

BATTERERS INTERVENTION PROGRAM STANDARDS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Meeting of February 5th, 2007

Open session

Minutes

Voting Members Present (11): Sisan Smallman, RI Department of Corrections, Chair; Stephen King, RI Supreme Court/Co-Chair; Maureen Keough, Domestic Violence Unit/Office of the Attorney General; Ed Degnan, Kent House/BIPs Representative; Deb DeBare, RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Kristen Meuse, RI Justice Commission; Janice Dubois, Supreme Court Domestic Violence Training & Monitoring Unit; Chief John LaCross, RI Police Chiefs Association; Honorable Elaine Bucci, RI District Court; Joseph Ben, Justice Assistance; Beatriz Perez, RI Department of Health.

Seats Not Represented (2): Governor's Office; Urban League.

Additional Participants (6): Laura Jaworski, BIPSOC; Dr. Kathleen Carty, Vantage Point; Sage Bauer, RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Sharon Schwartz-Vanderhoff, Probation & Parole; Michael DiLauro, Public Defender's Office; Lola Lange, Public Defender's Office.

Materials Distributed:

Meeting Agenda: February 5th, 2007

Meeting Minutes: December 4th, 2006

Schedule of Meetings: 2007

BIP Comprehensive Standards: Draft Revision (dated 2/5/07)

Correspondence packet

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

Review of Minutes

Minutes from the meeting of December 4th, 2006 were reviewed and adopted.

Deb DeBare made a motion to adopt the December 4th, 2006 minutes. Janice Dubois seconded the motion. All votes in favor; none opposed; Sisan Smallman and Beatriz Perez abstained. Motion carried.

Sisan Smallman informed members that Kathy Carty and the Vantage Point batterers program were the focus of an article for the February 2007 issue of Rhode Island Monthly. Copies were available for those interested.

Sisan also informed members that the grant that provides the funds

for Laura Jaworski to function as Project Services Coordinator for the BIPSOC will be available until March 31st, 2007.

Review Subcommittee Report

Laura reported that she has received the application package from RIBIP requesting renewed comprehensive certification. Current certification is scheduled to expire in April 2007.

Galilee Mission to Fishermen is the next program due for renewed comprehensive certification. The application package was mailed at the beginning of February 2007. Current certification is scheduled to expire in August 2007.

Rules & Standards Subcommittee Report

Sisan reported that the Rules and Standards Subcommittee had been relatively inactive recently due to the creation of the Ad Hoc Legislative Subcommittee and the momentum to focus on work related to the proposed legislation of allowing credit for batterers intervention program participation in the ACI. However, Sisan and Laura have continued to compile the revisions that have come out of subcommittee discussions, and a draft was made available for

members to review.

The major change that members will notice on the latest draft revision of the Comprehensive Standards is the new format change. Sections are referenced by a series of numbers, which will ideally result in a more user-friendly document. Notable sections where content revisions have occurred are as follows:

1.060: Recognizes the importance of Comprehensive Standards as outlined by the Oversight Committee; however a degree of flexibility for the batterers intervention programs is essential as well.

Discussion: Janice Dubois requested an example of a situation whereby this Standard would be applied. Sisan reported a case where a year-round resident of Block Island was court-ordered to attend a batterers intervention program. No certified BIP exists on Block Island, and a hardship would be created in the regular travel back to the “mainland” to attend a BIP. A therapist who was familiar in the dynamics of domestic violence was identified (and travels weekly to Block Island to provide counseling services) and was willing to provide individual counseling to the individual.

4.200-4.400: The original Comprehensive Standards did not explicitly identify the certification process. Additional details have been included in the revisions to the Rules of Practice and Procedure. Language has also been added in reference to updating curriculum and changes in business operations.

5.000 The “Program Content” section has been revised in various areas, including fee collection, breaks, difficulty in attending BIP regularly due to employment types, co-facilitator and group issues, and the creation of safety plans. Ensuring that victim safety plans are updated at the time of program completion will help in transitioning out of the program (or transitioning from the ACI to a community-based program).

Discussion: Kathy Carty requested that clarifying language be added in this section to indicate that attendance is required over the course of twenty (20) weeks. Sisan stated that this is stated elsewhere in the Standards; however reference could be made to this statutory requirement.

6.113 Addresses issues resulting from client inappropriateness for a group setting. Generally, such a determination is based on cognitive or psychiatric limitations, but the possibility of including geographic limitations was also discussed.

Discussion: Janice Dubois questioned whether there is confidence that program providers would utilize this exception appropriately. Kathy feels that documentation describing the reasons why an individual is unable to attend is important. Judge Bucci feels that the individual should appear in front of a judge based on the documentation that an individual is not appropriate for a group setting. Janice feels that if an individual is determined to be appropriate for individual counseling, the therapist should be

required to be trained in domestic violence. Maureen Keough feels that the addition of “geographic” constraints would open the door to issues for the BIPSOC. Kathy reported that transportation is available for individuals that reside in more rural areas through RIPTA. Members stated consensus on not including the geographic exception.

6.215 Addresses the issue of “program shopping” (when a client moves from program to program) by prohibiting switching programs mid-stream, except in extraordinary circumstances.

6.427 Addresses client compliance and payment of fees.

Discussion: Judge Bucci reported that she has an issue with the lack of communication around client fees. Sisan noted that the expanded sections in the Standards are an effort to strike a balance among various interests: the offender’s responsibility to pay for the services received, the programs’ ability to collect reasonable compensation, and reduction of barriers to service. Programs would need to be prepared to document efforts made to work with clients regarding fees. Michael DiLauro questioned whether the programs can release an individual’s financial records to the courts. Sisan stated that programs require clients to sign a release form for documents for Probation and the courts. Kathy stated that financial information is given on an “honor system”. If a client is unable to pay, they are not necessarily dropped; many times the client misses sessions because they are unable to pay, and as a result, the program has no

documentation because the client does not return.

6.713-6.714 Addresses discharge summary requirements.

7.111 Addresses diversity of program staff.

Discussion: Some members felt the new proposed language does not go far enough in encouraging diversity, while Judge Bucci expressed the view that it is not an appropriate matter for the Standards. The revised language was accepted, however.

Ad Hoc Legislative Subcommittee

Maureen Keough updated members on the response generated from the letter she mailed out to Senator Charles Levesque and Representative Joseph Almeida regarding the revised legislative proposal. She received a response from Senator Levesque stating his appreciation for the work of the Subcommittee, and that he will submit the revision as a bill. Maureen has not received a response from Representative Almeida. No bill numbers have yet been assigned, and hearings have not been scheduled. Maureen stated that the next step would be to look at the revisions that would be required for the Comprehensive Standards. Sage Bauer, Mike DiLauro, and Laura Jaworski volunteered to meet separately as a “working group” to develop possible draft revisions which then could be distributed to the programs for feedback within a defined timeframe.

Member Issues/Announcements

None reported.

Upcoming Meetings

Review Subcommittee:

February 27th, 2007, at 2:30pm in Bernadette Building, 15 Fleming Rd., Cranston DOC.

Rules + Standards Subcommittee:

February 20th, 2007, at 2:30pm in Bernadette Building, 15 Fleming Rd., Cranston DOC.

Ad Hoc Legislative Subcommittee:

March 8th, 2007 at 1pm in Bernadette Building, 15 Fleming Rd., Cranston DOC.

DV Critical Case Review Team:

March 13th, 2007, at 2pm at RI-DOC, Pinel Bldg.

Oversight Committee:

TUESDAY, April 3rd, 2007 at 2:00 at DOA, Conference Room C.

Members were reminded that the April meeting is on a Tuesday

Meeting Adjourned

Beatriz Perez made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Judge Bucci seconded the motion. All votes in favor; none opposed; no

abstentions. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Laura Jaworski, Project Services Coordinator

Batterers Intervention Program Standards Oversight Committee