

Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider Network Meeting-May 11, 2010

Attendance: Chris Huffine (Allies in Change Counseling Center), Amber Sutphin (Multnomah County DV Unit), Stu Walker (Multnomah County DV Unit), Ryan Alonzo (Bridges to Safety), Choya Adkison-Stevens (YWCA Yolanda House), Amanda Binley (Bridges to Safety), Regina Rosann (ARMS), Sara Windsheimer (Choices DVIP), Samantha Naliboff (VOA Home Free), Emily Szeliga (Allies in Change), Melinda Sherman (Men's Resource Center), Ashley Boal (Portland State University), Phil Broyles (Teras Interventions and Counseling), Guruseva Mason (Choices DVIP), Marta Bringas (MHFCS)

Minutes by Ashley Boal, edited by Chris Huffine

Meeting Topic: Corporal Punishment and DV

When it comes to corporal punishment (i.e., the use of physical discipline with children), it is presumed that most, if not all, providers take a stance against it. Given that some of those men who attend to use/believe in corporal punishment, how can that be effectively addressed in the group? The group discussed this issue.

The Case Against Spanking is a book you can read if you are interested in the topic. There has been research evidence showing the negative effects of corporal punishment in a variety of domains including negatively affecting intelligence level. Murray Strauss, a DV researcher has published several international studies in recent years on the negative effects of corporal punishment.

First, it is important to talk about it with the men rather than just assume they are not using it. It was suggested to focus on realistic alternatives to physically controlling your child. It needs to be very realistic and practical. Make it clear that not using corporal punishment doesn't mean letting your child do whatever they want, rather it's using alternatives and finding a different way of relating.

You can talk about it in parallel to DV and how it is still a form of physical punishment and abuse. Frame it as looking at the relationship you are creating with your child when you are using physical punishment. Present it as the difference between compliance out of fear vs. out of respect. Physical discipline encourages fear rather than respect- need to differentiate what the difference is between fear and respect and how it affects masculinity. Respect is the more enduring and desirable quality to engender as a parent. You can control your children or you can teach them self-control, especially useful when talking about teenagers.

One tactic to use with men is to talk about their childhood experiences and what makes a good childhood. Ask about what relationships were like growing up and how that affected them, is that the relationship you want with your children? Focus on the need for the same worldview as a parent and partner. Work with children in a collaborative way, both individuals have needs and it's respecting those needs in a healthy way.

If you are taking time in groups to discuss corporal punishment are you taking away time from DV related info? They are very much the same and if you talk about corporal punishment you have to provide info on alternatives.

You can talk about when they punish the child, is it when they are most angry? Talk about that, it is a short term, anger induced solution. Another thing that may come up is what each partner does and who is doing the parenting. You can discuss the entitlement/ownership angle.

One way NOT to talk about corporal punishment is from a moral angle. Men are more likely to become defensive and reactive to that perspective if they don't share it.

BIP providers are mandated reporters, issue of when to report? Usually if he reports he left a physical mark/injury. Can only do mandated reporting when hearing info from the victim or perpetrator, can't be a third person. Mandated reporting isn't super common in BIPs or probation. What is best in terms of victim's safety? When reporting does nothing for the child, it may escalate the situation and disenfranchise men from the group.

What about parenting children with a disorder of some sort? In some people's experience these are the ones at most risk because they may be more challenging. The man may use the child's condition/behavior as a justification for his "physical punishment".

The abuse can cause a cycle where behaviors get worse due to punishment and then because of that punishment gets worse, etc.

What about biblical justification? Have to explain the context of the passage, break it down.