



2004 Position Paper on the Restructuring of BISCMI

BISCMI History

The Batterer Intervention Services Coalition (BISC) was formed in July of 1994 when the staff of First Step's Violence Intervention Project (Canton, MI) met with the staff of Catholic Social Service of Washtenaw County's Alternatives to Domestic Aggression Program (Ann Arbor, MI) to discuss issues of mutual interest and concern. BISC's membership grew rapidly, primarily with people

who work with batterer intervention services and battered women's services organizations.

In 1996 BISC held the FIRST Michigan Statewide Conference on batterer intervention and state standards. The conference was held at Higgins Lake, McMullen Conference Center. As a result, the organization name was changed and The Batterer Intervention Services Coalition of Michigan (BISCMI) was initiated in November 1996, bringing together the efforts of all six regions of Michigan.

Reorganization Rationale

For several years now, BISCMI has been receiving feedback and discussing our credibility and our role in the state. In 2002 we surveyed our membership and it clarified our strengths and the needs of our membership. Through Council discussions and exploration we began to understand the challenges to our direction and credibility issues. In July 2003 we invited the directors of the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence and the Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board to attend a Council meeting to speak frankly with us about their personal and organizational views regarding BISCMI. We remain grateful to them for their candid and forthright information. The Council is committed to the process of exploring changing the organizational structure.

Through numerous discussions the Council recognizes BISCMI's strengths are our conferences and trainings. In order to broaden our strengths we have begun to consider changing the membership structure from member organizations to one of individuals who are committed to accountable batterer intervention. There is recognition that organizations will want to continue affiliation and to enjoy the benefits for an organizational membership, such as reduced costs for conferences and trainings.

Our next step was to seek guidance from an organizational consulting firm. From early fall 2003 to mid January 2004, the Council interviewed five firms. We unanimously decided to proceed with Susan Stratton from *Leading Edge Mentoring*.

We planned and held a two-day retreat with this consultant on March 12th & 13th. The Council was thoroughly educated in what is called "Policy Governance". The Council believes BISCMI must make structural changes.

From the outcome of this retreat the Council is in agreement that we need to move from a geographic regionally based council to a representative board, with strong representation from batterer intervention providers. This would mean we would be reviewing and changing our regional representation and structure. However, the Council is committed to having local meetings and accessibility. The purpose of these meetings would be:

- Networking
- Legislative/regulatory information dissemination
- Identifying people who should be involved at the state and local levels
- A linking point for ownership input
- Develop local and community connections and coordinating efforts.

The Council clarified that the guiding principles and core beliefs of BISCMI that will lead us through this change remain:

- Safety & empowerment needs of victims, including minors, are primary in our efforts. Batterer accountability must occur but NOT at the expense of the victims' needs.
- Batterer behavior is a choice in a society that condones violence against women. It is not caused by substance abuse, family history, psychological conditioning, etc.
- Eliminating domestic violence requires a systemic response from the community. Batterer intervention is a key interdependent component in a community response to domestic violence.
- Children who witness or experience battering tactics are also victims of domestic violence

The process of the organizational change may include:

- Creating a path to address organizational goals.
- Raise the integrity of the organization
- Gain strength
- Reinvigorate the organization through deep vertical change.

The Council is committed to making these changes in a timely fashion. In an effort to avoid being short sighted the Council has set a timeline to identify all structural changes to the Bylaws, the development of the Board, Membership, Committee structure, etc. by the Fall training on 11-12-04. At that time the membership will be presented with a document to vote on. ***Therefore, we ask that you please support the election of the current officers to stay in their role until 2005 elections.***

We value your thoughts and input. Using the space on the following pages please feel free to share with the BISCMI Council any thoughts and/or concerns you would like us to consider. You may convey this information to us by simply handing this sheet to one of the BISCMI officers or Region Representatives.

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If you would like some time to gather your thoughts you may send this in the mail to us at the address listed below, fax it to the number below, or you may email one of the Council members at the address listed above.

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Please turn write your feedback on the next sheet



