

Tri-County Batterer Intervention Provider Network Meeting Minutes April 10, 2018

Present: Chris Huffine (Allies in Change); Jason Kyler-Yano (Portland State University); Regina Holmes (ARMS); Matt Johnston (Domestic Violence Safe Dialogue); Linda Castaneda (Castaneda Counseling); Carrie Kirkpatrick (Multnomah County Department of Community Justice); Tim Logan (SoValTi); Sara Van Dyke (Clackamas County)

Minutes by Jason Kyler-Yano, edited by Chris Huffine

Discussion Topic: Trends or changes in the DV field

The first trend in the DV field that we discussed was the grouping of abusive men into typologies based on risk, and specifically the Colorado and Washington risk models. The three levels of risk in the Colorado model are 1) first time offenders who are not perpetually abusive, 2) medium risk typical offenders with multiple charges, 3) High risk offenders usually with high criminality. The Washington model differs from the Colorado model in that it adds on an additional level of psychopathic offenders.

The question of whether or not offenders from different risk levels should be mixed was brought up and several perspectives were brought forth on this issue. One provider described how he has observed different motivations between high/medium risk and low risk men, where the former are motivated to stay out of jail because their families depend on them and the latter are motivated by the negative effect their behaviors are having on their jobs, friends, and lives. A couple of times during this discussion, the notion that different cultural factors might play an important role in the groups regardless of risk or race was brought up. Examples of these cultural factors were education level, experience and knowledge with the criminal justice system, and social economic background.

Risk Assessment was discussed, particularly in terms of how well we are able to assess risk and what to do with offenders of different risk levels. Our current risk assessment tools in some ways are quite objective in categorizing men because the items/questions are objective (e.g., number of arrests). Later in our conversation, the racial and class bias of our policing system was identified as a factor that can lead these assessments to identify men of color and poor men as more risky compared with similar white and middle class men. The topic of mixing men of different risk levels in the same groups required a nuanced examination. There was debate and discussion about whether this is practical, who to separate out, etc. The strongest stance was keeping those rare psychopathic offenders out of regular groups, regardless of the risk level of other group members.

While this separation of specific groups might be highly recommended, culturally specific programs and groups (e.g., African American men) have a much smaller pool of offenders, staff, and groups from which to pool leaving them to, at times, having to mix low, medium, and high-

risk offenders. One provider from a culturally specific program shared that he sets his groups up as a positive prosocial group with norms and expectations that allows him to create non-ideal mixed groups and still maintain productive sessions.

The discussion then shifted to a discussion of how to determine success for offenders and programs. One provider shared that one measure of success he uses is when men who have completed his program either continue to attend voluntarily or keep in touch with him to check in. We talked about the process of change for abusive men and how it takes much longer and is less linear than many in the justice systems and public understand or wish it to be. This topic led to the endorsement of searching for and having researchers conduct more studies and program evaluations that use qualitative data, analyses, and results to really capture the rich processes of change and of success that might not be captured by simple re-arrest data. This discussion of the complex processes of change also led to a brief discussion about how long it could take for real change to take place (e.g., abusive and controlling beliefs and ideology). Some folks said around a year, and others said 2-3 years. This is in contrast to what society and many justice folks believe is appropriate and needed—usually shorter.

The trend of evidence-based practice was discussed, specifically around the more prominent and controversial practices of Moral Reconnection Therapy-Domestic Violence (MRT-DV), Acceptance Commitment Therapy – Violence (ACT-V), Strength at Home Program, and couples counseling. We briefly discussed the motivations for, shortcomings of, and effectiveness of these programs that are part of the evidence-based practices trend.

Several other trends were briefly discussed nearing the end of our meeting time. These included the trends of mindfulness/self-compassion in treatment, focusing on fatherhood and parenting in treatment, specialized programming, better understanding of dating violence, and social media's effects on DV work. Regarding mindfulness and self-compassion in treatment, the challenge of holding both accountability for offenders' behaviors and promoting their self-compassion at the same time was brought up, as was the danger of untrained people attempting to do trauma informed work while doing more harm than good. Focusing in part on fatherhood as a motivator for offenders has been found to be effective by some providers. We ended the discussion with a brief mention of how social media is both good for the DV field when it increases accountability due to the digital paper trail and record, and bad when it allows abusive men to stalk their partners online.