

Tri-County Batterers Intervention Network Meeting
9/20/05

Present: Michael Crowe (Choices), Marc Hess (Allies in Change Counseling Center), Kelly Hart (Communities in Partnership to Stop Violence Against Women and Children), Angela Schultz (VOA Home Free), Jacquie Pancoast (Change Point), Paul Lee (Men's Resource Center), Jeanne Goetz (Women's Counseling Center), Debbie Tomasovic (Allies in Change), Chris Huffine (Allies in Change), Robert Johnson (Landerholm Counseling), David Houston (Lifespan Counseling), Cindy Lyndin, Don Voeks (Gresham Intimate Violence Education), Elsie Garland

Minutes by Marc Hess, edited by Chris Huffine

Topic: Coordination with Victim Advocates and other professionals working with the victim and BIPs

Confidentiality - One BIP gets the offender to sign releases to the victim as well as several local VA agencies.

If there is contact between the victim and the offender, assume that what you say to the victim will get back to the offender, because they are talking.

Reasons in favor of having contact:

- One reason is to hear the perspective of the victim.

- More important if there is contact, that the BIP ask the victim how is he doing, rather than the victim asking the BIP. What is their experience of him?

- If there is contact with the victim, it may increase her willingness to engage in victim advocacy services. At Safety Matters, they have a routine part of their initial services that They tell the victim that an advocate will contact them if they sign a release.

- One way we can confirm whether change is happening is coordinating with the advocate and/or the partner. Especially, later in the work, when you are expecting that the offender is doing ok, to confirm or deny this is helpful.

- Another benefit of coordination is to learn to represent the voice of the victim in a group, based on stories of real situations learned from victim advocates who have worked with victims of the men we work with.

- Sometimes O is in BIP, but V and O are seeing a pastoral counselor in addition. This is an opportunity for the BIP to contact, educate, coordinate. Others said they don't call victims. Several reasons were given:

-One is that it is discouraged by the state standards. Written contract is the standard, (e.g., about the program and BIPs in general). Question is, where do you get the mailing information. Most get it from the man at intake.

-There is also the danger of disclosing something that will have a negative impact on the victim.

-Must be careful about conveying positive information about the offender about his behavior in the group, as that may give false hope.

What to do with any information provided by a victim? One way to use the information, is to confront the offender in a mild, non-direct way about the general topic that concerns the victim. One provider, instead of directly confronting the offender with information provided by the victim, will tailor the topic of the group that night to cover that issue. Or, wait a week or two to discuss that issue.

Advocates said that they only get involved if the victim identifies that she wants their involvement and if she wants support of the agency. They give info to the victim to contact BIP and default is that she contacts them on their own. What about other levels of coordination, (e.g., families, churches, etc.)? Advocates said that any move they make is survivor generated. They look at to what degree the victim can establish self advocacy and access resources by herself. If a victim has sought her own help, (e.g., individual therapy) would the BIP then contact her directly to gauge the offender's progress? Advocates say that information from the VA about victim progress wouldn't be gotten that way anyway. They won't make that call, they are there to support the victim. VOA Home Free has the new contract with Multnomah County Probation DV Victims

The brochure "Is he really going to change this time" is helpful in providing information to partners of men in BIPs.

What are some of the questions that women are asking in women's groups?

How effective are BIPs – the percentages are not good.

They want to talk about his program. This is the area where they have no control, it's up to him.

The issue of making decisions about contact between victim and offender is a hot issue. Clackamas county is tackling this now in a committee of BIPs, Probation, DA, Judges, Women's Resource Center. Washington County has a committee examining this as well. One BIP will work with the PO to slowly integrate the offender into the home.

