

Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider Network Meeting Minutes October 13, 2015

Present: Chris Huffine (Allies in Change), Adina Beth Rubin (Central City Concern-Eastside), Alison Dunfee (Pathfinders of Oregon), Michael Davis (Central City Concern), Matt Johnston (Domestic Violence Safe Dialogue), Jacquie Pancoast (Eastside Concern), Tim Logan (SoValTi), Kendra Harding (Lifeworks NW), Rachel Smith (Portland State University), Kate Sackett (Portland State University), Krystal Duff (Bridges 2 Safety), Guruseva Mason, Jennifer Hopkinson (Clackamas Women's Services), Katherine Stansbury (Eastside Concern), Shannon Barkley (Clackamas County Corrections), Dawn Penberthy (Clackamas County Probation and Parole), Sandi Rorick (Multnomah County Dept. of Community Justice), Tammie Jones (Multnomah County District Court)

Minutes by Rachel Smith, edited by Chris Huffine

Topic: Classification System for People Convicted of DV (Presentation by Chris Huffine)

Chris Huffine presented his classification system which is very similar to a system developed (and with some empirical support) by Pence and Dasgupta a number of years ago. A copy of that article, along with Chris' PowerPoint is attached. Chris briefly reviewed his proposed classification system (previously presented at the May 2015 Tri-County meeting). It should be noted that the Pence and Dasgupta article identified the exact same categories, albeit with different names, except for Chris' 4th category, which, ironically, he is the most concerned about being inadequately addressed. Those six categories are:

1. One time event (due to a mistake)
2. Limited occurrence (due to a co-existing psychological issue)
3. Secondary aggression (in response to being abused/a pattern of abuse)
4. Continuing subtle pattern (limited obvious/illegal acts of abuse overlaying a larger pattern of subtle "milder" abuse)
5. Continuing obvious aggression
6. Larger criminal pattern (multiple victims, not limited to romantic partners)

He noted that the first three categories do not have pro-abuse belief systems and hence do not have patterns of abusive behavior and would not need a full program. Practically, and logically, programs would see very few mandated men who truly fell into the first three categories. The later three categories do have pro-abuse belief systems and would need full programming. Many in the fourth category might score low on risk tools and might be misidentified as belonging in one of the first three categories. The sixth category was likely to score as the highest risk and receive the highest level of supervision.

He made a couple requests of the group. The first is whether they were willing to agree with and accept this classification system and that it fit with their own direct experience (given that they would be having limited contact with males in the first three categories). Second, he proposed that all individuals arrested for DV in Multnomah County would automatically be placed into batterer intervention programs. Those programs would then do on-going in group assessment of referrals. Any who they believed fell into the first three categories would be released early from requirements.

General Discussion on Classifications and Category-Specific Interventions:

Category 1. We often find that, overtime, more stuff starts to come out, which falls under Category 4. Although Category 1 is an extremely unusual and rare category, the court seems to think they see a lot more people under this category. This is concerning because, while some of us can recall men who may fall into this group, we eventually see those "not-pro-social" attitudes come out a few months down the line because we live in an abuse-justifying culture. There was general concern in the group that there was real risk of inappropriately putting mandated abusive men into this category.

Category 3. Secondary aggressors are probably the most acknowledged among women arrested for domestic violence, with much smaller numbers among men. The power dynamic in the relationship is skewed and the intentions are different. Still, wrong is wrong. There are also cultural differences that can come up with mixed-cultural couples (e.g., there is a power dynamic in the context of a hispanic man with white woman).

Common pro-abuse belief systems are, collectively, a way of thinking that makes it okay to be abusive. Thus, the key work that needs to be done is not stopping behaviors, but rather targeting pro-abusive belief systems, because it is much more covert than what is generally understood around domestic violence. Pro-abuse involves justification of behaviors (e.g., "I'm not as bad as that guy", "The ends justify the means", etc.)

Following the thinking of classifying men, ideally there would be an individual plan for each man. Batterer Intervention providers should be the ones making the decisions about where each person falls within categories, and then the levels of intervention needed.

How do we measure pro-social vs. pro-abusive belief systems? You cannot right up front, because it has to do with culture, social constructs, resistance to the intervention, etc. Self-report is not reliable, especially for negations of abuse perpetration. We also need to take into account educational, economic, and cultural differences.

Secondary abusers should not necessarily not be immediately mandated to batterer intervention (e.g., secondary aggressors who decide to kill their abusers). We still need to do more education with judges and defense attorneys, and we need alternative treatment modalities for cases like these.

Intervention providers and others involved in the overall coordinated community response to domestic violence need empowerment. A commonality among batterer intervention providers is that 5-6 months is needed to really assess the men. We typically get a better picture of individuals about 5-6 months into their participation in the program. In Marion County, when there used to be different lengths of programs, there would be re-assessment throughout the course of the program.

If we have a resolution around this proposed categorization system, it should not just be up to intervention providers to do the assessment. The probation and others working with these men need to be doing assessment as well so that we can all come together and see how our assessments do or do not match up and why.

The general consensus seemed to be that while people were interested in this classification system and proposal, they were not yet ready to fully commit to it and to do the in-group assessment and variable length of service provision that Chris had proposed. Concerns included misidentifying/underestimating the level of abuse and having the full burden of placement on programs. Given that this could only be implemented with every program's (and probation) support, it will not be implemented at this time.