



Featured in this issue: Offender Accountability

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From the Executive Director

This issue of our bulletin addresses offender accountability, which is one of the more challenging components of domestic violence. Those of us in the field embrace our collective mission to provide services and resources that address the needs and concerns of victims and survivors but we often struggle with how best to effect and enforce lasting change in abusers.

We know that we cannot truly prevent domestic violence until abusers commit to stop abusing. Our role in helping to achieve that reality, however, has always seemed less concretely defined. Historically, batterer programs have served as one element of offender accountability, although assessing them for consistency or effectiveness in preventing domestic violence has always proven challenging because they are neither regulated nor overseen by a single entity.

One promising response has been the development of Abusive Partner Intervention Programs (APIPs), which evolved from the batterer program concept but are different in scope and approach. This issue's feature article, "Abusive Partner Intervention Programs: Beyond Battering" by Máire Cunningham explores the theory behind the original model of batterer's programs and highlights how abusive partner intervention programs are designed to work.

As always, I thank you for your continued partnership and wish you a safe and happy summer.

Signature of the Executive Director

The New York State Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team

The New York State Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team consists of members from state and local entities — advocates, police, district attorneys, courts, health, corrections, social services, probation among others. The team conducts detailed reviews of domestic violence deaths and near-deaths, not to place blame, but to identify trends and patterns that may suggest improvements to New York State's overall response to domestic violence.

To date, we have reviewed thirteen cases and several themes have emerged. One is that people close to the victim or offender – family, friends, co-workers – were often aware of the abuse before the killing, but weren't sure how to respond. This illustrates the importance of public awareness about homicide risk and how to support friends and loved ones who may be in danger.

To refer a case for possible review, visit: http://www.opdv.ny.gov/professionals/fatalrev/nysdvfrreferral.html

1-800-942-6906
NYS Domestic & Sexual Violence Hotline

Confidential • 24 HRS/7 DAYS
English & español, multi-language Accessibility
711: Deaf or Hard of Hearing
In NYC: 311 or 1-800-621-HOPE (4673)
TDD: 1-800-810-7444

Shine the Light: 10th Anniversary!

October 2017 marks the 10th anniversary of our annual, statewide Shine the Light on Domestic Violence campaign! We hope that you will partner with us to help make this our biggest, most spectacular campaign yet. Visit the Shine the Light toolkit on our website for materials, resources and ideas about low- and no-cost ways to raise awareness in your community. Remember to photograph your efforts and send us your captioned photos throughout the month of October. Questions? Email: opdvpurple@opdv.ny.gov

The Great New York State Fair

It will soon be time for the Great New York State Fair, scheduled for Aug. 23-Sept. 4, 2017 in Syracuse, NY. If you go, make sure to stop by the OPDV booth, located in the Science and Industry Building. We'd love to see you there!

Did You Know...

In 2015, 22 percent (6,087) of the 27,667 individuals on parole were identified as having a history of domestic violence.

Source: 2015 NYS Domestic Violence Dashboard.

# Broadening Our Lens: Abusive Partner Intervention Programs – New York State Guidelines

[Máire Cunningham](#), New York State Excelsior Fellow, NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

Feminist theory has been the prevailing model for abusive partner programs, also referred to as batterer intervention programs, since they were created in the 1970s. This theory looks at domestic violence through a patriarchal lens, focusing on how a man uses violence as a way to maintain power and control over his female partner. While there is no doubt that gender bias – both conscious and unconscious – exists in our society, there has been some debate as to whether the feminist theory is the best model for abusive partner programs because it emphasizes on heterosexual relationships and does not address violence in same-sex relationships.

As a result of this debate, many abusive partner programs nationally and statewide have questioned curricula that strictly focus on feminist theory and have emphasized instead society's acceptance of violence in general to address abusive behavior. By broadening their focus, these programs can address violence in all relationships, regardless of sexual orientation or gender.

While this shift has helped make the field much more inclusive, it also has created inconsistencies among abusive partner programs. Many organizations have requested guidance from OPDV on how to determine whether abusive partner programs are using best practices. In response to these requests and as part of the agency's commitment to continuous study of developments in this field, OPDV has created "[Abusive Partner Intervention Programs – New York State Guidelines](#)" to provide individuals and organizations with knowledge and information so they can assess abusive partner programs.

## Abusive Partner Intervention Programs – New York State Guidelines

OPDV staff with expertise in the criminal justice, victim services and abusive partner fields created the guidelines, which provide a list of characteristics and things to consider when assessing these abusive partner intervention programs operating in New York State. Staff drew upon the extensive knowledge of Executive Director Gwen Wright and the most recent research in the field to build upon the foundation laid by OPDV, victim service and abusive partner intervention programs throughout the state over the past 25 years.

The guidelines reiterate the importance of a coordinated community response and accountability as central components of any abusive partner program. [They](#) also acknowledge the need to recognize programs that accept voluntary participants, although OPDV prefers mandated and referred participants:

...programs that accept voluntary participants should be recognized for the service they provide to those who are outside the criminal justice system and might otherwise never participate in an abusive partner intervention program. While there is no formal mechanism for holding participants accountable, these programs have a strong focus on accountability and have processes in place such as keeping detailed reports on attendance and participation as well as requiring participants to complete assignments that provide opportunities for self-accountability. They hold the participant to all the policies and procedures that apply to mandated clients.

The guidelines address the impact that trauma-informed programming and shared services have on working with participants but also make clear that a history of trauma, mental illness, or substance abuse is not an excuse or the cause of abusive behavior. Information about female and LGBTQ participants, program length, cultural competency, and other topics also are included.

The [guidelines](#) also explore the time-honored question, "Do these programs work?":

This is a difficult question to answer, as there is no clear way of measuring the success of a program. In the past, a successful program was one that reduced recidivism. However, there is no consistent evidence that these programs reduce recidivism.

Instead of asking, "do they work?" one should ask the following to gauge the quality of a program: Is the program part of a coordinated community response? Are there consequences for non-compliance? Are participants engaged and invested in the process? Are programs focused on accountability, behavior change, and educating participants on how their behavior affects those around them? Are programs using trauma-informed practices? What kind of tools, if any, do programs use to assess a participant's progress?

Most professionals and facilitators of these programs would agree that dismantling abusive behaviors and pro-abuse beliefs is a process, not an end result, as is the case with any substantial behavioral change. If abusive partner programs do anything, they plant the seeds for this behavioral change. It is ultimately up to the participant to decide whether to change their abusive behavior.

While not an all-inclusive list, the guidelines can provide assistance when deciding between several programs, or can be used as an information guide for those who wish to know more about abusive partner programs.

# Q&A: Offender Accountability and the Role of Trauma



This Q&A was conducted with **Tamaris Princi**, [Abusive Partner Intervention Program](#) Coordinator at the **New York City-based Urban Resource Institute**.

## **Q** Could you describe the Abusive Partner Intervention Program that you coordinate and facilitate?

**A** Our Abusive Partner Intervention Program (APIP) is based on a curriculum developed by [Correctional Counseling, Inc.](#) (CCI) that combines [Moral Reconnection Therapy](#) with other principles, such as concepts of power and control, trauma-informed care, and an understanding of personality disorders. Our program has 65 sessions that focus on challenging participants' abusive behaviors and thought patterns. Each session is facilitated by two professionals and/or one professional and one survivor with (lived) experience.

## **Q** Is your program connected to the criminal justice/legal system?

**A** Our participants are typically mandated to attend by the criminal justice/legal system. Although this allows for oversight and accountability, it also presents challenges for program staff and participants. Since the program is based on the clinical cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) approach, facilitators work to gain the trust of participants so they can fully engage in the program. However, many participants have significant unresolved trauma histories so the time and effort required to establish a trusting, honest relationship may not happen according to the timeline of the sentencing court or mandating agency. As a result, while valuable in theory, the criminal justice/legal system may impose direct, often grave consequences before participants have experienced enough of the program to make meaningful and lasting changes.

## **Q** What do you mean by “unresolved trauma histories”?

**A** Although trauma does not cause an individual to abuse, changing patterns of abuse can be extremely difficult.

I coined the phrase “trauma-focused accountability” to describe being accountable for one’s behaviors while acknowledging patterns of trauma and understanding the relationship between the two. While there are relationships in which violence is committed by a single offender against a single victim, in many relationships that include violence, there exists a dynamic between two traumatized people. This concept, however, does not conform to traditional domestic violence interventions and programs.

Trauma histories can include various forms of childhood abuse and victimization in adulthood. Some of our participants also experience generational trauma, meaning that they are descendants of trauma survivors, or of individuals who have survived the Holocaust, slavery and other forms of oppression that can marginalize entire communities. These individuals have not only grown up with constant exposure to the violent stories of their countries and families of origin, they are repeatedly reliving those realities in the present, through the media and the way society has sensationalized and normalized a culture of violence, and condoned violence as an acceptable form of conflict resolution.

While the choice to abuse is neither acceptable nor outside of someone’s control, we try to help participants internalize healthier, non-violent behaviors that are often very different from the violent environments in which many of them were raised.

## **Q** How does your program define and measure “success”?

**A** The criminal justice/legal system considers participants successful if they are not reported for reoffending. But a significant portion of domestic violence tactics and behaviors do not rise to the level of arrestable offenses. Those that do are often under-reported or unreported altogether, so we recognize that reduced recidivism alone does not present the full picture of what is really happening.

As a result, it is necessary to understand that individuals who abuse can offend without causing physical harm or without engaging in acts that would be considered criminal. For this reason, the APIP curriculum focuses on both the offender behavior relating to the actual arrest/crime and examining the behaviors that led up to the arrest.

For example, it is not enough to focus on the hundreds of text messages that someone may send to their partner within the span of three hours. In order to be truly successful, the program must help the individual connect those text messages, which could potentially be criminally charged as stalking, with the irrational thinking that motivates those text messages. Most importantly, program staff must then help that individual understand why their behavior is abusive, and then help them develop healthier beliefs and behaviors.

## **Q** What else would you like people to understand about your program?

**A** The APIP model is grounded in the belief that all individuals are capable of change and worthy of opportunities for growth. Initially, it can feel intimidating to try to teach abusers ideas contrary to the ones they currently embrace. It is empowering to watch those same individuals become accountable for their actions, and feel confident that they will make better future choices.

Offender work is victim work. If we only provide direct services and resources to victims, we overlook the very people whose behaviors we want to change. When we do that, abusers not only continue to harm their intimate partners, they often perpetrate violence against others as well. In order to work toward prevention, we must begin to see domestic violence as a public health crisis and a public safety issue by addressing every component through collaboration and coordination of services, resources, and expertise.

One of the hallmarks of our program is our genuine hope that we will spark the fire of change in the hearts and minds of each and every participant. And I believe that we can.

# Legislative Update: Translation of Orders of Protection

For an order of protection to have value, both the victim and perpetrator must understand the conditions of the order. Parties with limited English proficiency may leave the court without that essential understanding. The 2017-18 budget contains a new law requiring language assistance in many courts and creating pilot projects to expand those services to all New York courts issuing orders of protection (Chapter 55 of the Laws of 2017, Part BB).

This law requires translation of temporary or final orders of protection,

when needed, in all Family Courts and Supreme Courts. Each of New York's judicial districts must implement these services for the 10 languages most frequently used in their district, following this schedule:

- Three languages by Jan. 1, 2018;
- Three more languages by June 30, 2019; and the
- Final four languages by Dec. 31, 2020.

The law also creates two important pilot projects: one town or village court within

each judicial district will develop best practices for language assistance for orders of protection in justice courts, and one county within New York City and two outside of the five boroughs will develop best practices for language assistance for orders of protection in their criminal courts.

The State's Chief Administrative Judge must consult with stakeholders, evaluate both pilot projects, and provide a plan for expansion throughout the state.

## OPDV Provides Funding to Local Communities

In an effort to support local communities across the state, OPDV funds the following:

### **The Ursula Forem Domestic Violence Program Employment Fellowship Grant**

The YWCA of the Niagara Frontier and the Family Justice Center of Erie County each recently received the Ursula Forem Domestic Violence Program Employment Fellowship Grant for 2017-2019.

The [YWCA](#) will develop and integrate a survivor-centered approach in all victim services to more effectively respond to the unique strengths and needs of each individual. The YWCA's Fellow will research best practices, develop surveys, run focus groups, evaluate data, and develop survivor-centered training. All program staff will then be trained on the

new survivor-centered approach, and all policies and procedures will be updated to reflect this new survivor-centered model.

[The Family Justice Center of Erie County, Inc.](#) will open a satellite office on Grand Island. The Fellow will assist in developing the plan for this new office, and will be trained on providing client services, including assistance with obtaining orders of protection electronically. The Fellow also will work with program staff to educate the community about service availability.

### **The Risk Reduction Enhanced Response Pilot Program (RRER) and the Risk Reduction Civil Legal Assistance Program (RRCLA)**

Last fall, Unity House of Troy and Safe Homes of Orange County each received

funding through the [RRER Pilot Program](#). Each Pilot seeks to prevent intimate partner homicides by strengthening community partnerships and using validated risk assessment tools. OPDV will fund four more programs to start in October 2017.

Building off of the promise of the RRER, OPDV launched the [RRCLA Program](#) to provide holistic legal services to victims of domestic violence who have been identified as having a high risk of homicide. The awarded DV agency will work with a civil legal assistance provider to identify and address victims' legal issues as quickly and comprehensively as possible.

## The Albany Stratton Veterans Affairs Medical Center

The [Albany Stratton Veterans Affairs Medical Center](#) ("the VA") provides services and resources for veterans who have experienced violence.

Currently, the VA screens all female veterans in the women's health clinic — and male veterans as appropriate — for intimate partner violence using the Extended Hurt/Insult/Threaten/Scream (E-HITS) screening tool. Based on the original [HITS](#) screening tool, E-HITS includes a sexual violence question to capture the full range of intimate partner violence tactics and behaviors.

In addition to E-HITS screening, the VA trains all staff and community partners on referral protocols, documentation, and interventions for clinical and non-clinical health care staff. They also provide follow-up services such as safety planning and referrals to resources both within the VA and the community for all veterans who screen positive for intimate partner violence. Additionally, the VA administers a 12-week, evidence-based [Strength at Home](#) program for male veterans who are violent in their intimate relationships. The VA currently has one class in progress and is accepting referrals for additional classes.

### **Partnership with OPDV**

In 2016, OPDV trained VA staff and the community as part of their Domestic Violence Community Awareness Day. That collaboration led to OPDV's participation in a panel discussion at the screening of "Buried Above Ground," a documentary about veterans experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder. This past spring, OPDV also presented to VA primary care staff on the importance of screening for intimate partner violence.

For more information, please contact [Bonnie Allen](#) at OPDV.

NYS Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence [www.opdv.ny.gov](http://www.opdv.ny.gov)

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