

Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Committee
Batterer Intervention Program Standards Subcommittee
Meeting Minutes
October 11, 2013

Meeting Start: 10:05 a.m.

Members Present: Karen Diebolt (Chief State's Attorney), Joseph DiTunno (Judicial Branch-Court Support Services Division), Katie Heffernan (Office of Chief Public Defender), Karen Jarmoc (CCADV), Merit Lajoie (Office of the Victim Advocate), A. Stephen Lanza (Family ReEntry, Inc.), Regina Owusu (Department of Public Health), Mary Painter (Department of Children and Family), David Rentler (Board of Pardons and Paroles), and Nancy Turner (CCADV)

1.) Welcome by Chair Karen Jarmoc

2.) Introductions

3.) Began with agency briefings on what is happening with respect to domestic violence offenders here in Connecticut. Concern continues to focus on those non-contracted providers operating without standardized credentials and the segment of offenders deemed ineligible for Explore or Evolve who are accessing these providers.

4.) **Department of Children and Families-** Mary Painter

The Department is currently mining case narrative notes in order to collect data. Trying to get a picture on where offenders are going in families with which the department is involved. 2012 data shows approximately 30,000 reports were accepted by DCF for investigation. 20% of these cases involved a domestic violence allegation. 44% of those cases found the allegation substantiated. Investigations must be able to demonstrate an impact on the child for continued DCF involvement.

Of the 60 cases studies, 53% received domestic violence services. 60% were closed for reasons including court involvement, refusal of services, or community-based service engagement services referred to as anger management, couples counseling, pastoral counseling, individual counseling, and family enrichment. A barrier is no access to BIP through CSSD without having a court referral. DCF is looking into purchasing CSSD batterer programming slots in community groups. Family Re-Entry in Bridgeport runs groups (funded by DCF) for fathers/batterers using the same curriculum and facilitators as FVEP/Explore program.

On a voluntary basis families can get a treatment plan but few repercussions for poor follow through unless there is an identified risk to the child(ren). DCF emphasizes home retention or kin placement. Efforts underway to strengthen the department with internal protocols and inter-agency collaboration on cases (including mutual agreements to release information so can get DCF reports to prosecutors). Believe educating judges as key because they seem willing to require DCF cooperation if the children are in the home. Some protection orders are issued with the requirement of DCF cooperation which can then order abusers into classes. DCF is looking for new tools to use for assessments.

5.) **Court Support Service Division-** Joe DiTunno

Domestic violence offenses for which CSSD batterer intervention programming is available must occurred in Connecticut by a resident of this state. Every domestic violence offense results in a family violence intake by Family relations staff. Individuals must be court ordered and are not eligible to pay privately to attend. Through the Request for Proposals (RFP) process, providers awarded contracts to offer programming must meet specific requirements detailed in the RFP. Ethical code is included in the contract language as standardized by the state. Other details contained in the RFP include: offender program rules: group size; offender fee schedule; facilitator skill, training and education; facilitation team composition. Provider agencies are paid by the group and facilitators are typically on "fee for service" arrangements. Currently there are 8 providers for the Explore

program (available state-wide) and four providers for Evolve (4 locations in state) whose facilitators receive monthly clinical supervision. The three batterer programs (including FVEP) have a 60-65% completion rate for participants. Offenders on probation who are unsuccessful are “violated” and sent back to court where they can face 2 years in jail.

Offender outcomes- “recidivism” means offender comes back into the system as a re-arrest on a domestic violence charge. Recidivism rates for FVEP is 12%, for Explore it is 15% and 18-19% for Evolve.

6.) **Department of Public Health-** Regina Owusu

Licensure and Regulations department contacted about standards. Providers for batterer programs not covered. Told no data is collected or available.

7.) **Risk Assessments**

- Agencies using various tools. What are they assessing for: onset, persistence, re-offense, lethality?
- What is the victim’s perspective on the risk? How can we avoid putting victim at risk through assessments?
- Issue of static or historic factors (that do not change)being assessed versus dynamic factors which require a structured clinical assessment tool.
- Family Relations staff conduct risk assessments on each offender charged with a domestic violence crime. Assessments are given to prosecutors who it is felt typically do not read them or use the information or recommendations. Suggested prosecutors should engage in lethality check-off/risk assessment (non-discoverable) before cases are disposed/nolled. Issue of what prosecutors see as risk factors and focus on likelihood of re-offense or lethality was discussed.

Emerging Needs/Recommendations

1. Risk assessments to be conducted by prosecutors before granting nolles.
 - a. Needs to not be shared or discoverable
 - b. Must understand what prosecutors see as risk factors
2. Establishment of clear judicial guidelines for offender participation in FVEP, Explore and Evolve programs.
3. Create a lethality bench card for judges.
4. Standardize information all providers must have access to regarding an offender including, but not limited to, police report for current offense.
5. Standardized credentials for providers and determination of entity for vetting professionals.

Follow Up Actions

1. Joe DiTunno will provide a breakdown on the recidivism rates for offenders who did not complete each program (FVEP, Explore and Evolve).
2. Nancy Turner seeking clarification on LAP screening form and court’s access to information gathered.
3. Committee members asked to bring assessment tools used with offenders by their respective agencies to meeting on 10/25/13.

Meeting End: 11:50 a.m.

Next Meeting: October 25, 2013 at 10:00 a.m.