

Batterer Intervention Program Advisory Committee
May 7, 2015 9:00 to 12:00 pm
Capitol City Business Center, Umpqua Conference Room

In Attendance:

Shannon Sivell, Eric Mankowski, Steve Berger, Vivian Bliss, Chris Hoy, Chris Huffine, Audrey Broyles, Jayne Downing, Priscilla Marlowe, Margaret Braun, Jeremiah Stromberg, Don Chapin

Attending by phone: Rebecca Orf

Guests: Patricia Warford (Yamhill County Psychologist), Brad Berry (Yamhill County DA), Ted Smietana (Yamhill County Corrections)

Minutes: Sherree Rodriguez

Welcome, introduction and greetings

Yamhill Demonstration Project Discussion

Summary of questions for clarification:

- The use of the Demonstration Project curriculum in other areas of Yamhill Corrections has not yet been determined.
- The following things lead to exclusion: verbal and non-verbal indications of fear from the female partner; any response or hesitation that would indicate fear. Misdemeanor strangulation is cause for exclusion, in the present circumstance or in the history of the perpetrator. Police records that indicate fear-inducing violence cause exclusion.
- Brad Berry sited his reasons for strong support for this project:
 - He provided a thorough summary of his 19-year history as Yamhill County District Attorney, indicating the significant commitment of his office to victim safety. The office has a dedicated Domestic Violence (DV) attorney and Victims' Advocate who deals only with Sexual Assault and DV. They have a support dog program to assist victims of DV. He has been on the Attorney General's Task Force for Victims' Rights Enforcement since its inception and he co-chairs the National District Attorney's Association on Domestic Violence.
 - He noted his skeptical nature. He and his wife have participated in the class for six weeks as a trial run. He found it to be intensive.
 - His office does everything possible to help facilitate change to batterers' beliefs and behaviors. He stated currently recidivism is not good in the long term.
 - He sees a high percentage of victims who are determined to reconcile with their partners. Because of this he finds it constructive to provide both parties tools to inform them of relational health and to improve their relationship.
 - His position is that if there is any increased danger, the Yamhill County DA's office will pull support quickly, effectively stopping the demonstration project. He feels this research will determine if it is a functional model.
- Dr. Warford stated the statistic of 80% of batterers as situationally violent, which was cited in the January meeting, is indicated by police visits and not regarding those who present in the BIP groups. Some disagreement over this statistic was expressed by committee members, as well as the ability to comprehensively screen characterological abusers from the program.

- Jayne Downing expressed her concern of validating victim desires to stay within dysfunctional relationships since they often lack objectivity. This can cost victims their lives. Brad Berry stated that a high number of reconciliations happen regardless of danger.
- Becky Orf stated that sending all those with DV charges to BIP programs is also destructive. Audrey Broyles similarly stated the need for innovative approaches to domestic violence treatment. She has not seen BIP programs prevent homicide. She is supportive of an alternative treatment method.
- Chris Hoy expressed concern regarding victims being persuaded to participate when they don't really want to. Brad Berry stressed victims have full confidential veto power; there are safeguards built into the program that would allow for the dismissal of the couple that would not cast any culpability upon the victim. There are many reasons an offender can be removed without explanation. There is phone and mail monitoring through the jail system as well.
- Is it possible to conduct female screening in person? Patricia Warford stated sometimes difficulty is due to economic constraints for female with transportation or childcare issues. They can make sure the offender is not present in the home when the phone call takes place without his knowledge. Ted Smietana stated Corrections may be able to provide transportation or schedule the offender for an office visit at that time. He noted that bench probation supervises all forms of assault, even misdemeanors in Yamhill County.
- The premise that this method of treatment is shown to reduce violence in the proposed letter to be used to invite participation by couples should be re-worded. "The *Creating Healthy Relationships Program* has already been found to decrease abuse and improve relationships" should have the words, "decrease abuse and" deleted since the publication cited did not find this as a main direct effect and because the Demonstration Project is designed to research this question. Patricia Warford agreed to make the suggestion to Dr. Babcock.
- The question of whether a local DV program has been contacted has been answered.
- Ted Smietana shared that Yamhill County is highly collaborative. Agencies work closely with one another on a weekly basis. He emphasized the importance of screening characterological abusers while also providing an alternative for situational abuse. He is supportive of the research component. He agreed with Brad Berry that he will pull support immediately if danger increases to females. He has not reviewed the curriculum but he expressed his trust in Dr. Warford's abilities.
- Patricia Warford described the curriculum to the group: After completion of 14 weeks of male only treatment, there will be a one-time only meeting with female partners. Five couples participate in each group. Subsequent meetings will include a one-word check-in time, a video teaching, discussion and training to review the skill of the session. Couples will practice the skill. The curriculum is founded on John and Julie Gottman's 40 years of couples' research. Two pieces of it are geared toward domestic violence. The remainder of the curriculum is based on building a healthy relationship. EmWaves are used in the research project to teach couples to self-soothe. EmWaves are biofeedback devices monitoring blood pressure and heart rate. Couples proceed in their interactions when they are in the "green zone." A program objective is to help the men open to women's influence. Five basic skills are reviewed.

- The AC requested access to the curriculum for review purposes. Dr. Warford agreed she might be willing to allow one member of the AC to review it; but only someone without reason to use it and only under conditions of confidentiality, with the Gottmans' approval. Jayne Downing agreed to Patricia's request to be that person. Jayne noted the State of Oregon has mandated the AC review the curriculum. Concern was raised that one person's review of the curriculum is not the same as a full committee review. Dr. Warford stated she believed the review board had approved the curriculum.
- No contact orders are handled through immunity from courts.
- If a class is missed, the couple is required to make it up with the instructors. Other counties have expressed interest in participation, which would help keep numbers up.
- Conversations are being conducted across the state to establish funding and costs to couples. The cost is comparable to other BIP programs. They are working to lower the costs as much as possible.
- Priscilla Marlowe expressed her concern about the disparity of education opportunity for men and women, since the men receive 14 weeks of Accountability training and the women do not.

ACTIONS:

- Patricia Warford will contact the Gottmans to receive permission for an AC representative to review the curriculum.
- Shannon and Eric will work to provide a committee response as a high priority.

The guests were dismissed from the meeting at this point.

Yamhill Demonstration Project Deliberation

Shannon stated the telephone interview piece was adequately addressed; the screening tool and curriculum areas are the only unresolved issues.

ACTION: Shannon will write out what she has suggested regarding in-person interviews.

Shannon invited Margaret Braun to become a formal BIP AC board member. Margaret accepted.

Votes listed:

Yes - five

Yes if curriculum review is permitted – four

Yes, conditional on curriculum review or other condition - four

There was discussion regarding whether a yes vote meant AC officially endorsed the project.

These additional concerns were listed as conditional for the yes votes for several of the members:

- Safety considerations, especially regarding in-person interviews with female partners
- Difficulty in accurately identifying situational offenders
- Some want a broader scope of curriculum review than one committee representative