

**BATTERERS INTERVENTION PROGRAM STANDARDS
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

Meeting of December 5, 2005

Open session

Minutes

Voting Members Present (10): Sisan Smallman, RI Department of Corrections, Chair; Stephen King, RI Supreme Court, Vice Chair; Sage Bauer, RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Kristen Meuse, RI Justice Commission; Beatriz Perez, RI Department of Health; Janice Dubois, Supreme Court Domestic Violence Training & Monitoring Unit; Toni Marie Roderick, Urban League; Ed Degnan, Kent House/BIPs Representative; John Brennan, Justice Assistance; Honorable Elaine Bucci, RI District Court.

Seats Not Represented (3): RI Police Chiefs Association; Office of the Attorney General; Governor's Office.

Additional Participants (6): Kathy Carty, Vantage Point; Sharon Schwartz-Vanderhoff, Probation & Parole; Shelley Cortese, Probation & Parole; Brandi Campbell, Probation & Parole Intern; Deb Valleta, Kent Center; Laura Jaworski, BIPSOC.

Materials Distributed:

Meeting Agenda: December 5, 2005

Meeting Minutes: October 3rd, 2005

Certification Summary: Kent Center

BIPSOC 2006 Schedule of Meetings

Sisan Smallman, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:05 pm.

Review of Minutes

Minutes from the meeting of October 3rd, 2005 were reviewed and adopted.

Steve King made a motion to adopt the October 2005 minutes. Sage Bauer seconded the motion. All votes in favor; none opposed; one abstention (Judge Bucci). Motion carried.

Rules & Standards Subcommittee Report

Sisan reported that the Rules & Standards Subcommittee has been busy with revision to the Comprehensive Standards. Sisan reminded members that in Spring 2005, she and Laura met with Mike Grant, Legal Counsel at the Department of Corrections, to request an informal review of the proposed revisions to the Comprehensive Standards. In a meeting last month with Mike Grant, Sisan and Laura were informed that no particular problems are foreseen with those

revisions, as well as within the revised Rules of Practice and Procedure. At the next regularly scheduled Oversight Committee meeting, Sisan reported that she would like to begin the process of actively reviewing the revisions to the Comprehensive Standards and beginning the process of making final changes. Sisan will send all members a copy of the current revisions electronically, for members to review and provide feedback.

Review Subcommittee Report

Upcoming Renewal Applications:

- **Laura Jaworski is working on different phases of the application process with each of the following programs:**
 - o **Family Violence Intervention, expiring February 2006.**
 - o **Tri-Hab, expiring February 2006.**

Renewed Comprehensive Certification:

Deb Valleta was present on behalf of the Kent Center, whose existing Comprehensive Certification was scheduled to expire today. A program summary for Kent Center was distributed and reviewed. Kent Center is a private, non-profit agency and community-based provider of mental health, substance abuse, and educational services. Included in these service provisions is the batterers intervention program. Kent Center operates one (1) batterers intervention group for males per week in Warwick. All groups are facilitated by one male and one female facilitator and follow a twenty

week curriculum. Group observation and review of the curriculum, staff qualifications, supervision records, case files, and other documents were described in the summary, which indicated that the Review Subcommittee recommends renewed certification for two years.

Sage Bauer made a motion to award renewed Comprehensive Certification to the Kent Center. Toni Marie Roderick seconded the motion. Nine (9) votes in favor; none opposed; one abstention (Ed Degnan, BIP representative). Motion carried.

Member Issues/Announcements

Sisan reported in her experience at the “From Roots to Wings” Conference that was held in November in Dearborn, Michigan. The conference was organized by Batterers Intervention Services Coalition of Michigan (BISC-MI), and over the course of four (4) days of presentations, a wealth of knowledge and experience was shared. Sisan reported that in comparison to what other states are doing, it appears as though Rhode Island has good domestic violence statutes, good Standards, and an excellent monitoring process in place.

Sisan would like to find a means going forward to address the issue of affordable fees, especially as the number of certified batterers intervention programs decreases. The population in Rhode Island

will be less able to afford program fees in the future as operating costs increase. Some states have found creative means of subsidizing either the batterers programs or the clients with the use of state and/or grant funds. It is important for members of the Oversight Committee representing our own constituencies to find a way to reduce obstacles. While a program of subsidies would require more thought and planning, it would also require the willingness to revisit the DV legislation.

Sisan also noted that the batterers intervention programs are doing a great job with providing education and training to its staff/facilitators without much support. Janice Dubois questioned the possibility of batters intervention programs being covered through health insurance. Kathy Carty reported that it is not necessarily considered a “health” issue from an insurance standpoint. However, the Centers for Disease Control identified domestic violence as an epidemic and major health risk, particularly to women. For third party billing, agencies are generally required to identify a billable diagnosis and provide a treatment plan, which would diverge from current agency practice. Sisan noted that health insurance is not prohibited by the Standards, but most existing insurance plans do not cover treatment for what is explicitly identified as domestic violence or battering; in any case, most clients probably do not have access to health care anyway.

Judge Bucci inquired whether there were grants available to program

to defray these costs; Kathy Carty reported that that they are increasingly difficult to obtain, and only a few are available. Judge Bucci also inquired whether a program for victims was available to provide support and address self-esteem. She cannot force victims to attend any type of program, but she can recommend and note in the file that information was given to that victim. If a victim is requesting that an NCO be vacated, there might be instances when attending a program could be made a condition. Sage Bauer reported that support groups for victims are available through the various member agencies. Some agencies may hold a group in a classroom setting only when there are enough participants, but there is not an established program of any given length. Requiring completion could backfire in any case, and could be dangerous for the victim. Kathy Carty reported that on Saturday morning she holds an information session for victims, at which time they are able to review the program curriculum and ask questions about the program being offered to the perpetrators.

Toni Marie Roderick took this opportunity to identify some “creative funding” that is currently underway at the Urban League. Under contract with the DOC, they work with high-risk offenders at the ACI who have been charged with particular crimes. The Urban League has taken this opportunity to examine recidivism rates in relation to existing barriers, especially how they relate to domestic violence and sex offender issues. Toni further reported that the Urban League program formerly only assisted with sex offender counseling; this

has been expanded into domestic violence counseling/batterers intervention program. The Urban League is using some of their contract funds to assist with program fees for eligible clients for the first six (6) months of enrollment on a graduated schedule. Toni also added that if the offender is at the ACI on a domestic violence related charge, the offender can contact the Urban League while incarcerated to be enrolled in the “Fresh Start” program. Kathy Carty reported that some states have added a surcharge to the marriage license as a means to supplement batterers intervention programs. Sisan reported that federal grant money should be made available for those working with offenders and not just victim services, without taking money away from victim services. Kathy reported that there is currently a push towards certification for facilitators on a national level, similar to licensure.

Sisan reminded members that Kathy presented at the conference in Michigan on a tool she has developed that serves two (2) purposes: measure attitudinal/behavioral changes, and measure covert/overt changes. This is to help evaluate how efficacious a program is. Kathy reported that she is working with an agency in California to utilize and make the tool available on a national level. Sisan reported that while most research is mixed on the effectiveness of batterers intervention programs, on the whole programs are having some positive impact. She urged individuals to think of batterers intervention as comparable to drug and alcohol treatment programs. We have come to recognize that the rate of relapse is high among substance

abusers, and that some people need to go through treatment several times. Batterers intervention is similar in that a program may not be a one-time fix for some clients. Overall, however, batterers programs have a higher success rate than drug/alcohol treatment programs.

Sisan encouraged members to take the handout listing BIPSOC meetings for 2006. The next Attorney General's Domestic Violence Task Force meeting will be held on December 15th, 2005 at 12:30-2pm at 150 South Main Street, Providence.

Upcoming Meetings

Rules and Standards Subcommittee

January 10th, 2006 at 2:30 in Bernadette Building, 15 Fleming Rd., Cranston DOC.

Review Subcommittee

December 13th, 2005 at 2:30 at Bernadette Building, 15 Fleming Rd., Cranston DOC.

DV Critical Case Review Team

January 24th, 2006 at 2:00 in Pinel Building, 2nd Floor, Wilma Schlessler Lane, RIDOC Cranston.

Oversight Committee

MONDAY, February 6th 2006, at 2:00 at DOA, Conference Room C .

Meeting Adjourned

Judge Bucci made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Janice Dubois seconded the motion. All votes in favor; none opposed; no abstentions. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Jaworski, Project Services Coordinator

Batterers Intervention Program Standards Oversight Committee