

## Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider Network Meeting Minutes--10/16/2007

Present: Chris Huffine (Allies in Change Counseling Center), Cassandra Suess (Men's Resource Center/Women's Counseling Center), Diana Groener (Allies in Change), Stacey Womack (ARMS), Regina Rosann (ARMS), Phil Broyles, Lynda Bridges (Bridges to Safety), Elsie Garland (Juvenile Services Division), Brad Peterson (A New Life Christian Counseling), Priscilla Marlow

Minutes by Chris Huffine

### Outreach To/Working With Non-Mandated Abusive Men

-For purposes of this discussion, mandated men refer not only to court-mandated men, but also men who are mandated by DHS-Child Welfare. Many providers work almost exclusively with men coming from one of those two referral sources. "Non-mandated" men refers to men who are being directed to attend by some other referral source including, but not limited to: their partner, therapist, doctor, employer, minister, or themselves.

-In the past decade there has been increased energy, interest, and money to do outreach to battered women other than through shelters and the legal system, such as in medical settings and in the workplace. However, there's been much less focus on men who are abusive. It's likely only a matter of time before there is increased focus on men who are abusive. As outreach and education is done in those settings there will (hopefully) be an increase in the number of abusive men seeking out batterer intervention who are not court-mandated. What can we do to help reach out to those men? To what extent do we need to modify our services to adequately meet the needs of those men, particularly those of us who work almost exclusively with court-mandated men?

### Who are these men?

-There is a large number of abusive men who do little or no physical abuse, primarily perpetrating verbal and psychological abuse. Because they are not technically doing anything illegal, most of those men are unlikely to get arrested for domestic violence or have other court involvement.

-The primary difference between mandatory and non-mandated men appears less about their level of abuse and more that one group has been arrested and the other group has not. This is similar to what has been observed among alcoholics/addicts who voluntarily seek out addiction treatment compared to those on probation.

-Most non-mandated men still have some external motivation for attending--to save a relationship, keep a job, or preserve parental rights.

-As more outreach is done to abused women, they are becoming more knowledgeable about

domestic violence. While not necessarily leaving the man, they are more likely to set firmer limits and to insist that he seek out services for himself.

-As batterer intervention agencies become more well-known and do more public education and outreach more non-court referrals are likely to occur.

### Challenges

-One challenge in working with non-mandated men is that they tend to drop-out at significantly higher rates relative to mandated men.

-An overemphasis on physical abuse or illegal abuse can alienate non-mandated men. They are more likely to see themselves as “not like” those physical abusers, and different from those “criminals”.

-Even more so than their mandated peers, non-mandated men are likely to see themselves as “not a violent person”, “not a batterer”, “not a criminal”.

-Words like violence, domestic violence, and battering may also keep away non-mandated men who are mainly emotionally abusive and controlling.

-On the other hand, some non-mandated abusive men may have done fairly severe violence that they have forgotten or denied. The victim often has a clearer and more enduring recollection of some of the most severe episodes.

-Evidence based practices, particularly the Latessa model tends to focus on more severe and extreme violence and more criminally oriented men. Such models will be even less attractive and appropriate for non-mandated men who have less severe abuse.

-The thought of doing a group with other abusive men can be particularly intimidating to these men and pull for many stereotypes and fears. They are more likely to want to do the work individually or even within the context of couples counseling. Efforts to steer them into a men’s group leads a number of them to drop out altogether.

### Interventions--within batterer intervention programs/groups

-It was suggested that one way to help “ease men in” is to offer shorter term anger management classes which could then be used to refer men who need it into longer term programs.

-Having someone “monitoring” the man’s attendance and compliance tends to reduce drop-out. For example, one provider reported that pastor referred men tend to have a higher completion rate because there is someone they need to be accountable to.

-Offer a specialized group/curriculum for non-mandated men to help de-stigmatize the work and to tailor it to better fit their particular needs and barriers. One program already offers such a

group. This may be especially helpful for non-mandated men who are more tentative about seeking out services.

- Another approach would be to focus more on the general lifestyle of being abusive and the more general underlying beliefs which most have in common, rather than focusing so much on specific acts of abuse, where there might be greater diversity.

- While potentially not as effective as a group, offering individual counseling focusing on batterer intervention is still better than nothing or than individual counseling that doesn't directly address those issues.

- You may need to use a "lighter touch" with these men in terms of language and confrontation. Too heavy handed an approach may alienate them and/or increase their drop-out rate before there is significant change. This might include some willingness early on to use euphemisms such as "anger" as well as toning down the frequency of other words such as "domestic violence" and "battering".

- Perhaps talk with men who are currently engaged in the program and doing well about what sorts of things would have helped them seek out and be open to a program in the past. What are words that would have made a difference?

- Another way of working with these men is, early on, to use the words they are using to describe their abuse and control, even if such words are not completely accurate or accountable.

- The timing of when a non-mandated man is referred to a group is critical. If a man is referred too soon he is at much greater risk of dropping out. On the other hand, waiting too long to refer to a man may mean his motivation is less due to the passing of the crisis.

- One protocol one provider uses with couples where there is abuse is to do some basic education of the couple about these issues (in a gentle, easy manner), then suggest individual counseling instead and later, once the individual is engaged, suggest enrolling in a group.

#### Interventions--outside of batterer intervention programs

- There are efforts being made locally and across the nation to do more prevention work focusing on perpetrators of abuse. For example, in Olympia some money targeted for law enforcement was instead used to do some more prevention work.

- Having program graduates speaking publicly can help raise awareness and reduce stigma about being an abusive man and needing to seek out help. This has worked effectively in a number of other movements such as the addiction field or combating homophobia.

- Encouraging men to do reach out to other men who they see as being abusive can also help generate referrals and awareness among men.

-Do more public training and outreach to raise awareness of these issues.

-Encourage those who are doing outreach to victims to incorporate a component of outreach to their partners.

-Do more education and outreach to professionals (e.g., doctors, attorneys, therapists, pastors) about how to reach out to men who are abusive.

-Develop brochures that talk about what a healthy relationship looks like or what healthy parenting looks like.

-In general there needs to be more outreach done targeting men and people who are abusive.

**It was agreed that there is much more about this issue to be discussed. This topic will be revisited and further discussed at a meeting next year.**