

Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider Network meeting-8/16/05

Attendance: Debbie Tomasovic (A Better Way Counseling), Sonja Miller (Multnomah County Mental), Annie Neal (Multnomah DV Coordination Office), Brian Valetski (DCJ Multnomah County DV unit), Jennifer Hopkinson (Clackamas Women's Services), Samantha Naliboff (VOA Home Free), Olga Parker (Modus Vivendi), Ella Smith (ChangePoint), Matt Johnston (Domestic Violence Safe Dialogue), Mischelle Plunkett (Life in Focus Education), Yvette Wright (Life in Focus Education), Linda Castaneda (Manley Interventions), Regina Rosann (ARMS), Wendy Viola (Portland State University), Jaime Chavez (Cedar Counseling Center), Curtis St. Denis (Allies in Change/ICE), Chris Huffine (Allies in Change)

Minutes by Wendy Viola, edited by Chris Huffine

TOPIC: Termination

Some situations are clear cut - poor attendance or active resistance. When clients still present themselves as victims over months, this is appropriate. But when you have men who quietly resist, there is a dilemma. They may acknowledge some violence or abuse, but still are not acknowledging physical abuse or what was said in the police report, etc.

You can either look at some of these clients to be inching along or plateaued. It may be a good intervention for the group to let the man go. This has an energizing effect on the group when the client is terminated. The client is told that he isn't identifying issues in the group that he can work on, then he isn't getting anything out of and should not come back. There are some men who say just enough to get by. But there are some men who are left in the program, and maybe after a few more months, they can start to get it.

An introverted person has a style of not saying much. But these clients aren't disruptive, and typically get something out of the program. For many men this is the only opportunity they get to address these issues.

So long as they are not actively resistive, many providers feel they still may get something out of the group. The PO is a good partner to discuss the termination issue. The PO gets info that the provider may not get.

A difficulty for some is what to do with the client who even at the end of the program is not acknowledging his issues around battering. This type of client doesn't get it, but he goes through the motions. Unlike the client who is blatant and stops attending and makes it easy to terminate him, this one is just compliant enough to stay in. One perspective on how to deal with this is, if they have attended the entire length, to report them back as uncompleted, but are not recommended for sanctions. If we walk the talk, we would be controlling ourselves if we asked they be revoked for not thinking the way we do. These clients perhaps should be given, "time-served." Another provider does indicate the client has completed, but notes there is still reason for concern, and notes discrepancies. Some providers have them share their letter of accountability with the group, others don't. The group may discuss and hold perpetrators accountable.

Sometimes more disclosure is encouraged, other times less. In one BIP's class, the only completion requirement was that the men would attend for 52 weeks. At the end of that time,

regardless of what their current beliefs were, they would be considered completed. There would be no judgment as to accountability, all they had to do was show up. Other providers kick them out if they don't show progress, in terms of their spoken beliefs. But when or where else could a client have the opportunity to hear the information we have to present. Generally speaking, the telling point should be when the individual is interfering with the group process. The first course of action is to talk to the individual. If they interfere with the other men learning, they have to go.

Another group this seems to be more of an issue with are some non-native-born who are compliant but maintain a high level of denial throughout. One provider also gives them a "time served" status, since there are not culturally specific groups for those men.

There are a subgroup of men - if they have a personality conflict with a provider - who may benefit from a change of programs or counselors. We need to look at the person's effort.

Question: What about people with learning disabilities, cognitive or personality disorders? What if they don't get it because of this, rather than willingness? Illiteracy can be an issue. But we can work around this. Some have other group members help or have individual appointment time.

Part of determining when to terminate depends on the philosophy of the program.

Another issue is how often do you terminate. If you keep a man in the group who is not trying to do the work, you are colluding. Some programs terminate and restart clients at this point, having to start all over. But this can be overdone. You don't want to collude with them appearing to be done when they are not, but on the other hand, the men may feel betrayed, and thus shut out what they have learned.

Women have a tendency to stay with a man who is in treatment, so terminating him might help her decide. But on the other hand, if he is terminated, he has more stress and is perhaps more likely to abuse her.

When a client is terminated, there is a question as to what groups if any will apply toward completion. Some BIPS think what was attended in the past should count toward the minimum assignments. Another point of view is that they did prior assignments as a lie. Some agencies say the client's previous time counts, but they have to demonstrate competencies. Other programs say they have to start over after being terminated, but they consider what knowledge he has retained.

In summary, men that are quiet are not necessarily non participatory. Some people are resistant and not quiet, but we can be patient if it's not in a way that undermines the group. We expect a certain amount of resistance at the front end. The problem lies with the small group of men whose resistance does not go away.

Men who are implicitly or explicitly embracing abusive behavior need to be terminated. Most men who have continued to embrace abusive behavior after 6-8 months should be terminated. Men are reminded that one of the goals of the group is to be nonabusive and noncontrolling - initial warning. If men don't hear that and it continues, then they need to terminate.

Men who are terminated because they can't function adequately because they are behaviorally resisted are another category. They can't hold themselves together in a group. They might not necessarily be appropriate for sanctions, but can't be kept in the group due to disruption.

One option for men who don't work out in a group may be to see him individually.

There are two customers we work with - the client and the referral source. PO's may not understand why we allow the client in a group when he's resistive. It can be difficult to explain.