

BATTERERS INTERVENTION PROGRAM STANDARDS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Meeting of December 7, 2015

Open session

Minutes Draft

Voting Members Present (5): Shelley Cortese, RI Department of Corrections/Chair; Deb DeBare, RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Veronica Hobbs, Supreme Court Domestic Violence Training & Monitoring Unit; Anthony Ward-Smith, Justice Assistance; Judge Elaine Bucci, RI District Court.

Seats Not Represented (8): Batterers Intervention Program Representative; RI Department of Health; Office of the Attorney General; Urban League; Governor's Office; RI Justice Commission; RI Police Chiefs Association; RI Supreme Court.

Additional Participants (4): Karen Lubo, Supervisor Probation & Parole; Deb Ferrante, Elizabeth Buffum Chase Center; Emily Daniels, Probation & Parole/BIPSOC; Rachel Orsinger, RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Materials Distributed:

Meeting Agenda: December 7, 2015

Meeting Minutes: August 3, 2015

Proposed changes to Comprehensive Standards Section 5.5

Proposed changes to Comprehensive Standards Section 5.2

Shelley Cortese, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:20 pm.

Review of Minutes

Minutes from the meeting of August 3, 2015 were reviewed.

Deb DeBare made a motion to adopt the August 3, 2015 minutes. Anthony Ward-Smith seconded the motion. All votes in favor; none opposed. Judge Bucci abstained. Motion carried.

Rules & Standards Subcommittee Report

Emily informed attendees the proposed changes to sections 5.2 and 5.5 of the Comprehensive Standards were attached to the agenda for review. Emily stated the largest change to section 5.2-Curriculum Topics was the removal of subsection 5.2.6. Curriculum topics shall include learning to choose and practice non-abusive behavior,

effective communication, and listening skills. Rachel explained that the removal of the subsection was done to provide facilitators flexibility in choosing the group discussion. By removing the requirement to teach skills the facilitator can determine if the members of the group are at a point where skill building would be of value. Judge Bucci agrees with the idea that facilitators have flexibility in determining the topic of group discussion and the change of wording in subsections to reflect that and move away from a lecture type educational group process. Judge Bucci stated she finds the wording in proposed subsection 5.2.5 could be confusing and would like it to be amended.

As Proposed:

5.2.5. Batterers intervention programs shall treat violent and abusive behavior as a choice for which the abuser is responsible. Programs shall recognize that violence is a learned pattern of behavior supported by a system of beliefs and attitudes. The focus of program curriculum and group discussion shall be on the beliefs and behaviors of the abuser. Consistent with this, no program materials, models, or group content shall address a relationship dynamics or presume equal power within an abusive relationship.

As Amended:

5.2.5. Batterers intervention programs shall treat violent and abusive behavior as a choice for which the abuser is responsible. Programs shall recognize that violence is a learned pattern of behavior

supported by a system of beliefs and attitudes. The focus of program curriculum and group discussion shall be on the beliefs and behaviors of the abuser. *Consistent with this, all program materials, models, or group content shall take into account the inequality of power within an abusive relationship.

Members discussed of the influence of substance use and abuse in domestic violence incidents. It was decided the proposed wording in subsection 5.2.14 should include that substance use/abuse can be a contributing factor in domestic abuse.

As Proposed:

5.2.14. Curriculum topic to be used in engaging the group in discussion: how substance abuse is used to rationalize domestic violence. The curriculum shall make clear that substance abuse is not the cause of domestic abuse; batterers are accountable for their own behavior and are not to use substance abuse to minimize or justify abusiveness.

As Amended:

5.2.14. Curriculum topic to be used in engaging the group in discussion: how substance abuse is used to rationalize domestic violence. *The curriculum shall make clear that substance use/abuse can contribute to the frequency and severity of domestic abuse; batterers are accountable for their own behavior and are not to use substance abuse to minimize or justify abusiveness.

Deb DeBare made a motion to accept the changes to the Comprehensive Standards Section 5.2 . and its subsections as amended.

Anthony Ward-Smith seconded the motion. All votes in favor; none opposed. Motion carried.

Members discussed changes to Section 5.5.-Group Format. A key change is that check-in portion of the group format is not included as a required part of the group process. Members agreed that not having check in avoids putting group participants on the defensive at the start of group, avoids a “listing” of abusive behaviors without follow up, and does not allow group participants to focus on individual situations or another person’s behavior. Judge Bucci stated she is in favor of the changes thus far but will oppose the proposed changes as they stand because they do not go far enough.

Deb DeBare made a motion to accept the changes to the Comprehensive Standards Section 5.5 . and its subsections.

Veronica Hobbs seconded the motion.

Judge Bucci opposed. Anthony Ward-Smith in favor. Motion carried.

Member Issues/Announcements

Upcoming Meetings

Review Subcommittee:

TBD

(post meeting a subcommittee meeting was scheduled for Thursday January 14, 2016 at 3:00pm in Dix Building, Cranston, RI.)

Rules & Standards Subcommittee:

TBD

DV High Risk/Critical Case Team:

**Wednesday January 13, 2016 at 3:00pm in Dix Building, Cranston, RI.
(post meeting DVCCRT rescheduled for 1/27/2016 at 3pm)**

Oversight Committee:

Monday February 1, 2016 at 2:00pm in Dix Building, 18 Wilma Schesler Lane, Cranston, RI 02920.

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 3:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emily Daniels, Probation & Parole Officer

Batterers Intervention Program Standards Oversight Committee