

Minutes from Tri-County Batterer Intervention Network Meeting
March 4, 2003

Members Present – Paula Manley (Manley Interventions), Chris Huffine (Men's Resource Center), Courtenay Silvergleid (Portland State University), Songcha Bowman (Private Practice), Cassandra Suess (Pacific University's Psychological Service Center), Marc Hess (Multnomah County Community Justice)

Minutes taken by: Courtenay Silvergleid

Topic for today: Issue of risk assessment and lethality assessment

We know that batterers recidivate in little ways, big ways and sometimes in lethal ways. What should be the expectation of batterer intervention providers with regard to screening and action regarding risk and lethality?

One member began to discuss the issue of probation. So much depends on the degree of probation supervision. If you have formal supervision then there can be action taken if you as a provider believe there is heightened risk. If there isn't a probation officer then your ability to actually act on any concerns is diminished.

Another member confirmed the importance of probation officers and talked about the benefits of having close working relationships with P.O.'s. This member discussed how he/she can casually suggest making a home visit if he/she has concerns regarding risk/lethality. You can do it more informally. Strategize together which helps to maintain your integrity as a provider. You aren't the sanctioning body, but you can relay the information you have to the sanctioning body.

If there isn't adequate supervision by PO, there is too much responsibility placed on the provider. Providers certainly can't require regular phone check-ins, conduct home visits, etc. Additionally, if there is a probation officer, he/she can notify the victim more easily if there are concerns. There needs to be greater collaboration between providers and advocates so that they can work more effectively together when heightened risk is perceived.

Other difficulties/complexities around risk assessments? One member believes that batterer intervention programs generally don't have enough information to actually do an accurate risk assessment. They don't have prior criminal justice involvement (arrests that aren't convictions), arrest details, probation history (supervision history), victim perspective. In Portland, Portland Police Data System is very complete and with so much information, a summary from a PO won't suffice.

On the flip side, probation folks don't have all the information that providers do. They don't have week to week contact informing them about ongoing relationship problems, jealousy, psychological abuse, stalking, recent assaultive behavior, lifestyle instability (lost job, can't pay rent), substance abuse probability, anti-social peer group, attitudes, minimization or denial of offense history. In addition, what POs often don't have is information that could lower their assessment of the risk. They don't get to see the progress that men make.

Given that folks thought we had only begun to tap into issues regarding lethality and risk assessment, a decision was made to continue conversation at the next Tri-County Meeting which will be on April 1st.