domestic violence.

STAND! envisions itself supporting the work of others dealing with issues related to domestic violence by developing collaborative projects that utilize the core competencies and expertise of each collaborator, and by sharing its expertise and resources to enable others to incorporate strategies to reduce domestic violence within their own programming.

To achieve this vision, STAND! will more effectively integrate its own prevention and intervention services internally, will refocus its core services in Contra Costa County, expanding beyond Contra Costa County only as accompanying resources make expansion attractive, do not erode current services and can demonstrate impact on the mission. STAND! will also build sufficient operating and capital reserves by 2001 and have a systematic approach to allocation of both fiscal and human resources that affirms its core values.

### ***Mission Statement***

For those impacted by domestic violence, STAND! Against Domestic Violence is the catalyst for change that breaks the generational cycle of violence and rebuilds lives.

STAND! Against Domestic Violence is committed to ending domestic violence through the provision of prevention and intervention services primarily in Contra Costa County.

## **Interface Children Family Services**

### ***Who We Are and What We Believe***

Interface was established in 1973, as Interface Community Inc., with the primary purposes to: (1) organize volunteers, professional and community resources into affordable, accessible counseling, intervention, education and shelter programs, for children, families and organizations; and (2) develop coordinated community based approaches to unmet child, family and community needs.

Interface envisions a future where the phrase "to interface" is the generic equivalent of "to help" and that every person within Ventura County will have had their lives improved either directly or indirectly through being an Interface volunteer, service participant, donor, employee or community partner.

Interface is a public benefit organization that is client and community-focused, values-based and outcomes-driven. We strive to develop a sense of community that values unity without uniformity and diversity without divisiveness. As an organization, we expect, encourage and reward innovation, creativity, positive client outcomes and keeping our promises to the clients and to the community. At Interface, we believe in teamwork, individual excellence and accountability.

At Interface, we believe that it is important to acknowledge, value and accept that ethnic and cultural differences exist. Those differences shape our individual and institutional behaviors and beliefs. Our policies, procedures and practices and training opportunities as well as our staff and volunteers reflect to the best of our abilities the value we place on diversity and inclusiveness. These values impact our methods of operation so that we are able to respond effectively to the needs of a population that has a diverse range of religious beliefs, cultural experience, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientation, gender, physical capabilities, educational backgrounds and economic resources.

## **Women's Transitional Living Center (WTLC)**

### *Philosophy -*

WTLC strives to offer the most current, competent, and professional services with the ultimate goal of creating a healthy, productive environment for clients, staff, volunteers, and board members. In both service provision and fundraising, we maintain the highest professional and person ethical standards. We respect the diversity of the individuals we work with and serve. Each person's contributions are valued as we work together cooperatively with open communication. We continually evaluate the effectiveness of our services, with established channels for feedback and accountability.

We strive to help individuals and families gain a sense of empowerment that encourages them to reach their potential in a violence-free life. Through our comprehensive counseling programs, our clients' perspectives move from helplessness to hopefulness.

We believe that the world will be a better place for all of us when women stand shoulder to shoulder with men in a spirit of peace and cooperation at home, at work, and at play.

---