

Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider Network Meeting Minutes December 2, 2003

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Minutes by Courtenay Silvergleid, edited by Chris Huffine

Topic for Today: Economic Abuse

One form of abusive behavior that perpetrators commonly engage is economic abuse. However, it is often not given the same attention that physical, emotional and sexual abuse receive during intervention programs. The goal today is to talk about economic abuse to enhance our own awareness about how it manifests so that we can better educate the men in our programs about it.

The group began with a brainstorm of examples of economic abuse:

- Not paying child or spousal support
- Making the victim account for every penny she spends
- Hidden accounts or shifting/moving money from account to account
- Excessive spending
- Limiting access or scrutinizing the money
- Setting the economic agenda/priorities within the household
- Criticizing her spending
- Non-acknowledgement of family financial needs
- Unequal division of financial responsibility
- Refusing to get a job
- Requiring her to work
- Not valuing domestic work at the same level as out of the house labor
- Keeping her from getting a job, restricting what kind of job she gets, sabotaging her work
- There are many ways in which this particular controlling behavior can manifest such as:
 - giving her grief about not being at home with her kids
 - saying that her working suggests that she doesn't believe in his ability to provide
 - put-down/dismissive comments about her ability to get a job
 - restricting transportation
 - not doing his share of the domestic responsibilities
 - getting her pregnant
 - isolating her from a support network that could enable her to work

- extreme jealousy
- Restricting educational development
- Hiding documents such as passport, SS card, green card, etc. so that she can't get job
- Saying "my" money versus "our" money
- Unemployment to punish wife and kids
- Making unilateral economic decisions
- Considering domestic expenses as "hers"
- Denying money for basic needs
- Determining specific styles of spending – knit picking how she spends the money
- Undermining her financial decisions
- Withholding economic information
- Lying about finances
- Secret purchases
- Giving her an allowance
- Property destruction, breaking her things or household things
- Throwing out her items
- Letting medical/dental/car insurance lapse for her and the kids
- Using higher paying job as leverage in other family decisions
- Dismissing her math/financial management skills (especially for folks from non-dominant culture, saying that they don't understand finances in this culture)
- Keeping her financially dependent on him, by not filing for documented status
- Whining, complaining, badgering in order to get his financial interests/purchases met
- Imposing financial values (spending versus saving)
- Under-involvement in financial decisions
- Registering items in one name – vehicles, houses, etc.
- Borrowing money without consulting her

Group had a brief discussion about whether these behaviors are examples of abuse when women demonstrate them. In other words, victims can have hidden accounts or make secret purchases. Group determined that key difference between victim use of these behaviors and perpetrator use of these behaviors is whether the specific activity is part of a constellation of abusive and controlling behaviors. What is the intent of the behavior and where does it originate?

Group then began a discussion about how to intervene in group with men's economic abuse.

- Educate men about wide range of domestic expenses
- Encourage dialogue about finances
- Encouraging men to think in terms of "our" money instead of "mine"
- Helping them understand how self-focused and selfish they have been

- Address their cognitive distortions, economic specific thinking errors, belief systems
- Identify their economic value systems as one perspective, not the RIGHT perspective
- Point out the larger cultural supports for their economic abuse (e.g. undervaluing of domestic work, women's unequal earning power)
- Teaching them how to work as an economic team (equal voice for her, all financial information in the open, joint decisions)
- Negotiation exercise (Duluth curriculum)
- Identifying and holding him accountable to financial agreements
- Voicing the alternative view (partner's view)
- Addressing the issue of financial trust – assume your partner is your ally and has good reasons for her decisions
- List forms of economic abuse during group
- Deconstructing male financial privilege – male role
- Emphasize other roles/contributions that men make beyond financial
- Teach men how to be economically assertive
- Teach men difference between fishing and getting a fish – where is the true earning power
- Emphasizing their financial responsibility to their children

Despite the fact that money often comes up in group, the full range of control tactics rarely gets discussed. Subsequently, it is critical that providers make an explicit attempt to raise them.