<u>Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider Network Meeting Minutes February 13, **2018**</u>

Present: Chris Huffine (Allies in Change); Jason Kyler-Yano (Portland State University); Jacqueline Pancoast (Eastside Concern); Regina Holmes (ARMS); Kelly Bjordahl (Pathfinders); Tiffany Eggleton (Raphael House); Emmy Ritter (Raphael House); Linda Castaneda (Castaneda Counseling); Carrie Kirkpatrick (Multnomah County DCJ); Nanci Jarrard (VOA Home free-Safe Start); Phil Broyles (Teras Counseling); PJ Bennington-McCary (VOA Homefree)

Minutes by Jason Kyler-Yano, edited by Chris Huffine

<u>Discussion Topic: Barriers and encouragers to abusive partners making change</u>
The discussion today is not about the typical risk factors, but in our experience… What are the factors that increase the likelihood of abusive men changing and what don't increase the likelihood to change?

<u>Shame</u>
High shame guys have a poor prognosis for change if you can't break through that shame. Low levels of shame are more likely to receive services well. Likely to admit to their mistakes, bad behaviors. High shame is super strong at saying that no, no, no, they would never do that… deeper denial. Compared to substance abuse stuff, they are very good at promoting talking about their abuse.

If they aren't committed to changing behavior (e.g., addiction) and think they can partake then their risk is higher.

Toxic Shame (Bradshaw) … important to identify shame coverups (substance abuse) … shame v. guilt. Some people use the Johari Window to help with this—who we are and what we let others see about us. Letting them know about this hidden area and the impact. Guys with such intense shame, sometimes take months just to become part of the group of "batterers."

<u>Social networks—pro-social and pro-abuse</u>
Isolation is a barrier to change for sure… who are they connecting with? While some of these men are quite isolated, others have a great social network which supports their pro-abuse beliefs. Sometimes guys who are more isolated are more open to what is being said in groups because they are so isolated. In some cases, isolation increases likelihood that they don't change and at other times it increases the likelihood of changing. Isolation sometimes makes men take time to open up to the group which is a barrier to change. It's not so much having a social network, but its more so how that social network is holding you accountable (pro-abuse or accountable for your own actions).

The challenge is when the pro-abuse beliefs are in the workplace and in the families. It's huge when the pro-abuse beliefs are in the workplace… it's hard to combat. When men do make the changes there is some tension that happens. This is a great example of pro-social v. anti-social support system. There can be a non-criminal yet pro-abuse belief social network / peer who is a complete negative influence but is absolutely law abiding. Example of how it is much more subtle than criminal or not.

Recovery mentors do so well in drug courts but we're not sure how that would work in the dv community. They have to be trained and certified. Some are volunteers and some are paid. We're supporting this without research behind it because it is working so well.   Formalizing/ professionalizing the mentors can be problematic because it becomes a status/graduating thing. It's important to emphasize that this work is an on-going process… you're never recovered. This

It's important to emphasize that this work is an on-going process—you're never recovered. This is in part because there are many men who are put out as good models who are also still doing work on themselves and are struggling themselves. Though who knows best about the manipulation techniques and struggles… peer mentors. Relatability of recovery mentors who have walked in their shoes and know what they're feeling. For people who surely don't get any sympathy from society, it is super valuable to have that kind of support. It seems it would lead to a better outcome.

Can it be set up in a way where philosophically you aren't done, you are still continuing, (e.g., they still have to continue training), though you are agreeing to help someone while still learning and improving? Many of our DV mentors are still being abusive, despite their significant change and work, so being willing to admit this seems quite important in order for this mentorship to work. It is very rare that he hears from partners that their perpetrator is completely free of committing abuse.

Another person present said they think it is dangerous to have men who have power and control issues to be granted more power and control as a mentor.

Self-care
One provider has made self-care and healthy support systems (formal and informal) more of a focus in groups and whether they are good for them and bad for them. Self-care as a priority is important because many of them work so much. So it's more the issue of balance
Unemployment
Unemployment is a risk factor because their identity is so tied to work. Also pushed back against the unemployment point… has had unemployed guys who have had great change in part because they have more time and energy than other guys. On the other hand, I have also seen other guys struggle when they are unemployed. Doesn't see employment as being a factor either way.

Motivation to change
Another example is their motivation to change. It doesn't need to be internal. External motivation drops as POs have larger caseloads and have a harder time supervising the men. "The reason I come back next week is because I don't want to go to jail, because I don't want to lose my marriage." They can be completely externally motivated but they have to be motivated. Doesn't guarantee them taking in the material but does increase the likelihood.

Connection to the group
Connection to the group is an encouragement to change and alternatively not being connected to the group is a barrier.

Understanding the impact of their abuse
One provider is much more optimist for the guys when they understand victim impact… how and who they've hurt. The guys she feels best about really deeply understood the impact of their abuse on their partner. Both intellectually and empathically, though actually more on a feeling level is different than intellectual level. The empathy and compassion bubbles up as a result of the work they've done.

When men are emotionally absent from their partner (their partner feels alone though not being abused) then this heart/head change is not likely to happen. With heart change can have moments of behaving badly but because of the shift in compassion can actually make real change (heart v. head).

That is what I mean… when men say I am so sorry for what I did (not just cognitively getting it). For these men, they stick with their victims/partners more and longer to support them and be sensitive to them. When their partner is upset or separate, they get why the partner has to be separate from them and are upset with them and hope that their relationship can change later.

On the other hand, just because there is good empathy doesn't mean they can't be abusive again.

There was a guy who broke down crying in a group, had a great accountability statement and then 3 or 4 months later brutally abused her. She thinks it was the shame and guilt about his abuse that allowed him to channel these intense feelings at her. More and more men are connecting with individual counseling to do the internal shame/guilt work that is outside of the scope of the BIPs. This could be a difference in impression management (they are well trained in doing this image management to their communities) v. actually emotional change.

Another attendee thinks that abuse is calculated so questions why gaining insight into the impact on their partners is "growth." The guys don't have a clue about the huge amount of damage they caused. They think they caused just a tiny bit of damage through minimization. They struggle, in their impact statement, with seeing the impact of their abuse and taking accountability for behaviors. They are really disconnected with this stuff. Do you think they don't know how their behaviors affect their partner? NO, they often don't. They are not sadists, they are controllers whose main motivations are to make their partner fit into their model of women/partners/relationships. They are sort of objectifying their partners and thus building empathy is so important. Helping them understand the level of suffering that they have created is important. This lack of understanding allows them to the next day say that everything is fine and why are you upset because I'm not upset.

Privilege is applicable here because the privileged group does not know and is not concerned with how the oppressed group is feeling and experiences oppression. They don't think it is a big deal because to them it isn't. To get them appropriately uncomfortable is a step in building empathy.

Men say, oh they look sad. One provider pushes them to think about how sad they are, what does it look like, what does it feel like for them? How long were they sad, how sad were they?

Humility
Humility... to what extent are they able to say they don't know everything…

Relationship status
Interested in external motivators of still being in the relationship and what happens when that goes away. The voluntary men tend to go away if the marriage goes away because they think the problem was her and so now the problem is gone (voluntary side). Once in a while a volunteer guy stays because he gets that the problem isn't her. That's when it's important to keep them involved because that's when they're dangerous.

There's also the element of shame there because he failed in the relationship. The shame of not being able to keep the person here can lead to resentment and greater abuse and a barrier for them to look at themselves and their ability to change. See themselves as damaged goods. One provider reframes it as how they're probably going to be in another relationship and asks them how they contribute to the mess of their past relationship and how they are going to change that for their next relationship. They do pull back and look at themselves a little bit. She relates their contribution to relationships to their other relationships (e.g. sister, brother, kids)

Shifting from an external to an internal focus
One more thing is a shifting from an external to an internal focus. That's huge and is more of a long term goal but it is an indicator of real change. An awareness of their own emotional states, of their own agency, of their own accountability. "These are the choices I'm making, these are the feelings I am experiencing, I have power over how I behave." It's almost like they need an internal focus from another orientation.

Accountability
One more that hasn't been mentioned: Are they willing to own some part of the problem? The more they take some ownership the better the prognosis.