



Evaluation of the Batterer's Intervention Program (BIP) of the Delaware Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“In a positive way I think it’s great that we have a state where we are able to communicate to the extent that we have where you can go to the court and say these programs are important and here is why and we would like you to send batterers only to our certified programs. I think that is success.”

– KEY LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWEE

“I value the fact that the standards allow for a good balance between a basic structure to which all certified programs must adhere and the flexibility for each certified program to have its own unique identity.”

– KEY LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWEE

“It [the Batterer’s Intervention Program] is all encompassing. It works to dispel the myth that abuse is only physical; addresses personal accountability; teaches coping mechanisms and encourages participants to examine their life decisions.”

– BATTERER’S INTERVENTION PROGRAM FACILITATOR

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Overview

This report details findings from the first multi-faceted evaluation of the Batterer's Intervention Program (BIP) of the Delaware Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC), a longstanding standards-based program established in 1994. First developed in the 1970s, Batterer's Intervention Programs currently operate in every state and in several other countries.²

This evaluation of Delaware's Batterer's Intervention Program began in early 2016. The overall goal of the study is to demonstrate through a *meaningful, precise, and accurate* evaluation, the program's accomplishments and effectiveness, possible areas for improvement, and recommendations for the future. The study design, developed in collaboration with DVCC and provider staff, utilizes an array of both qualitative and quantitative measures.

This mixed methods evaluation design recognizes the critical importance of recidivism and other data, but also recognizes the importance of capturing the wisdom and perspectives of service providers, judges and court commissioners, and others involved with the program. It should be viewed as a significant step in enhancing the organizational capacity of the Batterer's Intervention Program; it also reaffirms DVCC's commitment to being a "learning organization."

Delaware's Batterer's Intervention Program Model

The foundation of the Delaware Batterer's Intervention Program is the Domestic Violence Intervention Standards, first adopted in 1994 and revised in 2012. The purpose of establishing standards is:

"...to increase victim safety by eliminating violence in intimate relationships. The interventions will focus on holding the offenders accountable for their behavior by teaching new skills and monitoring their behavior while they are participating in the intervention program."³

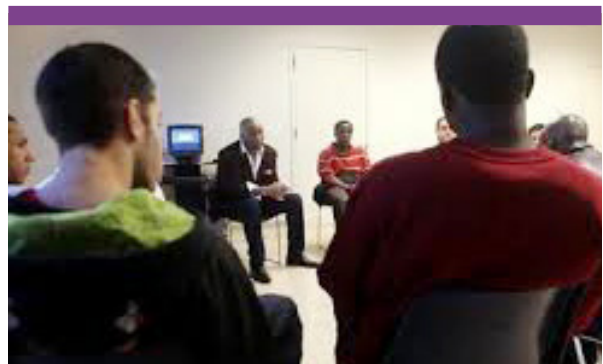
The program model includes intake, assessment,

² Acker, S.E. (2013, October). Batterer intervention programs: Getting to the root of domestic violence, p. 1. *Utne Reader*. Accessed March 16, 2017. <http://www.utne.com/community/batterer-intervention-programs-ze0z1310zpit>.

³ Delaware Domestic Violence Coordinating Council. (2012). *Domestic violence intervention standards*, p. 1. Wilmington, DE.

orientation, and delivery of a carefully structured curriculum. The purpose of the Batterer's Intervention Curriculum, as outlined in the Standards, is to:

- A. Provide a model for intervention which identifies and remediates tactics of "power and control" and other abusive behaviors;
- B. Promote consistency of intervention services statewide;
- C. Hold the offenders accountable for their behavior;
- D. Provide a model of violence-free behavior among family members.⁴



The curriculum draws upon the Duluth model developed in the early 1980s by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project of Duluth, Minnesota.

The Standards spell out standards of care, system procedures and flow, program content, credentials and other program specifics, including the length of the program. There are two types of programs offered:

- Domestic Violence Intervention (Batterers Type) – The length of the program intervention is at least 32 session hours over a minimum of 20 weeks, with a minimum of 16 sessions.
- Domestic Violence Intervention (Offender or Not Otherwise Specified Type) – The length of the program intervention is at least 24 session hours over a minimum of 15 weeks, with a minimum of 12 sessions.

Currently, there are four certified treatment providers offering batterers' intervention programs in Delaware. These programs follow the guidelines established

⁴ Delaware Domestic Violence Coordinating Council. (2012). *Domestic violence intervention standards*, p. 1. Wilmington, DE.

through the Domestic Violence Intervention Standards and have been certified by the Delaware DVCC Batterers' Intervention Certification Panel. They are also required to submit an annual report to the Certification Panel. Programs are offered by: Catholic Charities (New Castle County), CHILD, Inc. (New Castle County), Turning Point at People's Place II (Kent and Sussex Counties) and Dover Air Force Base (for military personnel only). Three of these programs—Catholic Charities, CHILD, Inc. and Turning Point at People's Place II—agreed to participate in this evaluation.

The Batterer's Intervention Program Evaluation Design

The Delaware Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) sought to evaluate the Batterer's Intervention Program comprehensively, based on overall program design, implementation at the three participating sites, and assessment of program outcomes, with the support of a grant awarded by the Delaware Criminal Justice Council through the STOP Formula Grant awarded to the State through the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women. To accomplish this, the evaluation team used a mixed methods design with both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess the program. Early on, program administrators and the evaluation team made the decision to focus on male participants in the program, due to far greater numbers of males in the program and the possibility that male and female offenders would have differing results. This evaluation constitutes the first comprehensive evaluation of the Batterer's Intervention Program since it began in 1994. Components of the evaluation included:

- Review, collating and analysis of available quantitative data and materials from DVCC and providers;
- Analysis of recidivism data available through DELJIS – With the assistance of Delaware Criminal Justice Council staff, 1,300 records of 2012 and 2013 Catholic Charities, CHILD, Inc.

and Turning Point at People's Place II participants were analyzed to determine re-arrest records over the subsequent two-year period;

- Results of BIP Process (BIPPOS) pre-tests and post-tests – Utilizing a tool developed by Dr. Eric Mankowski of Portland State University, pre-tests, midpoint tests, and endpoint tests were administered to program participants at Catholic Charities, CHILD, Inc. and Turning Point at People's Place II;
- Program observations;
- Judicial surveys;
- Judicial interviews;
- Other key informant interviews;
- Facilitators' surveys; and
- Brief focused literature review.

Key Accomplishments

Key accomplishments identified during the evaluation include the following:

1. A viable program, established over two decades ago and based on national models, has continued to serve Delaware families. The Batterer's Intervention Program is established as a comprehensive model that meshes with research findings about effective, evidence-based programs. The program model:
 - Includes the certification of programs in the Batterer's Intervention Program, to ensure the consistency of quality service delivery.
 - Provides a well-defined framework to the certified providers for service delivery.
 - Through the use of Standards, provides for "a good balance between a basic structure to which all certified programs must adhere and the flexibility for each certified program to have its own unique identity."
 - Requires the use of a recognized curriculum that "addresses personal accountability, teaches

"I think [the Batterer's Intervention Program] does breed attitude changes in the participants and I can't say in every participant, but in those who are engaged in the treatment and buy into it. I can see that there's an attitude change and they think before they act. I think another strength is allowing them to attend a program, once they complete, if issues come up, for free." – KEY LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWEE

coping mechanisms and encourages participants to examine their life decisions.”

- Through the DVCC, offers opportunities for providers to have a continuing voice in a collaborative setting.
 - Puts in place a system for refining the program model through revision of the standards.
2. Through collaborations among multiple systems – DVCC, the courts, providers, and probation and parole—several hundred batterers are offered an alternative to incarceration each year. In FY 2016, about two-thirds (66%) of participants completed the course of group sessions.

“There are wonderful surprises when the most resistant participants eventually become the most desirous of changing their behavior.”

– BATTERER’S INTERVENTION PROGRAM FACILITATOR

3. Based on a review of two years of Delaware Criminal Justice Information System (DELJIS) arrest records for 1,300 males who participated in the Batterer’s Intervention Program in 2012 and 2013, re-arrest rates are significantly lower among participants who completed the program than for those who did not.
4. Based on a comparison of Batterer Intervention Proximal Program Outcomes Survey (BIPPOS) pre-tests, midpoint-tests and endpoint tests, the program is having a significant impact on participants in several specific areas targeted through the curriculum: personal responsibility, power and control beliefs, understanding of the effects of abuse, dependency on partner, and anger control and management skills.
5. Based on multiple observations, survey results, and interviews conducted with key stakeholders and others, the certified providers—Catholic Charities, CHILD, Inc., and Turning Point at People’s Place II—are seen as offering high quality services which are well-received by the participants and are consistent with the requirements of certification.
6. Based on structured observations of both the orientations and group sessions, facilitators are highly knowledgeable and are skilled in: (1) introducing the program at the orientation in a way that establishes norms for participation and appears to reduce batterers’ defensiveness; (2) delivering the curriculum; (3) building rapport and encouraging peer to peer interactions; and (4) maximizing the positive impact of the group sessions. Based on interviews and surveys, all three providers are viewed as having strong, experienced leadership and staff. Facilitators are also experienced, with more than one-third (35%) of the facilitators having worked in the field of domestic violence programs for more than 15 years.
7. Facilitators noted the rigor of the assessment process, the positive outcomes for participants, and the impact on their families as primary strengths of the Batterer’s Intervention Program. Facilitators expressed satisfaction with their professional and personal growth during the time they had been part of the Batterer’s Intervention Program.
8. Judges and commissioners who were surveyed and interviewed pointed to: (1) the certification of the treatment providers and consistency of treatment and (2) the reputation of the providers and—for those who had seen them in action—the quality of the services delivered by the providers.

Key Challenges

Key challenges identified by participants in the evaluation process and through observations are summarized below:

1. Judges, commissioners and others were concerned about the lack of communication between the judicial system, DVCC, and the providers, feeling that judges and commissioners needed more information about the program in order to make the most appropriate referrals to it and, also, to have more of a sense of its efficacy. Several judges commented that, while they receive periodic feedback about some referrals they have made—those that have not completed or violated the terms of their probation—they feel that they are not sufficiently educated about the program.



2. As a corollary, several judges and commissioners were concerned that, although the Batterer's Intervention Program had been in existence more than 20 years, evidence hadn't been cited of its efficacy.
3. The financial commitment required of BIP participants was raised as a concern by judges and commissioners and others who were surveyed and interviewed, despite the availability of reduced fees through sliding scale policies. Respondents also cited lack of transportation as another potential barrier to participation.
4. Providers, judges and others raised concerns about the "one size fits all" nature of the program and the need for services for those who are also facing substance abuse and mental health issues.

5. As suggested in the literature about Batterer's Intervention Programs, "increased awareness of the diversity of the batterer population has given rise to the belief that more specialized approaches are needed."⁵ For example, the need for more African-American and Spanish speaking males to conduct groups was cited by facilitators.
6. Respondents also expressed concerns about sentencing laws and the negative impact they had on the program (e.g., "...regarding strangulation, a judge can only sentence for a maximum of five years, unless it is a second offense or more if a deadly instrument is involved. This statutory maximum is too low. If you only give a five year sentence, that will become three and a half years. A longer prison sentence would give more leverage.").
7. A few respondents expressed disappointment that the number of PFA referrals to the program wasn't higher and felt that that was something that the DVCC and courts should address.
8. Particularly at this time of budget constraints in Delaware, several respondents were concerned about finding sufficient financial resources to sustain and adequately staff the program over time.

"I don't need an all-day orientation; just a quick to the point presentation regarding where the programs are offered, how long they last, how much they cost, what cost reductions are offered, and whether any program has been shown to reduce [domestic violence], and whether the latter is being studied."

— JUDICIAL INTERVIEWEE

⁵National Institute of Justice. (1998). *Research in action – Batterer programs: What criminal justice agencies need to know*, p. 2. U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC.

Recommendations

The recommendations included below are drawn from the array of qualitative and quantitative data collected during this evaluation. They reflect the viewpoints of those involved in the evaluation process. These recommendations are designed to build upon the strengths of the Batterer's Intervention Program: the DVCC program model and vision, an established program, an experienced group of providers and facilitators, and opportunities for collaboration. Key recommendations are as follows:

1. Focus on strengthening communication among the providers, courts, probation and parole, and the DVCC. This is the most consistent recommendation to emerge from this evaluation. To this end, develop and implement a comprehensive strategy that:
 - Provides timely follow up to judges and commissioners about the status and participation of each person they have referred to a provider.
 - Disseminates information annually on key indicators of program participation and success for each provider.
 - Creates an online link that offers resources about the Batterer's Intervention Program and includes evaluation results, presentations, and other easy to access information about the program.
 - Includes a plan for providing judges and commissioners with information about the program model through presentations, short fact sheets and other easy tools.



“I am concerned about one size fits all. Every participant comes in with a different profile of personal trauma, substance abuse, mental illness, and tendency towards general violence. Yet they all take the same program. It is also very concerning that BIP is not offered in the prisons (or so I am told).”

– JUDICIAL INTERVIEWEE

- Encourages stronger communication between the providers and Probation and Parole. One of the respondents suggested having information sessions for the probation officers as well, so that they have a general understanding of the program, particularly in light of high rates of turnover. The respondent also encouraged that probation and parole officers communicate via phone rather than email, to better keep communication open.
2. Identify strategies to increase enrollments in the Batterer's Intervention Program by:
 - Revisiting the issue of costs and sliding scales, in an effort to find ways to communicate more clearly at every step of the process about the costs. Communicate in a uniform manner at every step that the sliding scale is available, so that judges, probation officers, and facilitators are offering the same, clear message about program costs.
 - To the extent possible, strive to insure that facilitators reflect the population that the provider is serving through the program.
 - Address the issue of why only 17% of those enrolled in the program in 2015 and 2016 are there because of PFAs and develop strategies to expand their enrollment in the program.
 - To the extent possible, consider transportation and scheduling barriers when planning orientations and group sessions.
 3. As part of capacity building efforts, form a DVCC Research and Accountability Committee comprised of DVCC staff, judges or commissioners, and agency representatives to

meet on a regular basis to develop and implement a more rigorous plan for ongoing data collection, analysis and dissemination. To build on this first evaluation effort:

- Design and implement a study that is focused on victims. While including victims was outside the scope of this evaluation, a pilot study that includes interviews conducted with victims of batterers enrolled in the program would have great value.
 - Continue the two outcome components of this evaluation: 1) the analysis of DELJIS data and 2) the utilization of the BIPPOS pre-test/post-test tool.
 - In the long term, conduct a cost-effectiveness analysis for the program.
4. As a corollary, and in light of current budget difficulties in the state, seek external funding to expand capacity-building efforts, with a particular focus on data collection and future evaluations, designed to address local, state, and national interest in the efficacy of Batterer's Intervention Programs.

Summary

Over the course of the evaluation, participants in the process demonstrated their ongoing commitment to the Batterer's Intervention Program, to the evaluation, to being part of a learning organization, and to constantly working to improve programming. Because of DVCC, there is the leadership and a collaborative framework for continuing to strengthen the program

“The foundation of abuse is disrespect. I believe that strongly. We have to challenge how people think about things and, hopefully, facilitate different ways and different frameworks that they can use to think about things, so they don't think, ‘My girlfriend's supposed to take care of me,’ or, ‘It's her job to do A, B, C, and D,’ or ‘If I say no to something, that means no.’ Those thinkings are the beliefs that are so detrimental. And, ultimately, when they don't work, that's when violence occurs.”

— KEY LEADERSHIP INTERVIEWEE

Acknowledgements

This report summarizes the findings of a multi-faceted evaluation conducted of the Batterer's Intervention Program (BIP) of the Delaware Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) from January 2016 to April 2017.

The study initiated with Aimee Voshell String, Project Coordinator; Eleanor Torres, past Executive Director; and Maureen Monagle, Executive Director at the DVCC. Their commitment to this program and their insights about its ability to impact the lives of offenders and victims have been invaluable

We especially want to thank the three non-military DVCC certified providers who provide BIP services in Delaware for their participation in the evaluation: Catholic Charities, CHILD, Inc. and Turning Point at People's Place II. We are grateful to each agency's leadership, their group facilitators, and their administrative staff for encouraging BIP participants to engage in pre- and post- testing, for providing valuable feedback, and for tracking data in a robust fashion throughout the past year. Of special note are Shamla McLaurin and Leslie Williams at Catholic Charities; Dan Armstrong and Robin Zizmont at CHILD, Inc.; and Blanche Creech and Linda Huffine at Turning Point at People's Place II.

Matthew Rosen, with the Delaware Criminal Justice Council (CJC), was instrumental in using the information contained in the Delaware Criminal Justice Information System (DELJIS) and providing data analysis of re-arrest rates among BIP participants. Melissa Kearney offered great assistance in understanding the process for litigants. Dr. Eric Mankowski, Portland State University, provided invaluable help with the utilization of the BIPPOS pre-test/post-test tool.

Delaware's judges and commissioners were generous with their time and insights while providing interviews for this report. Their deep understanding of the issues surrounding intimate partner violence and the context in which they work informed this study immeasurably.

We are grateful to Linda Nash, Barbara Goldberg & Associates, LLC, for entering the pre- and post-test data and to Laura Siitari for designing this Executive Summary.

Consistent with the strong expectations of the program, agency, and judicial leaders who informed this project, we hope the ideas presented in this report will serve as a call to action to ensure strengthening of and continued attention to the Batterer's Intervention Program of the DVCC.

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