

**BATTERERS INTERVENTION PROGRAM STANDARDS
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

Meeting of February 6, 2006

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; Elaine Dorazio, Supreme Court Domestic Violence Training & Monitoring Unit; Ed Degnan, Kent House/BIPs Representative; John Brennan, Justice Assistance; Honorable Elaine Bucci, RI District Court, Chief John LaCross, RI Police Chiefs Association.

Seats Not Represented (3): Office of the Attorney General; Governor's Office; Urban League.

Additional Participants (6): Kathy Carty, Vantage Point; Sharon Schwartz-Vanderhoff, Probation & Parole; George Sheehan, RIBIP; Kevin Murphy, Tri-Hab; David Spencer, Gateway/Tri-Hab; Laura Jaworski, BIPSOC.

Materials Distributed:

Meeting Agenda: February 6, 2006

Meeting Minutes: December 5, 2005

Certification Summary: FVI

Certification Summary: Tri-Hab

Comprehensive Standards draft revision (dated 1/9/06)

BIPSOC 2006 Schedule of Meetings

Sisan Smallman, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:10 pm.

Review of Minutes

Minutes from the meeting of December 5th, 2005 were reviewed and adopted.

Judge Bucci made a motion to adopt the December 2005 minutes. Chief LaCross seconded the motion. All votes in favor; none opposed; no abstentions. Motion carried.

Review Subcommittee Report

Renewed Comprehensive Certification

Family Violence Intervention (FVI)

A program summary for FVI was distributed and reviewed. FVI is a

private for profit agency located in Cranston, with J. Bryan Riley functioning as President. Sue Wilkie functions as the Office Manager, providing oversight for the batterers intervention program. FVI offers nineteen (19) groups per week for male and female batterers in Cranston, Narragansett, and Woonsocket. FVI currently has approximately two hundred (200) enrolled clients following either a 20 week or 26 week program format. Five (5) facilitators, three (3) males and two (2) females, are employed by the agency to run the weekly sessions. 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 comprehensive certification for two years.

Chief John LaCross made a motion to award renewed Comprehensive Certification to Family Violence Intervention. Judge Bucci seconded the motion. Nine (9) votes in favor; none opposed; one abstention (Ed Degnan, BIP representative). Motion carried.

Tri-Hab

David Spencer and Kevin Murphy were present on behalf of Tri-Hab, whose comprehensive certification is scheduled to expire today. A program summary for Tri-Hab was distributed and reviewed. Tri-Hab is a private non-profit agency located in Pawtucket/Central Falls. The Directors of the Tri-Hab Division under Gateway Healthcare, Inc. are Richard LeClerc, President, and David Spencer, Vice President. Kevin

Murphy functions as the Domestic Violence Program Manager, providing oversight for the batterers intervention program. Tri-Hab offers ten (10) groups per week for male and female batterers at their Central Falls and Woonsocket locations, with approximately ninety-five (95) enrolled clients following a 20 week program format. Five (5) facilitators, four (4) males and one (1) female, are employed by the agency to run the weekly sessions. 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 comprehensive certification for two years.

Sharon Schwartz-Vanderhoff indicated that the group facilitators that she observed were highly skilled and the groups were effectively run. David Spencer thanked the Oversight Committee for the collaborative relationship over the years; Sisan thanked David Spencer for the services that he and his agency have provided, particularly the batterers intervention program.

Beatriz Perez made a motion to award renewed Comprehensive Certification to Tri-Hab. Chief John LaCross seconded the motion. Nine (9) votes in favor; none opposed; one abstention (Ed Degan, BIP representative). Motion carried.

Upcoming Renewal Applications:

- Laura Jaworski reported that the following program is scheduled for**

renewed comprehensive certification:

o Vantage Point, expiring August 2006.

Rules & Standards Subcommittee Report

Sisan reported that the Rules & Standards Subcommittee remains busy with revisions of the Comprehensive Standards. Sisan reminded members that an informal review was completed by Legal Counsel at the Department of Corrections. The next step would involve the Oversight Committee holding a vote to approve the changes that have been made. Upon approval, the proposed documents would be forwarded to the Attorney General's Office for a formal review, and then to the Secretary of State for a public hearing.

Sisan had requested that members review the Comprehensive Standards draft revisions (dated 1/9/06) and provide feedback as necessary. Judge Bucci suggested that for readability purposes, the entire document follow a right-justification format. She also recommended rewording sections of the content that have lists so that "etc." can be edited out.

Sisan noted that current revisions have removed the requirement for a male and female facilitator. Also, provisions for a facilitator trainee to function as a second facilitator for groups were explained. In Section IV., General Program Responsibilities, new content has been added to refer to the certification application and process; encourage agencies to update program content as needed; and describe

requested information regarding changes in business operation. Section V., Program Content, addresses group format standards and clarifies various curriculum topics and format. Recommendations for the Group Check In/Out are also described in this section.

There was discussion about some of the detailed standards, as proposed, and whether they might constitute lack of flexibility or micromanagement. Program representatives who were present from Vantage Point, RIBIP, Kent House, and Tri-Hab each stated that they find they have flexibility, that programs are able to improve the curriculum materials over time, and that there is room for creativity. One program director reported that tight standards are crucial to establish consistency and accountability, and that variances are available for programs that seek to provide a significantly new approach. All program representatives reported that the Review Subcommittee has been helpful in working with them to clarify standards and certification issues.

With reference to the restrictions on joint work/couples counseling in Section VI., Client Enrollment, Judge Bucci noted that individuals in court sometimes request that No Contact Orders (NCOs) be vacated, in part so they can attend couples counseling. She asked for clarification as to whether the standard intends to bar BIPs from offering couples counseling. Sisan reported that professionals in the field virtually all insist that couples counseling should occur only when there is reasonable confidence that violence and abuse have

ceased. Most counselors recognize the risks involved in working with the batterer and the victim simultaneously in couples counseling, which is better reserved until successful completion of a batterers intervention program. Kathy Carty noted that couples counseling could place the victim at risk; for example, if the victim disclosed a particular topic during the counseling session against the batterer's wishes. Kevin Murphy reported that the issue of the victim and batterer continuing their relationship appears to be more common and more complicated than in the past.

Discussion followed concerning issuing receipts to group participants for attendance and/or for payment. Some program representatives reported that they give receipts routinely (Ed Degnan for Kent House, David Spencer and Kevin Murphy for Tri-Hab) while Kathy Carty indicated that most Vantage Point clients do not want receipts. Judge Bucci suggested that in her view receipts should be required.

The use of "documented medical need" under Missed Sessions in Section VI., Client Enrollment was clarified as being an excused absence. Kathy reported that clients can miss up to three (3) sessions even without documentation. Furthermore, if a group is made up during the same week, it does not count as a missed session.

In Section VII., Group Facilitators and Other Staff, Judge Bucci

questioned whether it is appropriate to the role of the Oversight Committee to mandate or even encourage the recruitment of staff for purposes of diversity. She did not believe that the Committee should include language that seems to promote affirmative action or quota systems, and that facilitators should be hired solely on the basis of qualifications. Considerable discussion was generated, with contributions from many of those in attendance. Judge Bucci indicated that she wished to be on record as opposing this feature: she said she has no issue with personnel policies that are based on non-discrimination, but objects to a policy of encouraging active recruitment of diverse staff. Sisan wrapped up the discussion by stating that the Review Subcommittee would take another look at the wording of the provision.

Sisan reported that more detailed language was added to the remainder of the Group Facilitators and Other Staff section. The Review Subcommittee has struggled for years with finding ways to give programs flexibility while providing enough detail to clarify qualifications and requirements. There was some discussion about the basis for certain qualifying degrees. Steve King stated that the formal education background should serve as a foundation, and the types of specialized training and experience would provide further preparation for working in the group setting. In addition, provisions were discussed that allow for substitution of experience for some portion of education – the experience requirements are considerable.

Observation of group facilitators as part of supervision (Formal Supervision Modalities in Section VII, Group Facilitators and Other Staff) was discussed. It was noted that in social work, group therapy, and related fields, it is not routine for supervisors to sit in to observe group leadership, once staff have completed college internships. Under the standards for BIP's, facilitator trainees are directly observed during their initial 100 hours of group experience, and many (but not all) facilitators are observed as part of the certification process. The standards strongly encourage programs to incorporate regular observation of group facilitation into their supervision process, and several of the program representatives confirmed that they do so.

Sisan added that the "Definition of Terms" section has been moved to the end of the revisions, with some additions and deletions. The "Variances" section has also been expanded in order to more clearly describe this process. Considerable material has been added to the "Appendices," including sample formats.

Member Issues/Announcements

Sage reported that the RICADV will host a Lobby Day at the State House on February 7th, 2006 at 2:30pm. The event is in support of an appropriations bill which would increase monies for the Children Who Witness Fund. Since 2000, this fund has supported one child

advocate position at each of the RICADV's member agencies. The RICADV would like to expand this program to allow for two (2) child advocates per agency. Sage encouraged members to attend the Lobby Day, or call their appropriate Senators or Representatives.

Upcoming Meetings

Rules and Standards Subcommittee

February 14th, 2006 at 2:30 in Bernadette Building, 15 Fleming Rd., Cranston DOC.

Review Subcommittee

February 28th, 2006 at 2:30 at Bernadette Building, 15 Fleming Rd., Cranston DOC.

DV Critical Case Review Team

March 21st, 2006 at 2:00 in Pinel Building, 2nd Floor, Wilma Schlessler Lane, RIDOC Cranston.

Oversight Committee

MONDAY, April 3rd, 2006, at 2:00 at DOA, Conference Room C .

Meeting Adjourned

Judge Bucci made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Steve King

seconded the motion. All votes in favor; none opposed; no abstentions. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Jaworski, Project Services Coordinator

Batterers Intervention Program Standards Oversight Committee