

**BATTERERS INTERVENTION PROGRAM STANDARDS
OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

Meeting of October 4, 2010

Open session

Minutes Draft

Voting Members Present (6): Shelley Cortese, RI Department of Corrections/Chair; Deb DeBare, RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Elaine Bucci, RI District Court; Anthony Ward-Smith, Justice Assistance; Mary Osborne, BIP Representative; Diane Dagle, Office of the Attorney General.

Seats Not Represented (7): Supreme Court Domestic Violence Training & Monitoring Unit; Urban League; RI Department of Health; Governor's Office; RI Justice Commission; RI Police Chiefs Association; RI Supreme Court.

Additional Participants (7): Emily Daniels, Probation & Parole/BIPSOC; Micheline Lombardi, Supervisor Probation & Parole; Sharon Schwartz-Vanderhoff, Probation & Parole; Chris Frenier, Probation & Parole; Bryan Riley, FVI; Jessica Seitz, RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence; George Sheehan, RI-BIP.

Materials Distributed:

Meeting Agenda: October 4, 2010

Meeting Minutes: August 2, 2010

Hand Out- Proposals for Batterers Intervention for Repeat Offenders

Shelley Cortese, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:10 pm.

Review of Minutes

Minutes from the meeting of August 2, 2010 were reviewed.

Deb DeBare made a motion to adopt the August 2, 2010 minutes. Anthony Ward-Smith seconded the motion. All votes in favor; none opposed. Motion carried.

Review Subcommittee Report

Emily reported that MAP's Comprehensive Certification to provide Batterers Intervention to court mandated offenders expires today. Paula Trice, MAP's Clinical Director, submitted a letter presented at the August 2nd meeting stating that MAP would not be submitting an application for Renewal of Comprehensive Certification. Emily reported that referrals to the program were stopped in August 2010 and all clients that would not or did not complete MAP's Batterers Intervention Program as of October 3, 2010 were referred back to the

referral source to be referred to another Certified Program to complete the court mandated Batterers Intervention.

Emily reported that the Comprehensive Certification process for Tri-Hab is underway. Tri-Hab's Application for Renewed Certification is due to be submitted to the Review Subcommittee on November 1, 2010 and group observations have been scheduled for October and November. The vote for Recertification will be at the February 7, 2011 Oversight Committee meeting.

Emily reported that the Comprehensive Certification process for RI-BIP will begin in November with group observations. The Application for Renewed Certification is due to be submitted to the Review Subcommittee on January 3, 2011 and the vote for Recertification will take place at the April 4, 2011 Oversight Committee meeting.

Member Issues/Announcements

By-Law Proposal

Shelley noted that the committee discussed amending the By-Laws regarding the requirement to meet a minimum of four (4) times per year at the Oversight Meeting on August 2, 2010. Shelley stated that the requirement to meet a minimum of four (4) times per year is written in the Statute, RIGL 12-29-5.1 (b). Deb asked if it would make sense to amend the legislation due to the fact that a lack of voting

items at meetings may decrease participation over time causing difficulty getting a quorum at the meetings at which a quorum is needed. Emily stated that the majority of meetings (3 of the 4 in 2011) require a vote of the members and that a reminder of an upcoming vote is sent with the request for a response to ensure a quorum of voting members. Emily stated that she does not foresee an issue with lack of participation in meetings when a vote is needed since only one meeting in 2011 and possibly two in 2012 currently have no voting items for the agenda. Emily also stated that the number of meetings with voting items may change as there have been inquiries from individuals and agencies regarding the process to become Certified to provide Batterers Intervention.

Judge Bucci stated that the Oversight Committee should not meet less than four (4) times per year to keep the Committee relevant. Bryan agreed the Oversight Committee may lose relevance if it met less than four times per year. Shelley stated she would bring in outside stakeholders to discuss their work with batterers and victims if that was of interest to committee members. The members present agreed that agencies from outside the members of the Oversight Committee could be invited to present at meetings when a voting item is not on the agenda.

Mary asked if the discussion regarding the minimum number of meetings stemmed from a lack of Certified Programs and if so should the Oversight Committee look into why there are less Certified

Programs. Shelley stated there are fewer programs than in the past; Deb stated there were as many as 17 Certified Programs at one point. Shelley stated the reduction in Certified Programs has occurred for many reasons, including the Certification Process for programs and facilitators, change in an agency's focus and a lack of revenue due to serving underprivileged clients.

Bryan asked if there were any suggestions to getting the Certified Programs interested in participating in the Oversight Committee meetings. Emily stated there are currently five (5) Certified Programs and of those five three are represented today. The two who are not present were not able to attend because of scheduling conflicts.

Batterers Intervention for Repeat Offenders

Shelley stated that attendees at the last meeting had discussed the possibility of creating an approach for repeat offenders within the parameters of the current Comprehensive Standards: Shelley reported that she, Micheline Lombardi, Emily Daniels and Chris Frenier of Probation & Parole, as well as Bryan Riley of FVI had met over the past couple months to discuss possibilities of a Recidivist BIP Format. Shelley asked attendees to review the distributed proposals. Judge Bucci asked if the referral for the program would come from the Judiciary or Probation & Parole. Shelley stated the judges' order to attend the repeat offender program would have more

teeth than a Probation referral. Judge Bucci asked if eligible offenders would have to be repeat offenders or could judges use discretion based on the facts of the case. Shelley stated that for the sake of keeping the numbers manageable it may make sense to keep the initial referrals to repeat offenders until the program format is underway and more than one group is created then the referrals will be opened to referrals based on judicial discretion.

Judge Bucci inquired about the requirement of offenders to prove community involvement. Emily stated that offenders participating in the repeat offender batterers intervention groups would be asked to document that they are working, attending school or performing community service on a weekly basis. Judge Bucci stated that it would not be a court ordered requirement. Shelley stated that it is not proposed that the courts order a requirement of community participation and therefore it is understood a technical violation could not be submitted based on an offender's lack of compliance with documenting community participation. Emily further stated that the supervised conditions of Probation state that an offender make every effort to keep employed, attend school or vocational training; the proposal is directed at Probation & Parole to follow-up on what is already part of the conditions of supervised probation. Attendees agreed that although non-compliance with community participation is not a basis for technical violation it is a good idea to hold offenders accountable for how they spend their time.

Sharon asked if all absences from the repeat offender group must be documented to be excused. Sharon stated that not all excusable circumstances would have documentation; for example an offender being sick but not attending a doctor's appointment due to lack of insurance. Emily stated that the proposal is to ensure that all absences have some type of verification from the Batterers Program, Probation & Parole or documentation for the approval of the absence. This proposal would eliminate the offender's ability to miss a group without contacting Probation & Parole and the Batterers Program for approval of the absence. Chris stated that the group process would be improved due to fewer absences.

Mary asked about having Probation & Parole staff stop in and/ or observe group at times other than during the Renewed Certification process. Mary asked if this would occur in the middle of groups and would it disturb the group process. Bryan stated that during the development of the proposal it was decided that Probation & Parole staff would come at the beginning of group to check on offender attendance and not come to observe the entire group. The intention of the proposal is to have Probation & Parole, the Batterers Program and the offender interacting on a regular basis.

Deb asked if there would be a loss of finances with the proposed group limit of eight (8), a change from the maximum of 10 per single facilitator. George stated there is a potential monetary loss to the Batterers Program. Mary asked if there are funding opportunities to

counteract the loss. Shelley asked members if increasing the attendee maximum from 8 to 10 for repeat offender groups would change Batterers Programs view on offering the service. George stated most repeat offenders pay the lowest fee on the sliding scale and a group consisting of only these clients would not be balanced financially with intake of money and overhead cost of group. Bryan stated that financially it may not be profitable at the onset but there is a need to provide the service and determine if it is effective. Chris stated that the benefit is long term in the form of offender compliance when they realize the coordinated response with the repeat offender groups is more serious and offenders become compliant in both repeat offender and non-repeat offender groups.

Judge Bucci asked when the group would begin so she could notify judges of the ability to order repeat offenders to attend the intensive group. Shelley asked Bryan when FVI would be ready to accept referrals for the repeat offender groups. Bryan stated he would speak with the facilitator he would like to run the group and would report a start date at the December Oversight Committee Meeting.

Upcoming Meetings

Review Subcommittee:

Tuesday, November 23, 2010 at 2:00pm in Bernadette Building

DV Critical Cases Review Team:

Tuesday, November 9, 2010 at 3:00pm in Bernadette Building

Oversight Committee:

**December 6, 2010 at 2:00pm in Bernadette Building, 15 Fleming Rd.,
Cranston DOC.**

Meeting Adjourned

Deb DeBare 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 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emily Daniels, Probation & Parole Officer

Batterers Intervention Program Standards Oversight Committee