

Vermont

Statewide Standards

for

Programming

for Men Who Batter Women

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 1996, the Vermont Department of Corrections issued the “Statewide Standards for Domestic Abuse Intervention”. These standards were developed by a core committee of Corrections staff, domestic violence victim advocates and batterer intervention providers. They were the first effort in Vermont to create a consistent set of expectations for programs that provided services to men who batter and reflected a national trend in this regard. The work of the core committee drew from efforts to develop standards in many other states and from the experience of providing batterer intervention services in Vermont.

In 2001, the Vermont Coalition of Batterer Intervention Services initiated a process of updating the 1996 Standards. The process was a collaboration involving staff of the Department of Corrections, the Vermont Network Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (now known as the Department of Children and Families), batterer intervention providers and members of the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence. This effort resulted in revised Standards adopted in 2005. These revised Standards included for the first time a requirement for programs to be certified for their compliance.

In 2008, the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence was established in statute. Amongst other duties, the Council was tasked with developing and maintaining Standards for programs that work with domestic violence offenders. In 2009, the Council initiated process of revising the Statewide Standards. Once again, stakeholders throughout the state participated in the review process. This document is the result of this process.

The body of experience and knowledge about batterer intervention services continues to grow. This document intends to reflect the history of the battered women’s movement and the early development of batterer intervention services as well as the most current research about men who batter and services that are most effective and appropriate for them.

Many people contributed to the creation of this document. Their time, commitment and effort are greatly appreciated. Those organizations and agencies that made significant contributions to this effort include:

- The Vermont Council on Domestic Violence
- The Vermont Coalition of Batterer Intervention Services
- Department for Children and Families
- The Vermont Department of Corrections
- The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

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SUMMARY OF VERMONT STATEWIDE STANDARDS FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION

Standards for Program Format and Design

Standard #1

Enrollment is open-ended allowing new participants to begin at any point.

Standard #2

Programming provided is gender specific.

Standard #3

The community-based program is designed to accommodate participants with or without a criminal conviction and/or court mandate.

Standard #4

Each group meets for at least 1½ hours.

Standard #5

A community-based program requires a minimum of 26 weekly group sessions for a participant to complete. A Corrections-based program requires a minimum of 12 months for a participant to complete.

Standard #6

Groups are led by two facilitators.

Standard #7

Group enrollment does not exceed 10 participants for community-based programs or 8 for a Corrections-based program except in limited circumstances during which enrolment may exceed these levels by no more than 25 percent. Groups are not held with enrollment of fewer than three participants.

Standard #8

The program engages in appropriate screening and documentation prior to granting any request for accommodations or alternative programming.

Standards for Program Content

Standard #9

The program uses a modality consistent with the philosophy outlined in these standards.

Standard #10

The program uses a curriculum approved by the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence Committee on Batterer Accountability.

Standard #11

The impacts of children's exposure to men who batter are routinely covered.

Standards for Program Referral, Screening, Intake and Orientation

Standard #12

Once a referral has been received, the program schedules an intake interview within two weeks of the date of referral.

Standard #13

The program documents the date a referral is received.

Standard #14

An intake interview is rescheduled if a referral packet is not made available by the referring agency.

Standard #15

Candidates sign a confidentiality agreement at or before the intake process allowing information disclosed during the intake process to be shared with the referring agency, victim advocates, and partner/ex-partner(s).

Standard #16

The intake/orientation process includes an eligibility screening, collection of relevant personal information, a discussion of any barriers a participant may face in completing the program as required and a thorough review of the program content and expectations.

Standard #17

To be eligible, a participant signs a program contract outlining the expectations of program participation, which includes a commitment to abide by the contract. The participant's signature is witnessed by a program staff member.

Standard #18

Candidates with pending charges for domestic violence-related crimes are considered ineligible.

Standard #19

If referred by the criminal court, a participant must admit to the acts of domestic abuse for which he has been convicted in order to be eligible for program participation. Programs maintain consistent criteria for defining the acts of abuse for which participants have been convicted.

Standard #20

A candidate without court mandate acknowledges a history of abuse against their partner(s) to be eligible.

Standard #21

To be eligible for a Corrections-based program, a candidate completes an approved screening procedure, meets requirements related to sentence structure and supervision requirements, and demonstrates the criminogenic need for intensive programming.

Standard #22

Partners and past partners of the potential participant are contacted during the screening process for all Corrections-based programs.

Standard #23

To be eligible for the incarcerative component of the Intensive Domestic Abuse Program (IDAP) potential participants complete a screening procedure and meet required conditions.

Standard #24

All referrals from the court of men referred to a Corrections-based program through court are reviewed and approved by the local program team.

Standard #25

Program intake procedures include an exploration of candidates' histories of substance use/abuse and substance abuse screenings and/or treatment.

Standard #26

During the intake/orientation process, a participant acknowledges, in writing, the date on which he is expected to start attending group as well as the time and location of group. Documentation of this acknowledgement is provided to the referring agency, if any.

Standard #27

If accepted, a participant attends his first group within 14 days of signing a program contract except under approved circumstances.

Standard #28

If a waiting list is used, no individual participant is on a waiting list for more than 30 days and the program does not maintain a waiting list for more than 90 consecutive days.

Standard #29

Upon completion of an intake, the program provides written notification of the program's determination of the candidate's eligibility to the referring agency within 14 days. If a candidate is found ineligible, this notification includes an explanation of the specific reasons for this determination.

Standards for Program Contracts

Standard #30

The program contract includes all expectations required for program completion or, if not abided by would result in program dismissal.

Standard #31

The program contract includes an agreement to comply with relevant court orders or contact conditions (e.g. probation warrants, relief from abuse orders, custody orders, divorce orders, no trespass orders, etc.)

Standard #32

Participants sign a confidentiality agreement that identifies that confidentiality in the program is limited and authorizes the program to share information about the participants without restriction with the referring agency, the participant's victim/partner, and the local Network program(s).

Standard #33

Participants are expected to keep the identities of other participants and the participants' partners/ex-partners and children confidential.

Standard #34

Participants acknowledge by signature an understanding of and willingness to abide by the program's fee policy.

Standard #35

If a provider accepts third party payments from health insurance companies, the program takes appropriate steps to ensure doing so does not conflict with the program's message about participant responsibility for their coercive behavior or interfere with the program's adherence to the Standards.

Standard #36

The program's attendance policy is included within its program contract and any violation of this policy results in dismissal.

Standard #37

A participant is considered to have missed a group if he fails to arrive on time for a group meeting, fails to arrive with a completed homework assignment, or fails to participate appropriately.

Standard #38

A participant in a community-based program is allowed no more than three absences within a period of 26 group meetings. A participant in the Intensive Domestic Abuse Program is allowed no more than three absences within a period of three months.

Standard #39

A participant can be on leave without dismissal for up to 30 days in the case of a medical situation, civic obligation or long term substance abuse treatment that is prolonged, prevents a participant from being able to attend, and is verified and approved by the program and the referring agency. Beyond 30 days, the participant is dismissed.

Standard #40

Participants are informed that contact between the program and participants' partners/ex-partners is initiated by the program.

Standard #41

Participants believed to be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs are asked to leave group and are considered absent.

Standard #42

The program's contract includes expectations for appropriate group participation.

Standard #43

Participants acknowledge in writing that information about suspected abuse of children and/or vulnerable adults will be shared by the program with appropriate agencies.

Standard #44

Participants acknowledge in writing that observers may be present while they are attending the program and are informed prior to any observation.

Standard #45

The program provides all participants with information about the program's weather and holiday cancellation policy.

Standard #46

The program provides all participants with clear information about the program's grievance procedure.

Standards for Program Information to Partners

Standard #47

The program acknowledges in all of their services and professional endeavors that improving the safety of women and children is the foremost goal of intervention with batterers.

Standard #48

Under no circumstance does the program share information gathered from a partner during the process of partner contact with a participant or use the information to challenge a participant in group.

Standard #49

The program has a written partner contact protocol outlining its process of providing information in a timely manner to partners that has been reviewed and approved by the local Network program.

Standard #50

The partner contact protocol has procedures for informing partners of participant behavior that might constitute a risk to her safety or the safety of her children.

Standard #51

Within 14 days of a participant signing a program contract, a program sends the partner comprehensive information about the program, batterer intervention services and resources available to her.

Standard #52

The program informs partners/ex-partners of their ability to choose not to receive additional contact from the program after information is sent following participant enrollment.

Standard #53

Contact is maintained with partners throughout a participant's enrollment in a Corrections-based program by the supervising CSS or Victim Services Specialist (VSS).

Standard #54

A participant's partner/ex-partner is notified in writing of a participant's dismissal or completion within 14 days. In the case of a dismissal, this notification includes the reason for the dismissal and how the partner/ex-partner can receive additional information regarding possible pending legal action resulting from his dismissal.

Standard #55

When providing information to partners/ex-partners, the program is clear that substance use or abuse is not the cause of domestic violence and that sobriety and/or recovery alone will not guarantee safety.

Standard #56

The program considers potential risks to children's safety and provides partners/ex-partners with any information about a participant's behavior that may constitute a risk to their children's safety.

Standard #57

The program informs partners/ex-partners that program participation is not a guarantee of participant behavior change or safety for partners and children.

Standards for Dismissal and Completion

Standard #58

To complete, a participant meets all requirements for program completion as identified in the program contract, including financial obligations and commitments to be non-violent and comply with supervision requirements and court orders.

Standard #59

If completion is based on demonstration of specific competencies, the program defines a clear process of when and how participants' demonstration of these competencies will be assessed and documents a participant's success or failure at demonstrating program competencies.

Standard #60

A participant is dismissed from the program in the event of a violation of the attendance and/or fee payment policy, new criminal charges that are domestic violence related, documented report of abuse, violent or intimidating behavior that compromises the safety of the staff and/or other participants, and/or self-reported acts of violence.

Standard #61

After documented warnings, a participant is dismissed for lack of participation, disruptive or inappropriate participation, or failure to maintain accountability for the acts of abuse for which he was convicted.

Standard #62

A participant suspended from the Intensive Domestic Abuse Program is provided with specific expectations that must be met in order to return to the program.

Standard #63

All dismissals from the Intensive Domestic Abuse Program are approved by the local program team.

Standard #64

The program provides written documentation of a participant's dismissal or completion within one week to the referring agency and, if requested, to the local Network program. Documentation of program dismissal will include an explanation of the reason(s) for dismissal.

Standards for Documentation

Standard #65

Program staff document services in a manner that remains objective, is rooted in observable participant behavior, and avoids speculation about participant's future behavior, process of change or victim/partner safety.

Standard #66

A participant's signed contract and any confidentiality agreement is maintained in a participant's file and provided to the referring agency upon request.

Standard #67

A participant's dismissal notice, including specific reasons for the participant's dismissal, is kept in the participant's file and shared with the referring agency.

Standard #68

A participant's completion letter, including the participants start date, number of sessions attended, status of participant's financial obligation to the program, and completion date, is maintained in the participant's file and shared with the referring agency.

Standard #69

Attendance and payment records for each individual participant are maintained and made available to the referring agent as needed.

Standard #70

Information gathered from a participant's partner/ex-partner is kept in a separate file and remains confidential from the participant.

Standard #71

Participant files are maintained for a period of at least seven years.

Standards for Staff Qualifications and Training

Standard #72

Paid staff and volunteers of programs are required to indicate their willingness to abide by the Vermont Statewide Standards for Domestic Violence Intervention.

Standard #73

Paid and unpaid staff are expected to be free of documented violence in their own lives. Any staff with a history of perpetrating domestic violence will be violence-free in his or her own life for a period of at least three years and have completed a recognized intervention program.

Standard #74

Paid and unpaid staff communicate and act in ways that are free of victim blaming, sexism, or misogyny and remain open to self-examination and receptive to feedback on issues of power and control, sexism, and collusion in their work and their own lives.

Standard #75

New staff members are provided with an orientation to the program's guidelines, rules, and expectations.

Standard #76

New staff members attend and complete a training approved by the Batterer Accountability Committee of the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence within three months of their employment.

Standard #77

New staff members observe at least three groups at a certified batterer intervention program within one month of their employment and a total of six within three months of their employment.

Standard #78

Staff members attend and document at least twelve hours per year of professional development approved by the Batterer Accountability Committee of the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence.

Standard #79

Facilitators are observed at least twice per year by a person with appropriate training and experience in batterer intervention services. Observations should be documented and focus on the development of specific professional development goals.

Standards for Program Collaboration

Standard #80

The program is an active member of the local task forces in each community where they provide services and assigns at least one representative to regularly attend task force meetings.

Standard #81

The program participates regularly in the Vermont Coalition of Batterer Intervention Services.

Standard #82

The program maintains a cooperative working relationship with local Network programs.

Standard #83

In any forum, presentations about batterer intervention are coupled with information about services available to victims of domestic violence and the need for a comprehensive and coordinated community response.

Standard #84

When making referrals of men who batter for substance abuse assessments or treatment, the program ensures that referrals are made to service providers who are consistent with principles articulated in these Standards.

Standard #85

The program provides a comprehensive orientation for community observers and appropriate confidentiality for participants and partners/ex-partners.

Standard #86

Program staff are expected to serve as mandatory reporters of abuse of children and vulnerable adults.

Standard #87

If asked to comment in child custody decisions by relevant agencies, the program provides factual information about a man's participation and challenges any inaccurate assumptions about program participation or completion being an indication or predictor of a man's safety as a parent.

Standard #88

Each IDAP site has a program team charged with general oversight of the IDAP program and its participants.

Standards for Program Policies

Standard #89

The program has an appropriate policy on the intersection of domestic violence and substance use.

Standard #90

The program has policies to ensure staff compliance with these Standards, including procedures to address staff who commit acts of abuse in their personal relationships.

Standard #91

The program is prepared refer participants to additional services to support their participation in and successful completion of batterer intervention services or to address issues other than violence prevention.

Standard #92

The program has a policy on fees, including a fee scale, that is applied in a standardized manner.

Standards for Program Evaluation

Standard #93

When conducting program evaluation, the program takes appropriate steps to collaborate with victim advocates, protect the identity and confidentiality of battered women who are research subjects or partners of research subjects, and ensure that findings are reported responsibly.

Standard #94

When conducting program evaluation, the program chooses appropriate outcomes and/or indicators of success.

Standard #95

The program engages in an ongoing risk assessment process and maintains procedures for informing partners and referring agencies of information about risk factors.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of the Statewide Standards for Programming for Men Who Batter Women (hereafter referred to as Standards) is to enhance the safety, security and liberty of women and children by providing guidelines for effective, consistent and quality intervention programs and related services for men who batter female partners. The Standards will also guide batterer intervention programs in the coordination of their services with those involved in local and statewide responses to end domestic violence.

These standards are not intended to address programs for women who use violence against men, perpetrators of intimate partner violence in same sex relationships, or other forms of family violence such as child or elder abuse. While some of the intervention tools and processes outlined in this document may be useful and applicable to other clients manifesting violent behavior, it is believed that other programs created for these groups would necessarily be distinctly different.

Why do we need batterer intervention services?

Domestic violence requires political, social and cultural solutions. Given the lethal nature of domestic violence as well as its impact on all within its range, each community should have a vested interest in eliminating and preventing domestic violence. Communities committed to ending domestic violence in a safe and ethical way should prioritize their efforts to ensure:

- shelter, advocacy and support services for battered women and children,
- improvement and coordination of the criminal justice response to domestic violence at all levels of the criminal justice system. The criminal justice response should include a strong pro-arrest response by law enforcement, a clear understanding of the concept of dominant aggressor, rigorous prosecution, appropriate adjudication, close monitoring by probation, and sentences that reflect the seriousness of the crime,
- professional training of health, social services providers and legal services providers, and
- widespread community education.

Intervention programs shall not provide services to batterers if advocacy, safe housing and support services are not available for battered partners in the local community. When the aforementioned efforts are organized and monitored in a community, it then becomes appropriate to provide domestic abuse intervention programs for men who batter.

Once developed in a community, domestic abuse intervention programs will:

- Hold offenders accountable and support victim safety,
- Support men who batter in engaging in a process of change and provide them with the information they need in order to stop their abusive behavior,
- Provide the courts with a service appropriate for all men who abuse, whether or not they are going to receive consequences that are more serious. At the time of the writing of these Standards, possible sentences for committing crimes relating to domestic violence in Vermont include the following: probation or split sentences with mandatory batterer intervention programming, intermediate sanction with all the conditions of the Intensive Domestic Abuse Program; incarceration with long term violent offender programming; and incarceration until near maximum sentence for offenders who do not complete required programs,

- Be a catalyst for social change through participation in community collaborations aimed at reducing the incidence of domestic violence and the creation of effective community responses to end domestic violence, and
- Regularly solicit feedback from battered women and advocates from the Network and its member programs.

Why do we need standards for batterer intervention programs?

Standards will help to ensure:

- 1) The safety of battered women and their children and of program staff is a priority.**
- 2) Appropriate modalities for intervention are used by domestic abuse intervention programs.**
- 3) Provision of services by those well-educated and skilled in appropriate program methodologies.** Experts generally recognize group education and domestic violence service providers as the most effective batterer intervention program format. Providers of intervention for batterers should meet the highest standards. Their training requires in-depth understanding of domestic violence, battered women, and batterer intervention
- 4) All programs for batterer intervention operate as integral components of a broad societal response.** Programs for batterers that operate in isolation from the wider community inherently compromise their ability to hold men who batter accountable and to support the safety of battered women and their children. Such programs may send confusing messages to men who batter, their partners and the general public. These programs also have the potential for causing a great deal of harm.
- 5) All community members of a coordinated community response to end domestic abuse will have consistent criteria to evaluate the quality of their community domestic abuse intervention programs.**

Who do these standards apply to?

These Standards apply to all programs that provide services to men who batter women in the State of Vermont interested in being certified by the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence. This includes programs provided in the community by independent agencies and to programming for batterer intervention services provided by the Vermont Department of Corrections.

How do the Standards work?

Expectations for batterer intervention programs are defined in Chapters three through fourteen of this document. Each Standard is highlighted and is intended to define what is expected of programs. In addition most Standards also include a rationale intended to help explain the reason for the Standard. Some Standards also include a statement about implementation. This is intended to provide guidance to programs about strategies for compliance or to certification review teams about how to evaluate whether a program is in compliance with the Standards.

What about standards for services for other domestic violence offenders?

Programming for men who batter women is significantly more developed in Vermont than are services for women who use violence against male partners or perpetrators of intimate partner violence in same

sex relationships. This trend reflects the enormously disproportionate degrees of male violence against women currently and throughout history and the significantly larger demand for services for men who batter women. Given this reality, intervention programs in Vermont have focused almost exclusively on this population.

There is a growing recognition in Vermont of the need to develop programming for perpetrators of domestic violence and those involved in creating these Standards are committed to the development of corresponding standards for these services.

DEFINITIONS

Batterer

A batterer is a person who uses a pattern of coercive control against a partner that may be primarily psychological, economic, or sexual, but that is reinforced by one or more acts of physical violence, credible physical threat, or sexual assault.

Batterer Intervention Program or “Program”

A batterer intervention program (BIP) is a program specifically designed to provide education about domestic violence to men who batter and to motivate men who batter to end their abuse and engage in a process of behavior change. When not specified otherwise, the term “program” is used throughout this document to refer to batterer intervention programs for men who abuse their female partners.

Community-based program: The term community-based program is used in the Standards to describe the independent providers of batterer intervention program. These programs are distinguished from Corrections-based programs that are provided by the Department of Corrections.

Corrections-based program: The term Corrections-based program is used in the Standards to refer to the batterer intervention programs provided by the Department of Corrections, namely the Intensive Domestic Abuse Program (IDAP). Corrections-based programming may be provided in the community to participants on furlough or to incarcerated offenders participating in a Corrections facility.

Dominant aggressor

A dominant aggressor is a person identified to be the most significant aggressor. The term “dominant aggressor” is preferred over the terms “primary aggressor” and “predominant aggressor” because it does not imply aggressive behavior on the part of the victim or survivor of the dominant aggressor’s abuse. This term was developed in an attempt to help professionals, particularly in law enforcement, distinguish which partner in a relationship poses a safety risk to another and helps clarify what may be incorrectly construed as a mutual conflict or assault.

Domestic Violence:

Domestic violence is defined as a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors that may include actual or threatened physical injury and sexual assault, psychological abuse, economic coercion and various other sexual and psychological tactics. These behaviors are perpetrated by someone who is, was, or wishes to be involved in an intimate or dating relationship with an adult or adolescent, are aimed at establishing control by one partner over the other and result in an atmosphere of fear and/or terror for the victim. (VT Agency of Human Services Policy on Domestic Violence 2007)

For the purposes of this document, the terms domestic violence, domestic abuse, intimate partner violence, and battering will be used interchangeably.

It is important to recognize the distinction between domestic violence, as understood in these Standards, and the legal definition of domestic assault. The latter is a legal term used to define specific behaviors for which a household member (as defined in 15 VSA § 21 sub chapter 1101) can be arrested and prosecuted. While many behaviors involved in domestic violence are against the law, many are not considered illegal as such.

Family Violence

Family violence incorporates many configurations of violence within the family. This includes domestic violence; child abuse, including child sexual abuse; cult/ritual abuse; elder abuse; sibling abuse; and child-to-adult violence. Family violence can include acts of physical, sexual, emotional, economic and psychological abuse

Network Program

Network program refers to any of the independent advocacy programs that are members of the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. Network member programs are independent entities. All adhere to basic standards of service as a prerequisite to their membership in the Network, and out of a deep, shared commitment to victims and survivors. Network programs may provide some but not all of the following services: 24 hour hotline, safe homes or shelters, legal support, children's services, support groups and community outreach.

The Vermont Council on Domestic Violence

The Vermont Council on Domestic Violence is a multidisciplinary council which provides leadership for Vermont's statewide efforts to eradicate domestic violence. The Council provides statewide leadership on issues related to domestic violence and offers support to local domestic violence task forces.

Participant

The term "participant" is used throughout this document to refer to a man who is enrolled in a batterer intervention program. Prior to enrolment, men referred for batterer intervention services are referred to as "candidates."

Partner

The term "partner" is used throughout this document to refer to an intimate partner of a participant in a batterer intervention program. In most cases, partner refers to a woman who is the victim or survivor of abuse perpetrated by a program participant. In some cases, partner may refer to a new intimate partner who may or may not have been the target of the participant's abuse for which the participant was arrested.

Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (VNADSV)

The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence is a statewide coalition of Vermont's 16 domestic and sexual violence programs with a statewide office in Montpelier. The member programs provide comprehensive domestic and sexual violence services to each county in Vermont. The VNADSV will be referred to throughout this document as "the Network".

Victim/Survivor

"Victim" and "survivor" are terms used to refer to the person against whom a man who batters directs his abuse or battering. A batterer is not referred to as a victim of domestic violence even when those he abuses react to him by using violence or abusive acts to defend themselves, to stop his abuse or in coping with their day to day lives.

Victim Advocates

Domestic violence victim advocates provide services and support to victim/survivors of domestic violence that will enhance the safety, liberty and security of themselves and their children. Victim advocates can include both staff of member programs of the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence and state-based victim advocates who work on behalf of victims from within state agencies. State-based advocates are exempt from the crisis worker privilege statute that allows Network program advocates to maintain complete confidentiality in most instances.

CHAPTER TWO: PHILOSOPHY OF STANDARDS

Based on the definition of domestic violence, the Vermont Standards acknowledge that:

- **Domestic violence is a violation of human rights.** It is so because it jeopardizes the safety, liberty and security of women and children. Many states, including Vermont, have passed laws making specific behaviors common to domestic violence illegal. While not all behavior is illegal, any act of domestic violence can be viewed as a violation of human rights.
- **The safety of battered women and children is paramount.** The safety and rights of the victim/survivor must be respected at all times. Their right to live free of violence supersedes other considerations. Their needs, as well as the potential for further harm should always be of utmost consideration when making policy decisions regarding the structure, design and content of intervention programs.
- **Domestic violence cuts across all lines of race, ethnicity, education, social class, sexual orientation, age, religion, geography, and physical or mental ability.**
- **Men's use of domestic violence is a form of gender-based violence.** It is rooted in the institutionalized imbalance of power (patriarchy) between men and women and is reflective of a belief system (sexism) that is based on the widespread assumptions that men are entitled to impose their will on their partners and women are objects for possession. Historically, cultures have endorsed men's use of violence to maintain dominance in relationships with their partners.
- **Men batter to achieve and maintain power over their partners.** Battering is purposeful, intentional behavior that is an effective method to gain power and control over intimate partners.
- **Men who batter choose their tactics of abuse, and are solely responsible for their actions.** Domestic violence does not result from individual personal or moral deficits, diseases, diminished intellect, addiction, mental illness or other external persons or events. Domestic violence is also not a result of provocation or loss of control. Men who batter carefully select the targets of their abuse: their partner. They choose the circumstances of their violence, including the amount of injury inflicted by their assault, the location of those injuries, the use of weapons, the presence or absence of witnesses, and the level of terror accompanying the assault.
- **Domestic violence is a widespread social problem that has dire consequences for individuals, families and communities.** Domestic violence may result in death or other serious physical or emotional injury.
- **Because men who batter choose violence, they can also choose to stop violence and eliminate coercive and controlling tactics in their relationships.** The decision to forsake violence and to participate in intimate relationships in a safe, respectful and equitable manner rests exclusively with men who batter. Batterer intervention programs are charged with educating men to consider the options for ceasing abusive behavior and embracing belief systems respectful of women's safety, security and liberties.
- **Coordinated community responses are vital to the long-term solution to ending domestic violence.** Intervention programs cannot guarantee the safety, liberty, and security of women and children alone. As a piece of the larger community response, intervention programs need to

coordinate efforts with the criminal justice system, other batterers' intervention programs, Network programs, family court, schools, religious organizations, media, substance abuse treatment, private and public mental health agencies, and more.

- **Intervention programs for men who batter are not to be used as a substitute or a way to circumvent arrest, incarceration, or other legal sanctions; nor should they be used as a mitigated legal consequence.**

Program Objectives

Intervention programs shall be designed to support men who batter with a process of change with the goal of eliminating abusive and violent behavior, while clarifying that they will eliminate these behaviors only if they choose to do so. Therefore, the intervention model must focus on strategies that will best serve to motivate participants to do what is necessary to engage in safe behavior within intimate partnership and family relationships. The model is education, not therapy.

The program and curriculum utilized in the programs shall work to:

1. Increase the participant's identification of his behaviors that are used as a means of controlling his partner's and children's actions, thoughts, and/or feelings. All forms of abuse shall be identified and challenged, including physical, verbal, and emotional abuse, intimidating behavior, threats, terrorizing tactics, isolating tactics, using male privilege, using the children, and sexual abuse.
2. Support participants in identifying cultural, social and familial influences related to the identified controlling and coercive behavior and those that can support safe and respectful relationships. This includes an exploration of the social contexts in which this violence is used, without allowing these issues to excuse or justify an individual's abusive actions.
3. Challenge participants' excuses for abuse and support participants in accepting responsibility for their behavior. This shall include a philosophical position emphasizing that men who batter are solely responsible for their choices to abuse and can make other choices and that abuse is never justified, and. This challenge must occur in a respectful manner that is supportive of self change.
4. Examine the harmful, damaging and potentially lethal consequences of abuse on battered women, children and the batterer's relationship with them. The short- and long-term effects of abuse and violence shall be enumerated, and participants shall be expected to take responsibility for creating these consequences. Programs will also work to increase the participant's understanding of the effects of domestic abuse on children.
5. Motivate participants to engage in a process of changing their pattern of coercive control and to make a commitment to supporting the safety and well-being of their partners and children. This includes helping participants to identify personal goals for engaging in a process of change. This may include their desire to be responsible fathers, respected within their community and respectful partners.
6. Provide the participant with strategies and skills to intervene in controlling and abusive behavior and to promote respect for his partner.
7. Provide the participant with structured activities to practice and demonstrate the acquisition of strategies and skills to intervene and refrain from controlling and abusive behavior.

8. Furnish the participant with general information concerning the federal, state, and local responses to domestic violence.

Domestic abuse intervention programs do not guarantee that men will cease their violence. Nor are interventions intended to salvage relationships. (Austin and Dankwort, 1999)

CHAPTER THREE: STANDARDS FOR PROGRAM FORMAT AND DESIGN

Standard #1

Enrollment is open-ended allowing new participants to begin at any point.

Rationale: A format provides a social environment of peers for men to be accountable for their behavior and to explore motivations for change. This format also provides an opportunity for men to challenge each other based upon their shared experience and the knowledge and skills they have acquired in group.

Standard #2

Programming provided is gender specific.

Rationale: Groups are intended for adult men who batter their female intimate partners. These programs are not intended for women, perpetrators of violence in same sex relationships, or for intervention in other forms of family violence such as child or elder abuse.

Standard #3

The community-based program is designed to accommodate participants with or without a criminal conviction and/or court mandate.

Rationale: Program participants may or may not have been convicted of a crime against their partner. While some will have had no criminal convictions, others may have been convicted of behaviors towards others or property which is related to the history of the abuse against their partner. Examples include charges for assault on a person engaged in or believed to be engaged in a relationship with a program participant's former partner or assaults on someone who is attempting to intervene in a batterer's assault on a partner.

Standard #4

Each group meets for at least 1½ hours.

Rationale: Group meetings should provide for sufficient time for participants to explore the challenging information discussed and to support the difficult process of change that programs hope to motivate. One and a half hours is not adequate time to address these goals.

Standard #5

A community-based program requires a minimum of 26 weekly group sessions for a participant to complete. A Corrections-based program requires a minimum of 12 months for a participant to complete.

Rationale: Experience suggests that longer term programs are more beneficial than shorter term programs. Given the resistance typically demonstrated by a participant to programming and behavior change, programs shorter than identified in this Standard makes it difficult for programs to cover appropriate material and to engage participants in a process intended to motivate behavior change.

Standard #6

Groups are led by two facilitators.

Rationale: Co-facilitation is central to making group programming for participants with such a high degree of resistance effective. Co-facilitation enhances safety for facilitators, participants and partners. The

challenge of facilitating batterer intervention groups stems from both the difficulty of facilitating group programming and working with a highly resistant population. Two facilitators enable more comprehensive delivery of curriculum. The expectation that groups will be co-facilitated is therefore not an reflection or statement about the skill or training of any specific facilitator .but a reflection of the difficulty of working with this population and the complexity of this issue.

Implementation: It is recommended that co-facilitation teams consist of one male and one female. Despite the challenges that staffing groups with a man and a woman presents, experience has shown that same-sex facilitator teams (whether male-male or female-female) can significantly alter the dynamics of the group process and content.

Any ongoing group within a program may be facilitated by one facilitator no more than six times during a year and only in circumstances in which the other facilitator cannot be present due to unforeseen reasons such as an unexpected illness. Programs will maintain documentation of any groups not co-facilitated and provide this documentation to their certification review team. Programs may adopt a policy of canceling any group for which two facilitators are not present.

Programs are encouraged to maintain substitute facilitators so that group cancellation can be kept to a minimum.

Standard #7

Group enrollment does not exceed 10 participants for community-based programs or 8 for a Corrections-based program except in limited circumstances during which enrolment may exceed these levels by no more than 25 percent. Groups are not held with enrollment of fewer than three participants.

Rationale: The attention that each individual gets diminishes significantly when groups get too large. Group enrollment in Corrections-based programs is smaller due to the increased individualized work done within the Intensive Domestic Abuse Program (IDAP).

Implementation: Limited circumstances are defined by periods of no more than 30 days in which programs are referred more men than can be served in the number of groups within a community. When this occurs, the program must assess whether the increase in demand for services will be sustained. If the demand for services is found to be ongoing, strategies must be employed to reduce group enrollment to 10 participants for community-based programs or 8 for the Corrections based programs.

Up to one participant completing his last task required for completion of a Corrections-based program may be excluded from the calculation of a group's enrollment.

Programs exceeding the limits defined in this Standard due to circumstance described herein must provide written notice to the Batterer Accountability Committee of the Council on Domestic Violence of the date that group enrollment exceeds the given limits and the date on which enrollment returned to the levels outlined in this Standard.

Standard #8

The program engages in appropriate screening and documentation prior to granting any request for accommodations or alternative programming.

Rationale: Programs have a responsibility to provide reasonable accommodations as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Programs may also receive requests periodically for alternative

programming. These circumstances should be addressed responsibly in consultation with appropriate community resources.

Implementation: When a program receives a request for reasonable accommodations or to provide services in a manner other than group programming, the program will at a minimum:

- (1) Ask the candidate and/or referring agencies for an explanation of why the candidate is not able to participate in group programming.
- (2) Conduct an assessment of the need for alternative programming or consult with other professionals who can accurately assess the need for alternative programming.
- (3) Determine if the request for alternative programming is warranted.
- (4) Document the stated need for alternative programming, collateral contacts and the program's determination.
- (5) Ensure that any alternative programming will focus on the violence and other abuses perpetrated by the offender and follow all other standards regarding appropriate intervention modalities.
- (6) Develop a plan for ensuring that any alternative programming will include appropriate procedures for addressing partner safety and partner contact.

CHAPTER FOUR: STANDARDS FOR PROGRAM CONTENT

Standard #9

The program uses a modality consistent with the philosophy outlined in these standards.

Rationale: Partners have a reasonable expectation that programs will adhere to modalities that support behavioral change of batterers and therefore support the safety of partners.

Implementation: An appropriate modality is one that:

1. Holds that battering is intentional and coercive behavior that can be used to maintain power and control over a partner.
2. Maintains that men who batter are solely responsible for their abuse and challenge an attempt to shift responsibility onto victim/survivors, drug or alcohol use/abuse, mental health issues or any other justification.
3. Directly challenges the abusive man's attempts to control his partner through the use of physical force, verbal and non-verbal intimidation and psychological abuse.
4. Defines "violence" as any act that causes the victim to do something she does not want to do, prevents her from doing something she wants to do, or causes her to be afraid.
5. Challenges the sexist expectations and controlling behaviors that often inhibit men's motivation to learn and apply such skills consistently in a non-controlling manner.
6. Holds that the safety of adult and child victims is paramount to all other considerations.

Theories, methods of practice, or techniques which in any way holds the victim responsible for the batterer's violence are inappropriate and do not comply with these Standards. While some of the following methods may, in some cases, be helpful as collateral services to address other issues, they are inadequate and inappropriate for batterer intervention if they stand alone as the focus of intervention. These methods are:

1. Psychodynamic individual or group therapy, which center causality of the violence in the past.
2. Communication enhancement or anger management techniques, which lay primary causality on anger, including fair fighting techniques and getting in touch with emotions.
3. Systems theory approaches, which treat the violence as a mutually circular process, ascribing any degree of responsibility for either the perpetration or cessation of abuse to the victim.
4. Addiction counseling models, which identify the violence as an addiction and the victim and children as enabling or co-dependent in the violence.
5. Family therapy or counseling that places the responsibility for the batterer's behavior on the children and/or partner.
6. Approaches focusing on gradual containment and de-escalation of violence.
7. Theories or techniques which identify poor impulse control as the primary cause of violence.
8. Methods that identify psychopathology on of either the batterer or victim as a primary cause of violence.
9. Couples counseling in any form, including couples conjoint counseling or marriage enhancement groups.

Standard #10

The program uses a curriculum approved by the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence Committee on Batterer Accountability.

Rationale: Partners, community members and other stakeholders have a reasonable expectation that the content of a program's curriculum will be consistent with the philosophy and objectives of these Standards. Some batterer intervention programs have a history of using an eclectic mix of program materials that are not consistent with the modalities outlined in these Standards.

At the same time, the field of batterer intervention is still developing and innovation must be encouraged. The challenge is to balance the creative efforts of programs with the expectation that stakeholders have a clear sense of what is being done in groups.

Partners also have a specific interest in clear information about program curriculum. Without clear information about program content, partners may find it difficult to recognize the attempts of men who batter to manipulate information presented in programs in self serving and/or coercive manners.

Implementation: Programs may submit their curriculum for approval at any time to the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence Committee on Batterer Accountability. The Committee will review the curriculum to ensure that it is clear, consistent with the philosophy and objectives of the Standards, reflective of models supported by research and evidenced based practices, and consistent with an appropriate modality.

Once approved, programs may continue to use the approved curriculum without need for further review until a change in or modification of the curriculum is proposed.

Standard #11

The impacts of children's exposure to men who batter are routinely covered.

Rationale: Recent literature in the field of domestic violence has heightened awareness of the need for intervention providers to develop a more comprehensive and appropriate response to the effects that exposure to men who batter has on children (Groves, 2002; McGee, 2000). The following findings provide an indication of the important connection between domestic violence and children (Bancroft, 2002):

1. Many men who are fathers and who have been abusive to their female partners will continue to be involved in the lives of their children, and/or will start a new relationship with new children.
2. There exists solid evidence that the more men focus on care giving and nurturing as the most important experiences of their lives, the less men are violent.
3. An understanding of the effects of domestic violence on children has proven to be a powerful motivator for men to change their beliefs and behaviors.
4. The positive role model of accountability and responsibility provides an opportunity to break the intergenerational cycle of learned violent behaviors.
5. The presence of a safe and caring adult male can have a long-term positive impact on children, improving their academic success, mental health, and ability to establish healthy intimate partner relationships.
6. Growing up in a household where violence is present affects children's development and the development of their relationship with parents and other adults. In fact, it has been shown that witnessing one's mother being abused has a greater impact on some children than being physically or emotionally abused themselves.
7. A large percentage (roughly 50%) of men who batter partners also physically assault their children. Men who batter are 6 times more likely than non-battering men to be incest perpetrators.
8. After separation, custody and visitation issues become one of the most common tactics of control used by men who batter after separation.

Recent research has provided insight into the parenting styles of men who batter. This research indicates that men who batter demonstrate the following characteristics as parents (Bancroft, 2002):

1. Men who batter are often rigid and authoritarian with their children, expecting full compliance and adherence to the rules they lay down. They are intolerant of criticism and unwilling to accept feedback from the children or their mother.

2. While men who batter see themselves as the ultimate authority, they tend to be uninvolved in the regular, day-to-day duties of parenting. They often have clear beliefs about a woman's role in parenting, expecting the majority of duties to fall under the mother's responsibility.
3. By engaging in a pattern of abusive, controlling behavior towards his female victim, a man who batters inherently undermines her authority.
4. The entitlement that plays out in an abusive man's relationship with his victim also shows up in his parenting. Rather than seeing his role as attending to the needs and developmental tasks of his children, a man who batters often expects his children to meet his needs. This "my needs come first" mentality precludes his ability to attend to the feelings, interests, and experiences of his children.
5. A batterer often engages in many forms of manipulation and justification meant to obscure the reality of his behavior: the willful abuse of his victim. This tendency to manipulate also appears in his parenting style, leaving the children confused and unclear about who is responsible for the abuse in the home.

CHAPTER FIVE: STANDARDS FOR PROGRAM REFERRAL, SCREENING, INTAKE AND ORIENTATION

Standard #12

Once a referral has been received, the program schedules an intake interview within two weeks of the date of referral.

Rationale: It is recommended that men referred to programs from the court system be referred for service as quickly as possible. Partners of program participants have expressed that the period between conviction and the beginning of intervention services is a stressful time. Every effort should be made to keep this period to a minimum even though enrollment in the program does not guarantee safety for partners and their children.

Implementation: Community-based programs may schedule the interviews themselves or provide referring agencies with an intake schedule so that the referring agency may schedule the candidates.

Standard #13

The program documents the date a referral is received.

Rationale: Programs will make every effort to ensure that eligible candidates begin services in a timely manner. The date of the referral must be documented in order to assess the timeliness of the referral and screening process.

Standard #14

An intake interview is rescheduled if a referral packet is not made available by the referring agency.

Rationale: To be considered for participation in a batterer intervention program, potential participants or the agencies that refer them must provide to the program information about specific behavior for which participants are expected to be accountable. Without that information, intake interviewers cannot accurately determine a potential participant's accountability or eligibility for the program. Examples could include a State's Attorney Information sheet and affidavit, Relief from Abuse Order and affidavit, or a DCF case plan.

Standard#15

Candidates sign a confidentiality agreement at or before the intake process allowing information disclosed during the intake process to be shared with the referring agency, victim advocates, and partner/ex-partner(s).

Rationale: Information shared by the program candidate may be helpful for the referring agency or the partner/ex-partner. Appropriate confidentiality agreements are therefore important at the time of intake to allow information sharing to occur. The information shared would be based on the observations of the candidate by the intake worker and would be shared if the intake worker felt the information revealed by the candidate posed a potential risk to a partner or to children.

Standard #16

The intake/orientation process includes an eligibility screening, collection of relevant personal information, a discussion of any barriers a participant may face in completing the program as required and a thorough review of the program content and expectations.

Rationale: The intake and orientation process serves three main purposes. These include:

1. Determination of the candidate's eligibility for the program.
2. Collection of relevant personal information and information about the candidate's history of abuse.
3. To provide the candidate information about the program content and expectations.

Implementation: Relevant personal information to be collected during an intake process includes:

1. Demographic information
2. A history of abusive behavior,
3. Information about partner/victim (including new partners) and children for the purpose of partner contact
4. A history of Relief from Abuse Orders, including any violations and the conditions of any current RFA(s)
5. History of involvement with the criminal justice system, including any violations of court conditions
6. Relevant probation and/or furlough conditions

Standard #17

To be eligible, a participant signs a program contract outlining the expectations of program participation, which includes a commitment to abide by the contract. The participant's signature is witnessed by a program staff member.

Rationale: Participants should not be allowed to participate in program services without agreeing to abide by the expectations of the program. Given the resistance demonstrated by many participants, it is often essential that the participants' agreement to the terms of program services be documented with the participant's signature and witnessed by program staff.

Standard #18

Candidates with pending charges for domestic violence-related crimes are considered ineligible.

Rationale: Batterer intervention programs provide an opportunity for men with histories of domestic violence to learn more about domestic violence and engage in a process of changing their behavior. They are not intended to shelter men from the consequences of their behavior, including criminal conviction. Furthermore, participants with pending charges are frequently unwilling or unable to talk openly about their histories of abuse.

Standard #19

If referred by the criminal court, a participant must admit to the acts of domestic abuse for which he has been convicted in order to be eligible for program participation. Programs maintain consistent criteria for defining the acts of abuse for which participants have been convicted.

Rationale: Participants in batterer intervention programs have a very specific legal obligation to be accountable for the acts of abuse for which they have been convicted. Programs have an obligation to the court system and partners to expect men in their programs to remain accountable for those acts for which they have been convicted. The legal system and partners should expect that batterer intervention programs will not renegotiate what participants have been found responsible for in court.

Determining that a participant demonstrates an adequate level of accountability for the acts of abuse for which he has been convicted can be challenging. Men who batter routinely minimize their behavior and attempt to shift responsibility. Additionally, the court system does not always clearly communicate the specific behavior for which a person is convicted. In some cases, this is clearly documented and or is

clear from the information presented. In others, it is less clear and requires programs to make a subjective determination of what the behaviors are and whether the participant has provided sufficient acknowledgement of them.

Implementation: It is recommended that programs use the State's Attorney's Information Sheet and/or any stipulated agreement as the basis for determining the behaviors that a participant is accountable for. A person is not always convicted of every act in an affidavit. The State's Attorney's Information Sheet and/or any stipulated agreement provide a clearly understanding of exactly what behavior a person has been charged and convicted of.

It is important to distinguish between admission and accountability for the purpose of screening for eligibility. It is expected that men referred to programs will engage in some level of justification or blaming. For determination of eligibility, the focus of attention should be on whether the participant acknowledges committing the behavior even if he shifts blame or claims that the behavior was justified. Addressing the justifications and blaming are appropriate discussions during a participant's participation in the program. Over time, participants will presumably progress in the process of change from a point of the typical denial and minimization toward a place of full accountability for all acts of abuse that they have engaged in.

Standard #20

A candidate without court mandate acknowledges a history of abuse against their partner(s) to be eligible.

Rationale: Batterer intervention programs are designed for men who have engaged in abusive behavior and are willing to discuss the behaviors. Men who deny any history of abusive behavior are not appropriate for batterer intervention programs as their lack of admission indicates that they have either not engaged in abusive behaviors or are not willing to talk about them. In either case, batterer intervention programming is not designed for such men.

Implementation: Candidates who deny any history of abusive behaviors toward their partners should be found ineligible and referred back to their referring agency with a description of the reason for being found ineligible. This description should include specific statements made by the candidate during the screening process.

Standard #21

To be eligible for a Corrections-based program, a candidate completes an approved screening procedure, meets requirements related to sentence structure and supervision requirements, and demonstrates the criminogenic need for intensive programming.

Rationale: The court, state's attorney and defense attorney, Department of Corrections, or Vermont Parole Board can refer an offender for eligibility screening. The DOC may make referrals at the time of a new offense, a violation of probation, or for an incarcerated offender as part of his case plan for reintegration into the community.

Implementation: Once the DOC receives a referral, staff will screen the candidate according to the program's eligibility requirements and report back to the court two weeks prior to the sentencing hearing. If the candidate is not eligible, a notice will be sent to the referring party indicating why the client is not eligible. If the referral is determined to be acceptable according to sentence structure and offense criteria, the following assessment tools will be used with the candidate to assess eligibility:

1. Intermediate Sanction Report (ISR) or Pre-Sentence Investigation (PSI)
2. IDAP structured interview, including the Marshall and Tollman interview tools
3. a domestic violence risk assessment tool approved by the Department
4. LSI-R.

Required conditions for eligibility for the IDAP include:

1. All participants must be males who have exhibited abusive and/or violent behaviors towards an adult female in an intimate partner relationship.
2. Participants must have a conviction for a felony domestic violence-related offense or multiple misdemeanors, at least one of which is domestic violence-related.
3. Participants must have eligible offenses, supervision status and sentence structure, as described by the Department of Corrections Sentencing Options Manual.
4. Participants must be determined to have an appropriate risk level to be supervised safely in a community setting.

Incarcerated individuals with domestic violence-related offenses who have participated in Cognitive Self Change (CSC) or other programming in an incarcerative facility or who have not completed programming, may be considered for participation in the IDAP through the case staffing process. When an incarcerated individual is being considered for IDAP, the facility Corrections Services Specialists (CSS) should be in contact with the community CSS who will supervise the case. The individual being considered should review and sign the IDAP contract prior to placement in the community.

Standard #22

Partners and past partners of the potential participant are contacted during the screening process for all Corrections-based programs.

Rationale: Contacting partners is an essential component of conducting a thorough screening and assessment process for domestic violence offenders. At minimum, this includes contacting current partners and past partners involved in the incidents resulting in programming and/or Correctional supervision. This could also include contact additional past partners who may be able to provide relevant information.

Implementation: When contacting current or past partners, the staff member will explain that a referral for IDAP programming has been received and provide information about the program. The partner/past partner will be invited to participate in the screening process and share any information she may wish to provide. Prior to asking the partner/past partner to disclose any information, the staff member should inform her about what information is confidential, how the information will be used and ensure that she understands the implications of providing information. If she consents, she may complete additional screening interviews for partners.

Sensitivity to a partner's safety concerns should be used in setting up an interview with a partner. If the interview takes place at the Corrections office, staff should take steps to ensure that the offender/participant does not interfere with her appointment and that contact is avoided. If the partner requests to meet outside of the Corrections office in order to feel safe, a space at the state's attorney victim advocate's office or a local Network program may be appropriate.

Standard #23

To be eligible for the incarcerative component of the Intensive Domestic Abuse Program (IDAP) potential participants complete a screening procedure and meet required conditions.

Implementation: Required conditions for eligibility for the incarcerative component of the Intensive Domestic Abuse Program (IDAP) include:

1. All participants must be males who have exhibited abusive and/or violent behaviors towards an adult female in an intimate partner relationship.
2. Participants must have a minimum incarcerative sentence to serve of 13 months, for an 8 month program. (Maximum program length is 16 months).
3. Participants must have a conviction for a felony domestic violence related offense or multiple misdemeanors, at least one of which is domestic violence-related.
4. Consideration will be given to participants from community IDAP who have violated their program or supervision requirements and whose Pre-Approved Furlough (PAF) status has been revoked, suspended, or interrupted and who have been given a period of incarceration that allows 8 months of participation in the program.
5. Agreement to continue IDAP programming in community upon release.

Standard #24

All referrals from the court of men referred to a Corrections-based program through court are reviewed and approved by the local program team.

Rationale: Local program teams help to facilitate consistent screening decisions. The collaborative review of local program teams helps to ensure that screening procedures are thorough and that the decisions reflect the best possible thinking about offender accountability and victim safety. (See Standard 90 for information regarding program team makeup.)

Standard #25

Program intake procedures include an exploration of candidates' histories of substance use/abuse and substance abuse screenings and/or treatment.

Implementation: When indicated, referrals to appropriate substance abuse assessment services should be made.

Standard #26

During the intake/orientation process, a participant acknowledges, in writing, the date on which he is expected to start attending group as well as the time and location of group. Documentation of this acknowledgement is provided to the referring agency, if any.

Rationale: If found eligible for the program, a participant should not leave an intake without acknowledging, in writing, when and where he is expected to begin his first group. Doing so avoids any potential conflict about exactly when and where a participant is to attend group and makes it easier to address missed groups.

Standard #27

If accepted, a participant attends his first group with 14 days of signing a program contract except under approved circumstances.

Rationale: Programs should make every effort to ensure that eligible candidates begin services in a timely manner.

In some communities, it may be possible to accommodate additional participants in other available groups or by starting additional groups. This can be more difficult in smaller communities where it is unclear if there is a demand to support the addition of a new group. Under certain circumstances, it may be necessary for programs to maintain waiting lists at times.

Implementation: An *approved circumstance* for a waiting list is defined as a period where more men have enrolled in the program than can be accommodated by the capacity of groups in the service area. When this occurs, a program must assess whether the demand for additional services will be sustained or whether existing services can accommodate the participant pending assignment to an ongoing group.

Programs using a waiting list under approved circumstances must provide written notice to the Batterer Accountability Committee of the Council on Domestic Violence of the date waiting list begins and the date on which the use of the waiting list ends.

Standard #28

If a waiting list is used, no individual participant is on a waiting list for more than 30 days and the program does not maintain a waiting list for more than 90 consecutive days.

Rationale: While approved circumstances may occur for waiting lists, participants should not be kept on a waiting list for extended periods nor should a waiting list be used for indefinite periods. If a waiting list is required for an extended period, additional groups should be developed to serve the demand for services. Programs should make every effort to ensure that eligible candidates begin services in a timely manner.

Implementation: An approved circumstance for a waiting list is defined as a period of no more than 90 days during which a program assesses whether the demand for additional services will be sustained or whether existing services can accommodate the participant pending assignment to an ongoing group.

Standard #29

Upon completion of an intake, the program provides written notification of the program's determination of the candidate's eligibility to the referring agency within 14 days. If a candidate is found ineligible, this notification includes an explanation of the specific reasons for this determination.

Rationale: It is essential that referring agencies are aware of the outcome of a program's screening process. If a participant is found ineligible appropriate actions need to be taken to ensure accountability and partner safety. Appropriate documentation and information sharing allows this to occur.

CHAPTER SIX: STANDARDS FOR PROGRAM CONTRACTS

Standard #30

The program contract includes all expectations required for program completion or, if not abided by would result in program dismissal.

Rationale: The goal of batterer intervention services is to motivate participants to change their abusive behavior and support participants in becoming accountable for their behavior. Accomplishing these objectives is more difficult if the expectations for successful program participation are not clear and acknowledged. When expectations are not clear, time is wasted on conflict over rules and focus is shifted away from the participant's pattern of coercive control. For this reason, a program's participant contract should clearly explain what is required for successful completion or conversely what might result in dismissal from the program.

Programs should be sure that any expectation they may have of participants are clearly articulated in the program contract. Once a participant has signed a program contract, the program's authority to hold participants responsible to expectations is limited to what is included in the signed program contract.

Implementation: Programs should make an effort to ensure that their program contracts are written in a manner that is accessible and clear to program participants.

Standard #31

The program contract includes an agreement to comply with relevant court orders or contact conditions (e.g. probation warrants, relief from abuse orders, custody orders, divorce orders, no trespass orders, etc.)

Rationale: Batterer intervention programming is one component of a community response to domestic violence and is an opportunity for participants to engage in behavior change. It is important to remember that these participants are often limited by legal restrictions issued by the court. Commitment to change and success in the program includes abiding by relevant legal expectations including those that might limit a participant's behavior toward or access to partners and children.

Implementation: Relevant court orders would include any orders related to a participant's pattern of coercive control or that relate to efforts to protect the safety and well-being of partners and children.

Standard #32

Participants sign a confidentiality agreement that identifies that confidentiality in the program is limited and authorizes the program to share information about the participants without restriction with the referring agency, the participant's victim/partner, and the local Network program(s).

Rationale: Batterer intervention programs provide participants with limited confidentiality. In this way, programs differ from traditional mental health services. Partners/ex-partners and referring agencies have a right to information about a participant's enrollment and participation. This information sharing can be essential to safety planning efforts for partners and efforts to hold participants accountable for their behavior.

Standard #33

Participants are expected to keep the identities of other participants and the participants' partners/ex-partners and children confidential.

Rationale: Participants can and should be encouraged to talk about their participation with anyone that they choose. These discussions however should remain focused on themselves and their behavior. At best, disclosing information about other participants and their families is disrespectful and shifts a participant's focus away from themselves. At worst, doing so can jeopardize the safety of others.

Standard #34

Participants acknowledge by signature an understanding of and willingness to abide by the program's fee policy.

Rationale: Participants should be made aware of their financial obligation to the program and acknowledge a willingness to comply with this obligation. Participants should be provided with clear, accurate and thorough information about what their fees will be, when fees are due and what would constitute a violation of the program's fee policy.

Standard #35

If a provider accepts third party payments from health insurance companies, the program takes appropriate steps to ensure doing so does not conflict with the program's message about participant responsibility for their coercive behavior or interfere with the program's adherence to the Standards.

Rationale: Men who batter have a tendency to externalize responsibility for their coercive behavior and to manipulate systems to avoid responsibility for their actions. These behaviors become more challenging for survivors when the practices and modalities of community systems reinforce justification for abuse or shift the focus of intervention away from abusive behaviors and the internal decision-making process that supports them.

Historically, concerns have been voiced about some practices and approaches within the mental health field that explicitly viewed men's abusive actions as symptoms of underlying mental illnesses or could be construed to more subtly externalize responsibility. For example, some mental health providers have focused more on men's traumatic childhood experiences and have overlooked the purposeful nature of the behaviors that men who batter engage in. Diagnoses such as intermittent explosive disorder or bipolar disorder have often been given to men who make an intentional choice to be abusive, and whose behavior patterns therefore may not specifically match these diagnoses.

Men who batter have historically taken advantage of these practices to claim that their abuse was not their choice and that they did not need interventions that focused on their abusive behaviors. At times, men who batter and some mental health practitioners have even argued that batterer intervention programming would actually cause further harm to the men. Such arguments have resulted in many partners feeling that they needed to shift their focus from abusive behaviors perpetrated against them to efforts to help "fix" some underlying psychological problem. Many men have been able to use this effect to claim that their partners' concerns about their own safety and the safety of their children were actually undermining their treatment and recovery.

Over the years, similar concerns have been raised about the practice of batterer intervention programs' billing of health insurance to cover the cost of men's participation in programming. There has been concern that billing for batterer intervention programming through insurance contradicts the endorsed philosophy and methodology, by implying that domestic violence is a result of mental illness or other mental health issues, rather than an intentional choice on the part of men who batter. There have been additional concerns that billing insurance limits participants' investment in their programming and impacts the ability of a

program to hold the man accountable, as a participant's payment is associated with his taking personal responsibility for his need for the program and literal ownership of the solution.

There is also concern that the practice of billing insurance creates additional staff qualifications that limit the availability of community members to facilitate groups and can prioritize qualifications required for insurance reimbursement over other training and experience specific to domestic violence.

Programs that have billed insurance have argued that billing does not inherently contradict the modality outlined in these Standards and that staff are expected to abide by the Standards and receive appropriate training on domestic violence, regardless of their qualifications for health insurance reimbursement.

While consensus may not exist on the practice in general, it is clear that programs engaged in the practice of accepting payments from health insurance providers must avoid practices that contradict the modalities outlined in these Standards and avoid practices that would explicitly support participants' attempts to externalize responsibility for their behavior. They must also work to ensure the partners of program participants receive a clear message about participants' responsibility for their behavior.

Implementation: Appropriate steps to ensure that billing health insurance does not conflict with the program's message about participant responsibility for their coercive behavior or interfere with the program's adherence to the Standards include but are not limited to:

1. using only billing codes such as V-Code 6112 (Programming for Perpetrators of Domestic Violence) that make a participant's pattern of coercive behavior the primary focus of intervention and do not imply the presence of a mental illness.
2. ensuring that billing practices do not give out messages that a participant might construe as relieving his responsibility for his choices that lead to threatening or violent behavior,
3. hiring staff based on their ability to facilitate educational programming for men who batter consistent with the philosophy and methods outlined in these Standards and not based solely on their ability to qualify for third-party reimbursement.

Standard #36

The program's attendance policy is included within its program contract and any violation of this policy results in dismissal.

Rationale: Batterer intervention programming is an opportunity for participants to engage in a process of behavior change. Failure to attend or inconsistent attendance limits this opportunity and may be an indication of a participant's lack of commitment to behavior change. Programs should be clear about expectations regarding attendance and hold participants to these expectations. Historically, some participants have attempted to enroll in batterer intervention programming and then not attend as a way of avoiding additional legal sanctions. Clear attendance policies that are implemented consistently help avoid this possibility.

Standard #37

A participant is considered to have missed a group if he fails to arrive on time for a group meeting, fails to arrive with a completed homework assignment, or fails to participate appropriately.

Rationale: A participant should only be considered present when they arrive on time, participate appropriately and complete all appropriate assignments prior to the start of group.

Implementation: An absence cannot count toward achieving the number of sessions required for program completion.

In Corrections-based programs, failure to comply with attendance expectations should be addressed as part of a priority review by the local program team.

Standard #38

A participant in a community-based program is allowed no more than three absences within a period of 26 group meetings. A participant in the Intensive Domestic Abuse Program is allowed no more than three absences within a period of three months.

Rationale: Participants will face circumstances in their lives that may interfere with their ability to attend batterer intervention programming. A limited number of absences are allowed to ensure that participants can care for a sick child, deal with a broken vehicle, attend a funeral, recover from an injury or address other obligations while still prioritizing their focus on programming. Providing additional “excused absences” other than those described in Standard #38 is inconsistent with this Standard.

Implementation: If a participant in a community-based program is required to attend more than 26 group meetings to complete, the programs attendance policy must provide for a comparable number of misses. Programs may create an attendance policy that is more stringent than this standard.

Standard #39

A participant can be on leave without dismissal for up to 30 days in the case of a medical situation, civic obligation or long term substance abuse treatment that is prolonged, prevents a participant from being able to attend, and is verified and approved by the program and the referring agency. Beyond 30 days, the participant is dismissed.

Rationale: In most circumstances, it is expected that participants prioritize participation in batterer intervention services and make arrangements in their personal lives to accommodate their participation. There are a limited number of circumstances in which a participant’s ability to make accommodations is limited and therefore programs should make reasonable accommodation. These circumstances include such things as service in the National Guard, extended jury duty or medical situations, such as recuperating from major surgery, that prevent a participant from attending.

Implementation: For participants in Corrections based programs, approval of any leave should be made by the local program team.

Standard #40

Participants are informed that contact between the program and participants’ partners/ex-partners is initiated by the program.

Rationale: Participants will frequently monitor their partners’ access with outside resources and punish them for having contact with people or agencies that they do not approve of. It is important that programs make clear to the offender that contact between his partner/ex-partner and the program is initiated by the program, not his partner/ex-partner. This is an important strategy for attempting to protect partners/ex-partners from potential abuse.

Standard #41

Participants believed to be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs are asked to leave group and are considered absent.

Rationale: Program staff should be aware of any behaviors or physical indicators that might indicate that a participant is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Participants who are under the influence of drugs

and/or alcohol during group are unable to participate appropriately in the discussions and behavior change process that programs intend to foster.

Implementation: Program staff should observe for any behaviors or physical indicators that might indicate that a participant is under the influence. Physical indications and behaviors of intoxication can include, but are not limited to:

- Lack of orientation to time, person, or place
- Lack of physical coordination: inability to touch fingers to nose or walk straight.
- Pupils may be restricted or dilated
- Reaction to light may be slowed, reactive, or non-reactive
- Slurred speech
- Sweating
- Drowsiness
- Delusions or hallucinations
- Physical complaints: heart racing, abnormal breathing, low or elevated body temperature.

When observed, such indications should be documented.

Tests that indicate past use of substances (i.e. positive test for THC within the past thirty days) should not be used to consider a participant under the influence.

For men referred by the court, any information about substance use or abuse should be reported to the Department of Correction's staff responsible for the man's supervision.

Prior to the participant's departure, a plan should be created with the participant to address the elevated risk that his substance use may present.

Standard #42

The program's contract includes expectations for appropriate group participation.

Rationale: Participants should be expected to participate in programming in an appropriate way. A program's participant contract should outline reasonable expectations for participation that clearly state what is expected from participants and the program to address inappropriate behavior as addressed in Standard #38.

Implementation: Expectations for appropriate participation may include that participants will be respectful; avoiding sexist, racist, heterosexist language; be willing to accept and receive feedback from others; and participate routinely in group discussions.

Standard #43

Participants acknowledge in writing that information about suspected abuse of children and/or vulnerable adults will be shared by the program with appropriate agencies.

Rationale: Programs have a responsibility to help protect children and vulnerable adults from abuse. If a program receives information about a participant's behavior that may be a risk to a child's or vulnerable adult's safety or well-being, the program has an obligation to share this information with the participant's partner and appropriate agencies including the Department for Children and Families. It is respectful to inform participants of the steps that a program will take when information about suspected abuse or neglect is received.

Standard #44

Participants acknowledge in writing that observers may be present while they are attending the program and are informed prior to any observation.

Rationale: Programs have an obligation to provide appropriate opportunities for members of the community to observe program services. These observations contribute to a program's accountability to the community and can serve as an important training/information resource for community members about men who batter and batterer intervention. In order to avoid conflict during groups, participants should be informed at the time of enrollment that observers may be present at times.

Implementation: Participant acknowledgement that observers may be present at times can be included in the program's participant contract or accomplished with a separate form.

Standard #45

The program provides all participants with information about the program's weather and holiday cancellation policy.

Rationale: Providing participants with information about a program's weather and holiday cancellation policy helps to avoid conflicts about cancelled groups. Providing participants with information about how to find out if groups may be cancelled due to weather can also help decrease the safety risks to participants.

Standard #46

The program provides all participants with clear information about the program's grievance procedure.

Rationale: Batterer intervention programs provide a service to participants and their families. Like all service providers, batterer intervention programs have a responsibility to provide participants with information about their rights as participants and a process for contesting program decision if they feel that their rights have been violated or decisions have been made contrary to program policy.

While providing information about grievance procedures to participants may result in some participants using the process in manipulative ways, doing so will more frequently provide a method for resolving complaints/concerns in a respectful and appropriate manner.

Implementation: There are several ways that participants can be provided with information about the program's grievance procedure. Participants may be provided with a specific form or document outlining the grievance process or the information can be included in a program contract.

Programs should ensure that information about grievance procedures is provided in a manner that is accessible and clear.

CHAPTER SEVEN: STANDARDS FOR PROGRAM INFORMATION TO PARTNERS

Standard #47

The program acknowledges in all of their services and professional endeavors that improving the safety of women and children is the foremost goal of intervention with batterers.

Rationale: Batterer intervention programming for men who batter women is rooted in the desire to protect the safety and well-being of women and children. While the lives of men who participate may also be enhanced by participating in programming and the behavior change they engage in, the safety of partners and children remains the priority.

Standard #48

Under no circumstance does the program share information gathered from a partner during the process of partner contact with a participant or use the information to challenge a participant in group.

Rationale: Partners/ex-partners can provide valuable information regarding a participant's behavior outside of group. Using that information, however, to directly confront or challenge a participant can endanger the partner's/ex-partner's safety and autonomy. Using information from partners to challenge men in group places partners at risk. Programs should be designed in a way that motivates positive changes in participant behavior and holds participants accountable for their patterns of coercive control without relying on information from partners/ex-partners.

Implementation: When contacting partners/ex-partners, programs will explain that information shared by partners will not be shared with participants and will remain confidential.

Standard #49

The program has a written partner contact protocol outlining its process of providing information in a timely manner to partners that has been reviewed and approved by the local Network program.

Rationale: Programs are responsible for engaging in an ongoing process of risk assessment. During the course of programming, facilitators may observe participant behavior or acquire information that indicates that a participant's partner(s)/ex-partner(s) may be at heightened risk of abuse. It is essential that programs have clearly defined procedures for sharing this information with partners.

Implementation: For the Intensive Domestic Abuse Program, the Department of Corrections may develop a protocol for each individual site or a statewide protocol for providing information to partners. If a statewide protocol is developed this will be reviewed and approved by the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

Standard #50

The partner contact protocol has procedures for informing partners of participant behavior that might constitute a risk to her safety or the safety of her children.

Rationale: Programs are responsible for engaging in an ongoing process of risk assessment and will periodically observe participant behavior or acquire information that indicates that partners may be at heightened risk of abuse. It is essential that programs have clearly defined procedures for sharing this information with partners.

Standard #51

Within 14 days of a participant signing a program contract, a program sends the partner comprehensive information about the program, batterer intervention services and resources available to her.

Rationale: Partners/ex-partners are entitled to information about their abusers' participation in intervention programs. Programs also have a responsibility to provide information to new partners of program participants regardless of whether they can be identified as victims of participants' abuse.

Information about a batterer intervention program, services available to survivors and their children and a participant's status and behavior in a program can greatly assist a survivor's ability to plan for her safety. It can also be used to reinforcement that she is not to blame for her abuser's behavior and that he is expected to respect her right to safety.

Intervention with men who batter may give the partner a false sense of security and may impact their safety planning. Therefore, when contacting a partner, it is necessary to make information available to survivors regarding intervention programs and realistic expectations about what they can accomplish. Hence, intervention must be undertaken with particular care to guard the safety of a survivor and their children.

It should always be recognized that providing information to partners/ex-partners of program participants can jeopardize their safety. Every effort should be made to ensure that safety remains a priority when contacting partners/ex-partners. It is essential to work with advocates to develop policies and procedures regarding partner/ex-partner contact.

Implementation: Programs are ultimately responsible for ensuring that partners/ex-partners receive information, but this protocol can identify how information to partners/ex-partners may be provided in collaboration with Network programs, the Department of Corrections, or other community partners.

Comprehensive information to partners/ex-partners will include at least the following.

1. An overview of the program. Partners/ex-partners should be provided with accurate information about the program's objectives and the structure of the program. This should include information about payment, attendance, completion and dismissal policies as outlined in the program contract. Partners/ex-partners should also be informed of their ability to observe program services in accordance with section 3.16.
2. The limitations of batterer intervention programs. Programs should provide partners/ex-partners with accurate information about the possible impact of the program on them and their children and explain that a man's participation does not guarantee that his partner/ex-partner or children will be safe. Partners/ex-partners should be informed that some men may escalate or substantially change their tactics of abuse when involved in a batterer intervention program.
3. Participants' responsibility for their behavior. Programs should provide partners/ex-partners with a clear message that men who batter are solely responsible for their abuse and consequently for their participation in batterer intervention programs. Partners/ex-partners are not expected to be involved in participants' programming, nor are they responsible for changing participants' behavior. Programs should be clear that information and materials provided to participants should not be used against partners/ex-partners in a coercive or manipulative manner.
4. Information about local resources. Programs should provide contact information for the following:
 - a. The local Network program
 - b. The participant's supervising Corrections Service Specialist (CSS)
 - c. Family court

- d. The state’s Attorney and State’s Attorney’s victim advocate
 - e. Local law enforcement or nearest state police barracks
 - f. Nearest supervised visitation program
5. Resources for safety planning. Information regarding safety planning includes referral information to a Network program.
 6. Information about the program’s confidentiality policy regarding information shared by partners/ex-partners. The safety of women and children can often be jeopardized by failure of programs to protect information shared by partners/ex-partners. It is imperative that programs not disclose information shared by partners/ex-partners, unless required under mandatory reporting and duty to warn laws and policies. Partners/ex-partners should be provided with accurate information about how, when and to whom information that she shares with the program might be disclosed to others.
 7. Overview of information about participant’s enrollment and participation that partners/ex-partners will have access to. See section 3.9 for a description of the waiver of confidentiality that participants must agree to in regards to partners/ex-partners receiving information about their participation.
 8. Information about grievance procedures. In addition to information about how to contact the program, partners/ex-partners should be informed about how to file a complaint with the program.
 9. Information about appropriate intervention modalities. Programs should provide partners with information about the possible dangers involved in other intervention modalities, such as couples or family counseling, anger management or substance abuse treatment without attending a batterer intervention program.
 10. Information about the Vermont Automated Notification System.

Standard #52

The program informs partners/ex-partners of their ability to choose not to receive additional contact from the program after information is sent following participant enrollment.

Rationale: Some partners/ex-partners may appreciate receiving information about a participant’s participation in the program. Others may not. Informing partners of their ability to choose whether or not to receive additional information allows partners/ex-partners to make the decision that is best for them.

Implementation: A partner’s or ex-partner’s choice to receive no additional information will not preclude her from requesting information at a later date.

Standard #53

Contact is maintained with partners throughout a participant’s enrollment in a Corrections-based program by the supervising CSS or Victim Services Specialist (VSS).

Implementation: Contact will be made in at least the following circumstances:

1. When a request is made for contact or change in contact level between the participant and the victim and/or children.
2. When a participant completes a Corrections-based program.
3. When any information is obtained by the VT DOC that might indicate a risk to the safety of the victim or her children’s safety.
4. When there is any change in the participant’s custody status, including re-incarceration.
5. Periodic updates about the participant’s progress and participation may also be appropriate.

Standard #54

A participant's partner/ex-partner is notified in writing of a participant's dismissal or completion within 14 days. In the case of a dismissal, this notification includes the reason for the dismissal and how the partner/ex-partner can receive additional information regarding possible pending legal action resulting from his dismissal.

Rationale: Partners have a right to know when a participant's enrollment in the program has ended and whether this was a result of dismissal or completion. Programs should make it clear that program completion is defined as compliance with standards or completion requirements, and does not guarantee battering has stopped during program participation or in the future.

Standard #55

When providing information to partners/ex-partners, the program is clear that substance use or abuse is not the cause of domestic violence and that sobriety and/or recovery alone will not guarantee safety.

Rationale: Some partners may have the misperception that if a participant stops drinking or using other substances his pattern of coercive control will also end. This can be the result of cultural misinformation linking substance use to domestic violence. Participants' frequent attempts to blame their abusive behavior on alcohol or drugs is also a contributor. Partners/ex-partners may also connect some of the most severe assaults perpetrated against them with participants' drug or alcohol use. This misperception can lead partners/ex-partners to focus more on participants' substance use/abuse and may be an obstacle to effective safety planning.

Batterer intervention programs offer a unique opportunity to provide partners/ex-partners with factual information about the intersection of domestic violence and substance use/abuse.

Standard #56

The program considers potential risks to children's safety and provides partners/ex-partners with any information about a participant's behavior that may constitute a risk to their children's safety.

Rationale: The co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment is well documented. Programs have a responsibility to consider the safety of children. If a program receives information about a participant's behavior that may pose a risk to a child's safety or well-being, the program has an obligation to share this information with the participant's partner/ex-partner and the referring agency. A program's ongoing risk assessment process should include a focus on children's safety and well-being.

Standard #57

The program informs partners/ex-partners that program participation is not a guarantee of participant behavior change or safety for partners and children.

Rationale: Some research has indicated that partners of men enrolled in batterer intervention programs are more likely to stay with their abusive partners. There is some indication that this is due to partners' hope or expectation that program participation will lead to a behavior change and increase their safety. While this may be the result in some cases, it is important that batterer intervention programs provide partners with accurate information about the potential that participants will continue their patterns of coercive control.

CHAPTER EIGHT: STANDARDS FOR DISMISSAL AND COMPLETION

Standard #58

To complete, a participant meets all requirements for program completion as identified in the program contract, including financial obligations and commitments to be non-violent and comply with supervision requirements and court orders.

Rationale: Program completion is defined here to mean compliance with standards or completion requirements. It does not guarantee battering has stopped during program participation or in the future. Programs should not use terms like "graduation." Even "successful" completion can connote more than is appropriate.

All participation standards are evaluated by demonstration. There is no expectation that group facilitators are able to accurately evaluate the degree to which any participant internalizes the concepts taught.

Standard #59

If completion is based on demonstration of specific competencies, the program defines a clear process of when and how participants' demonstration of these competencies will be assessed and documents a participant's success or failure at demonstrating program competencies.

Rationale: Participants should be provided with clear information about what they must do to successfully complete the program. If a program assesses participants for specific skills, attitudes, or competencies as part of deciding if he has completed the program or his participation will be extended, these criteria and the process for reviewing them should be explicit. Both the participant and the referring agency (if any) should be aware at the time of enrollment what the participant must do successfully complete.

Implementation: Competencies used to determine program completion must be clearly defined and allow for assessment based on observable behavior within the program setting. Competencies should also be directly related to the program objectives outlined in Chapter Two.

Program competencies should be designed to minimize any disparities in program success based on race, socio-economic background, educational level and/or cognitive abilities.

In the Intensive Domestic Abuse Program, a progress review must be completed by the co-facilitators to assess demonstration of the program competencies and be shared with the participant. If the co-facilitators determine that the participant has successfully demonstrated the program competencies, they will recommend the participant for program completion to the local IDAP team for approval. Upon approval, the co-facilitators will document the participant's completion and provide this documentation to the supervising CSS. This documentation should be included in the participant's program and core files.

Standard #60

A participant is dismissed from the program in the event of a violation of the attendance and/or fee payment policy, new criminal charges that are domestic violence related, documented report of abuse, violent or intimidating behavior that compromises the safety of the staff and/or other participants, and/or self-reported acts of violence.

Rationale: Participants who continue to engage in criminal or assaultive behavior demonstrate through their behavior an unwillingness to take advantage of the opportunity provided by batterer intervention

programming. In order to protect their partners and families, additional interventions are necessary. Future participation in batterer intervention may be appropriate, but only after criminal and assaultive behaviors have been addressed fully.

Participants who fail to attend batterer intervention programming also demonstrate an unwillingness to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the programs. Recent research indicates that men who fail to complete programs have a higher rate of re-assault (Edelson, 2002).

Implementation: Dismissal from Corrections based programs should be reviewed and approved by the local program team in accordance with program team procedures.

Standard #61

After documented warnings, a participant is dismissed for lack of participation, disruptive or inappropriate participation, or failure to maintain accountability for the acts of abuse for which he was convicted.

Rationale: When it can be anticipated, a written warning to the participant and to the referring agency is recommended outlining the violations of program policy and actions that are required to comply with program expectations and timelines. Given that inappropriate participation is often less concrete as other violations of program contracts (e.g. failing to attend, failure to pay, etc), it is recommended that programs implement a system of warnings and clarification of expectations. Such a system could include an initial verbal reminder of program expectations followed by a written warning if inappropriate behaviors persist. Whether verbal or written, any clarification of program expectations should provide participants with information about what behavior is expected to support successful completion of the program and be documented in the participant's file.

Standard #62

A participant suspended from the Intensive Domestic Abuse Program is provided with specific expectations that must be met in order to return to the program.

Implementation: When a suspension can be anticipated, a program should provide a written warning to the participant, outlining the violations of program policy and actions that are required to comply with program expectations and timelines. A suspension from group can result in an incarcerative sanction. Local program teams will define any expectations that a participant must meet prior to resuming program participation in a timely manner.

Standard #63

All dismissals from the Intensive Domestic Abuse Program are approved by the local program team.

Rationale: Program teams reflect a commitment to collaborative case management and a coordinated response to domestic violence offenders. Teams provide helpful support to peers, help ensure that appropriate procedures are consistently followed, and that decisions address the interests of participants and partners.

Standard #64

The program provides written documentation of a participant's dismissal or completion within one week to the referring agency and, if requested, to the local Network program. Documentation of program dismissal will include an explanation of the reason(s) for dismissal.

Rationale: Batterer intervention programming is one part of a community response to domestic violence offenders. If a participant is dismissed from a program that he was sent to as part of an obligation to the court or other system, it is essential that the referring agency know about the dismissal in a timely manner so that appropriate steps can be taken to address the participant's non-compliance. Given the potential that a participant's dismissal could have important legal consequences, formal, written documentation is necessary even if an informal notification has been provided.

CHAPTER NINE: STANDARDS FOR DOCUMENTATION

Standard #65

Program staff document services in a manner that remains objective, is rooted in observable participant behavior, and avoids speculation about participant's future behavior, process of change or victim/partner safety.

Rationale: Careful and complete documentation of services is an important component of a program's ability to hold men accountable for their behavior. This is particularly true in the case of program dismissal and in cases where dismissal from a batterer intervention program results in further court action.

Program staff should be vigilant to ensure that they remain aware of the limitation of program services and the potential ramifications of documented information on partners of program participants.

Documentation of services also plays a critical role in a program's collaboration with other members of a community's coordinated response to domestic violence.

Standard #66

A participant's signed contract and any confidentiality agreement is maintained in a participant's file and provided to the referring agency upon request.

Rationale: Having a signed contract and confidentiality agreement is essential if a participant fails to comply with the expectations of the program. Without this documentation it is much harder to prove that a participant knew what was expected of him.

Standard #67

A participant's dismissal notice, including specific reasons for the participant's dismissal, is kept in the participant's file and shared with the referring agency.

Rationale: This information may be required for efforts to hold participants accountable for non-compliance with expectations to complete batterer intervention serves.

Standard #68

A participant's completion letter, including the participants start date, number of sessions attended, status of participant's financial obligation to the program, and completion date, is maintained in the participant's file and shared with the referring agency.

Rationale: This information may be requested at a later date and should be kept on file.

Implementation: For corrections-based programs, the completion letter will also include a description and review of the participant's completion of required tasks and assessment of program competencies.

Standard #69

Attendance and payment records for each individual participant are maintained and made available to the referring agent as needed.

Rationale: Accurate information about participant attendance and payment is required for determining whether a participant has met program completion expectations. This information may also be requested by referring agencies and/or the courts at a later date.

Standard #70

Information gathered from a participant's partner/ex-partner is kept in a separate file and remains confidential from the participant.

Rationale: Ensuring partner/ex-partner confidentiality is important to protecting her safety.. No information from partners/ex-partners or information that may disclose the whereabouts of a partner/ex-partner or relevant child should be kept in a participant file. Doing so provides participants with access to this information, which could put the partner/ex-partner at significant risk, particularly if she is trying to keep her location confidential. Even though programs may receive very little information from partners/ex-partners, this information should remain in a file separate from a participant's file.

Standard #71

Participant files are maintained for a period of at least seven years.

Rationale: Maintaining participant files is helpful for many reasons. Participants may be referred to programming again and previous documentation may be helpful at the time. Additionally, information in a participant's file may be requested by the courts or other agencies and may prove helpful in efforts to protect partners and children. Participants files may also be helpful in evaluating program effectiveness.

CHAPTER TEN: GUIDELINES FOR STAFF QUALIFICATIONS, TRAINING AND OBSERVATION

Standard #72

Paid staff and volunteers of programs are required to indicate their willingness to abide by the Vermont Statewide Standards for Domestic Violence Intervention.

Rationale: Each program has a responsibility to ensure that staff behavior is consistent, at all times, with the goals and principles of these Standards.

Implementation: Programs can implement this standard by including an expectation that staff abide by the Standards within a job description or by having staff sign a specific agreement to abide by the Standards. In either case, it should be made clear to staff that failure to abide by the Standards will result in a termination of their role within the program.

Standard #73

Paid and unpaid staff are expected to be free of documented violence in their own lives. Any staff with a history of perpetrating domestic violence will be violence-free in his or her own life for a period of at least three years and have completed a recognized intervention program.

Rationale: The credibility and effectiveness of programs is seriously compromised by staff members who engage in violence. It is possible for a person with a history of violence to become effective at facilitating batterer intervention services but only after thoroughly and appropriately addressing their personal behavior.

Implementation: Staff members whose documented violence predates the existence of intervention programs will not be required to have attended an intervention program.

Standard #74

Paid and unpaid staff communicate and act in ways that are free of victim blaming, sexism, or misogyny and remain open to self-examination and receptive to feedback on issues of power and control, sexism, and collusion in their work and their own lives.

Rationale: Role modeling is one of the most effective strategies that facilitators use to support participants in a process of change. Behaviors that contradict the purpose and objectives of the program may actually reinforce participants' patterns of coercive control and interfere with the programs ability to motivate behavior change. This is true for overtly sexist and/or victim-blaming behavior as well as more subtle adversarial, argumentative and disrespectful behaviors.

Standard #75

New staff members are provided with an orientation to the program's guidelines, rules, and expectations.

Rationale: New staff members should be aware of the program's guidelines, rules, and expectations before they are expected to facilitate program services. Without this information, new staff cannot be effective in their facilitation and may undermine the effectiveness of the program.

Standard #76

New staff members attend and complete a training approved by the Batterer Accountability Committee of the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence within three months of their employment.

Rationale: Facilitating batterer intervention services is difficult work. Appropriate training helps prepare new staff members to be effective at this work.

Implementation: Training for new staff members will include the following topics:

1. The dynamics of domestic violence and behaviors used by domestic violence offenders as part of a pattern of coercive control,
2. The objectives of batterer intervention programming,
3. Appropriate and inappropriate modalities for working with men who batter,
4. Strategies for effectively confronting excuses for abuse, including substance abuse/addiction and victim blaming,
5. The impact of battering on women and children, and
6. The role of batterer intervention programs within a coordinated community response to domestic violence.

The Batterer Accountability Committee of the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence will maintain a process for approving training for new staff members.

Standard #77

New staff members observe at least three groups at a certified batterer intervention program within one month of their employment and a total of six within three months of their employment.

Implementation: It is recommended that new staff observe at a site or group meeting other than the one in which they will be working. It is highly recommended that new staff members be paired with a co-facilitator with at least one year of experience. If no experienced co-facilitator is available and two new staff members must be paired together, a program should develop a specific plan for observing/supervising this team on a frequent and regular basis.

Standard #78

Staff members attend and document at least twelve hours per year of professional development approved by the Batterer Accountability Committee of the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence.

Rationale: Batterer intervention programming is an evolving field and even experienced facilitators benefit from ongoing professional development and training.

Standard #79

Facilitators are observed at least twice per year by a person with appropriate training and experience in batterer intervention services. Observations should be documented and focus on the development of specific professional development goals.

Rationale: Observations of facilitators provide facilitators feedback about their work and an opportunity for ongoing professional development. Observations help to break down the isolation within which many facilitators work. They can also help identify inappropriate practices when they are occurring.

Implementation: Observations may be conducted by a facilitator's supervisor, a person from outside the organization with appropriate training and experience, or through peer supervision among VCBIS members.

Documentation of observations will include at least written feedback about the facilitator's strengths, recommendations for improvement, and specific professional development goals for the facilitator.

CHAPTER ELEVEN: STANDARDS FOR PROGRAM COLLABORATION

Standard #80

The program is an active member of the local task forces in each community where they provide services and assigns at least one representative to regularly attend task force meetings.

Rationale: The majority of Vermont's fourteen counties have multidisciplinary domestic violence task forces in recognition that domestic violence is a problem that must necessarily be addressed in a collaborative manner. These task forces often consist of representatives of the various agencies that have a common goal and a vested interest in dealing with domestic violence, (e.g. family and district courts, state's attorney, law enforcement, Network programs, Corrections and others). Task forces provide important venues for information sharing, receiving feedback and problem solving from a system perspective.

Standard #81

The program participates regularly in the Vermont Coalition of Batterer Intervention Services.

Rationale: The Vermont Coalition of Batterer Intervention Services (VCBIS) is a coalition of individuals and programs that provide services to men who batter. The mission of the VCBIS is to ensure the provision of quality batterer intervention services throughout Vermont. The VCBIS provides a forum for information and idea sharing, standards review and further development, networking, training, and the beginning of a peer supervision process.

Implementation: Regular attendance is understood to mean at least 75% of Coalition meetings. Programs must provide documentation of their attendance at Coalition meetings.

Standard #82

The program maintains a cooperative working relationship with local Network programs.

Rationale: Batterer intervention programs are one component of an effective community response to domestic violence and domestic violence offenders. The effectiveness of programs is strongly influenced by their collaboration with other community stakeholders. Domestic violence advocacy programs are one key community stakeholder that programs have a unique responsibility to collaborate with. Maintaining a cooperative working relationship with local Network programs is one way that batterer intervention programs maintain a focus on the interests and perspectives of partners/ex-partners and remain up to date about challenges faced by partners/ex-partners with the community.

Implementation: A cooperative working relationship may include, but is not limited to::

1. A regular practice of case consultation with victim advocates,
2. Regular schedule for communication and/or meeting about individual cases and program issues,
3. Ongoing sharing of information about program services,
4. Collaborative training or public awareness activities,
5. Sharing of program literature,
6. Collaboration on grants and other funding opportunities, and
7. Mutual support of program services.

Standard #83

In any forum, presentations about batterer intervention are coupled with information about services available to victims of domestic violence and the need for a comprehensive and coordinated community response.

Rationale: The ultimate goal of enhanced public awareness is to create a community that does not tolerate domestic violence.

Implementation: All batterer intervention programs are encouraged to have some member(s) of their staff involved in activities that enhance the community's knowledge and awareness about domestic violence and especially about the programmatic responses that are available.

Standard #84

When making referrals of men who batter for substance abuse assessments or treatment, the program ensures that referrals are made to service providers who are consistent with principles articulated in these Standards.

Rationale: Too frequently, participants in batterer intervention program receive conflicting information about their histories of abuse from the program and the substance abuse providers they also see. Effective collaboration and careful screening of resources prior to referral can help ensure that batterer intervention and substance abuse services are provided in a manner that is consistent and mutually supportive.

Standard #85

The program provides a comprehensive orientation for community observers and appropriate confidentiality for participants and partners/ex-partners.

Rationale: Programs have an obligation to provide appropriate opportunities for members of the community to observe program services. These observations contribute to a program's accountability to the community and can serve as an important training/information resource for community members about men who batter and batterer intervention. Observations can also provide an additional challenge to participants to be accountable for their behavior.

Implementation: A comprehensive orientation for observers will be outlined in writing and include:

1. A requirement that all observations occur for a purpose approved by the program. and with prior program approval,
2. Expectations of observer participation,
3. A signed confidentiality agreement, (Observers are expected to keep confidential the identities of participants and their partners/ex-partners).
4. A process for requesting feedback about the program from observers,
5. Specific guidelines for requests by victim/survivors to observe groups, (It is recommended that a victim/partner not observe a group in which her abuser is a participant).
6. Any limitations on observers. (For example, this could include limitation on the age of observers or on how many observers are allowed in a group at a time. It is recommended that no more than two people observe a group at one time. It is also recommended that programs receive written permission from a parent prior to a minor observing a group).

Standard #86

Program staff are expected to serve as mandatory reporters of abuse of children and vulnerable adults.

Rationale: The co-occurrence of domestic violence and maltreatment of children has been well documented. Programs can help protect the safety and well being of children and vulnerable adults by providing information about suspected acts of abuse to children or vulnerable adults to the appropriate agencies.

Implementation: Programs should be familiar with child abuse reporting procedures and the potential ways that participants may use a program's responsibility as a mandatory reporter to attack their partners/ex-partners through false reports of abuse. It is helpful for programs to work in collaboration with the Domestic Violence Unit within the Department for Children and Families in cases involving suspected acts of abuse.

Standard #87

If asked to comment in child custody decisions by relevant agencies, the program provides factual information about a man's participation and challenges any inaccurate assumptions about program participation or completion being an indication or predictor of a man's safety as a parent.

Rationale: While not common, programs may at times be asked to provide information to courts or other child protection agencies in relation to child custody or visitation decisions. Programs can frequently provide information that is helpful to those making these decisions. In doing so, programs must ensure that the information shared is factual and rooted in observations of participant behavior while enrolled in the program.

Implementation: Programs will attempt to make clear what participation in the program does and does not provide. Programming does provide education and opportunities to practice skills, but is not an evaluation of risk to re-offend.

Standard #88

Each IDAP site has a program team charged with general oversight of the IDAP program and its participants.

Rationale: IDAP teams will be made up of group facilitators, Community Corrections Specialists supervising IDAP participants, the IDAP Site Supervisor, a Case Work Supervisor or Superintendent, Victim Services Specialists (if available), Community Correctional Officers and, when possible, advocates from the local Network program or the state's attorney's office.

Implementation: IDAP teams will be made up of group facilitators, Community Corrections Specialists supervising IDAP participants, IDAP Site Supervisor, a Case Work Supervisor or Superintendent, Victim Services Specialists, Community Correctional Officers and, when possible, advocates from the local Network program or the state's attorney's office.

Local IDAP teams will be responsible for the following:

1. Acceptance or rejection of potential candidates referred to the program, including the approval of participant residences,
2. Review and approval of all program suspensions and dismissals, including identification of appropriate sanctions,

3. Review and approval of any requests for contact or increased contact between program participants and/or their partners (former or new) and their children,
4. Regular review of participant progress, including approval of participant progress through program phases,
5. Approval of participant completion of the program.

It is recommended that IDAP teams hold regularly scheduled meetings, preferably on a weekly basis. This allows the team to reach timely decisions while minimizing the time a participant is suspended from group.

CHAPTER TWELVE: STANDARDS FOR PROGRAM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Standard #89

The program has an appropriate policy on the intersection of domestic violence and substance use.

Rationale: The relationship between substance use and/or abuse and domestic violence is complicated. Recent research has highlighted the following in regard to the relationship between men who batter and substance use:

- Most incidents of domestic abuse take place without the use of alcohol by the batterer and 80% of alcohol-abusing men do not beat their partners (Kantor, 1987).
- Alcohol and most drugs do not have physiological effects that cause violence (Gelles, 1993).
- Alcohol is most likely to contribute to violence in those who believe that it will do so (Gelles, 1993).

It is important that program providers remain clear about the differences between substance use, substance abuse and addiction. Severe alcohol use has clearly been documented to be a risk factor for severe violence and should be viewed as a potential indicator of lethality. This does not mean that substance use causes violence, but rather that substance abuse can contribute to an increase in the severity and frequency of violence by men who batter. It is recommended that program providers seek assistance in making distinctions between substance use, abuse and addiction through internal or multidisciplinary case staffing when such knowledge is specifically related to the participant's abusive behavior.

The relationship between recovery and domestic abuse is also complex. Some men in recovery will escalate their violence, while others may reduce or eliminate the abuse for some period and possibly permanently. Many providers feel that men who batter must be free from the influence of substances in order to remain focused on their process of change. The principle is that clear thinking, unclouded by substance effect, is necessary for significant changes in behavior, thinking and lifestyle.

Another perspective on the relationship between recovery and abuse maintains that many men who continue to use substances do engage in behavior change and that programs cannot ensure that participants will be substance free except when they are attending groups. Although programs should maintain clear standards about substance use and appropriate participation, they must also recognize that rigid standards, which exclude substance-abusing men and are applied to all men regardless of histories of abuse or addiction, can result in a diminishment of the focus on abusive behavior.

Many men will use their partner's substance use as an excuse for their own domestic abuse or as an attempt to shift focus away from their histories of abuse. A partner's history of substance use or abuse should never be allowed to justify or explain a man's abusive behavior toward a partner or child.

Program staff should be hesitant to take participants' descriptions of their partner's substance use as fact. Staff should be cognizant that some battered women use alcohol and other drugs as a strategy for managing the physical and emotional impact of being abused. In other cases, men who batter may also coerce their partners into using substances, or force their partners to deal drugs for them.

The existence of a policy on the intersection of domestic violence and substance use allows programs an opportunity to address many of these complex issues and engage in educational discussions about inaccurate assumptions about substance use and domestic violence.

Implementation: An appropriate policy on the intersection of domestic violence and substance use will address at least the following:

1. The misconception that substance use/abuse does NOT cause domestic violence,
2. An acknowledgement that victim safety and violence prevention are the unequivocal and paramount goals. When the two goals are in conflict, safety is more important than sobriety.-
3. If the program is also a provider of substance abuse services, articulate clear boundaries between its batterer intervention programming and substance abuse services,
4. If a program elects to require group members to remain substance free throughout the duration of their participation in the program (i.e., 24 hours per day while in the program), strategies to ensure that this practice does not reinforce the idea that substance use or abuse causes domestic violence should be included.

Standard #90

The program has policies to ensure staff compliance with these Standards, including procedures to address staff who commit acts of abuse in their personal relationships.

Implementation: Strategies to implement this standard include ensuring expectations in job descriptions or separate agreements related to compliance with the Standards signed at the time of employment. Any strategy chosen should allow the program to take appropriate actions should staff members violate the expectations outlined in the Standards.

Standard #912

The program is prepared refer participants to additional services to support their participation in and successful completion of batterer intervention services or to address issues other than violence prevention.

Rationale: Batterer intervention programs offer educational intervention services and are not expected to provide case management services. For many participants, case management services are provided by the referring agency. Nonetheless, programs should be prepared to make referrals to adjunctive services when appropriate.

Implementation: Programs should be prepared to make appropriate referrals by at a minimum maintaining a list of community services available to assist participants with a range of issues. Programs should make every effort to refer participants to agencies and/or organizations that provide consistent messages about victim safety and offender accountability and participate in a coordinated response to domestic violence.

It is recommended that batterer intervention programs work with Network programs and local domestic violence task forces to ensure that they are making referrals to appropriate agencies.

Standard #92

The program has a policy on fees, including a fee scale, that is applied in a standardized manner.

Rationale: Fees are a necessary and appropriate reality of providing domestic violence services to offenders. In consideration of diminishing public/governmental resources, dollars available for domestic violence intervention should be aimed toward victim services first. Batterer intervention program providers should not compete with victim services for funding. When applying for grants or other funding sources, providers should make every effort to pursue collaborative funding sources, which increase support services for victim safety and offender accountability. Consequently education services for batterers should be supported and

paid for by batterers. An assigned fee also places value on the program and a participant's payment is associated with his taking personal responsibility for his need for the program and literal ownership of the solution.

Fees should be kept at a modest level to make the service affordable and to minimize the impact that fees can have on partners and families of participants as their resources are further depleted.

The development of a sliding fee schedule is one method for deciding fair fee levels and at the same time assuring programs the financial resources to maintain services.

Implementation: The implementation of a program's fee policy should be standardized. Determination of fees owed and any qualification for fee reductions should be based on a defined fee schedule and applied consistently.

In accordance with VT DOC Directive 368.01 (Waiver of Offender Fees for Contracted Intervention Services), participants in the IDAP may have a portion of their fee waived in cases where payment of the fee would cause financial hardship for the participant and/or his family. In the case of a waiver, the participant must agree to work off the balance waived by working without salary on a community service team or on a volunteer basis at a VT DOC approved non-profit or government agency. Vermont's existing hourly minimum wage will be used as the conversion rate.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: STANDARDS FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION

Standard #93

When conducting program evaluation, the program takes appropriate steps to collaborate with victim advocates, protect the identity and confidentiality of battered women who are research subjects or partners of research subjects, and ensure that findings are reported responsibly.

Rationale: When considering program outcomes, it is critical to understand and acknowledge that the results of any particular domestic abuse intervention cannot be measured in a vacuum. Programs for men who batter play an integral part with other intervention processes, including courts, law enforcement, prosecution, victim advocacy, and Corrections. The laws themselves and changes in the law, public education, and societal tolerance all play a significant role in our ability to successfully respond to domestic violence. It is also important to acknowledge the difficulty in creating objective measures for attitude change *Batterer intervention systems: Issues, outcomes and recommendations* by E. Gondolf (2002).

All domestic abuse intervention programs must be constantly challenged for continuous improvement, both because the stakes are so dangerously high for victims and families and because our responses must be as cost effective as possible. In undertaking research, providers and researchers accept responsibility for the selection of research topics and methods used in investigating, analyzing, and reporting that will enhance the safety and integrity of victims/survivors and advance the elimination of domestic abuse.

The desired outcome of batterer intervention programming is to keep women and children safer and lessen the rates of domestic violence. When batterer intervention programs are evaluated, the whole system's response and efforts to hold abusive men accountable must also be evaluated.

For more information about current research on the effectiveness of batterer intervention programs, see Gondolf, 2002.

Implementation: Appropriate steps for conducting program evaluation and/or research include:

1. Working in collaboration with the Network, its member programs and other advocates,
2. Taking extraordinary care to protect the identity and confidentiality of battered women who are subjects or partners of subjects on any research,
3. Planning research in ways to minimize the possibility that findings will be misleading,
4. Providing thorough discussion of the limitations of data, especially where the product touches on social policy or might be construed to the detriment of victims/survivors, abused children, or persons in specific age, sex, race, ethnic, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic, or other disenfranchised social groups,
5. Seeking to have independent research rather than self-evaluation,
6. Acknowledging the existence of alternative hypotheses and explanations of their findings, and not suppressing disconfirming data,
7. Taking credit only for work actually done, and
8. Broadly disseminating findings that will help victims/survivors make effective safety plans and obtain adequate legal protection and social support.

Researchers in the field of domestic violence shall make every effort to incorporate the perspective of victims/survivors into their entire research process in a way that does not compromise their safety and/or pressure them to participate unwillingly.

Standard #94

When conducting program evaluation, the program chooses appropriate outcomes and/or indicators of success.

Rationale: Accurately defining outcomes and/or indicators of success is a crucial step when conducting program evaluation or research. The safety of victims/survivors and their children is the ultimate indicator of success and should be the paramount concern in evaluating batterer intervention programs and the community systems in which they operate.

Implementation: The following is a list of appropriate outcomes that can provide important information about program performance:

1. Program participants demonstrate an increase in victim empathy and an understanding of the impact of their abuse on their family, on the community and on their other relationships.
2. Program participants demonstrate a broadening of their understanding of domestic abuse, including verbal and emotional abuse, intimidating behaviors, threats, isolating tactics, using children, sexual abuse, economic abuse, denial and blaming, making light of abuse.
3. Participants demonstrate an increased ability to identify and own their personal patterns of abusive behavior in relationships.
4. Participants demonstrate reduction in, and ultimately an elimination of, abusive and controlling behavior.
5. Participants who complete programs commit fewer new domestic abuse related crimes than those men who batter who do not complete programs.
6. Partners of program participants express that they feel safer and access resources more frequently
7. Partners express the belief that the program has been effective.

Other goals include system improvements to the degree that victims can safely bring forth all complaints coupled with offender accountability for continued inappropriate behavior. For more information about expanding indicators or success in batterer intervention programs, see *Batterer intervention program outcomes: Broadening the criteria* by David Adams and Nikki Galibois (2004).

Standard #95

The program engages in an ongoing risk assessment process and maintains procedures for informing partners and referring agencies of information about risk factors.

Rationale: Research has identified several factors that are commonly associated with heightened risk for re-abuse and/or lethality. Batterer intervention programs have a unique opportunity to gather information about these factors and when appropriate share this information with referring agencies and partners/ex-partners. This information can help inform decision making processes that can significantly help protect partners/ex-partners and children.

Programs may also obtain information about risk factors that could help referring agencies address safety concerns. For example, research indicates separated women are three times more likely than divorced and twenty-five times more likely than married women still living with their husbands to be victimized by a batterer making these times the most dangerous time for victims (Smith and Coukos, 1997, Gaffe, 2003)). Participants may share information about potential separation with the program that others, including the referring agency, may not be aware of.

The risk assessment process should be ongoing. Risk assessment is not simply a function of an intake or screening process but is an important element of any contact by the program with participants.

Implementation: Strategies for ongoing risk assessment include:

- (1) Training staff about domestic violence lethality risk factors,
- (2) Including and identifying risk factors during the intake process,
- (3) Appropriately documenting identified risk factors,
- (4) Sharing of information gathered about risk factors with referring agencies and when appropriate with partners/ex-partner.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN: STAKEHOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES/COMMITMENTS

Vermont Coalition of Batterer Intervention Services:

The Coalition will maintain documentation of member attendance and provide documentation of attendance to review teams upon request.

As a minimum peer supervision process, Coalition members will provide mutual program endorsement and hold each other accountable to adherence to the Standards described herein.

Vermont Council on Domestic Violence:

The Council will establish and maintain standards for intervention programs for perpetrators of domestic violence, and develop a process for certifying that programs are complying with the standards as required by 15 V.S.A. chapter 21, subchapter 4.

The Batterer Accountability Committee of the Council will maintain a process for approving training for batterer intervention program staff.

Vermont Department of Corrections:

Programs that do not receive the endorsement from the Council will not receive referrals through the court system or Department of Corrections.

Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence:

The Network will work with the Vermont Coalition of Batterers Intervention Services, the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence, and the Vermont Department of Corrections to support batterer intervention programs in their efforts to hold batterers accountable and enhance the safety of victims of domestic violence and their children.

A representative of the Network will participate in the Batterer Accountability Committee of the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence, and will provide support for the local review process through either the participation of local Member Programs or by participating in the review process.

The Network will provide support for the Standards to reflect nationally recognized best practice by sharing such information with the other stakeholders.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: PROVIDER CERTIFICATION AND DE-CERTIFICATION

Rationale and objectives of the review process

In order to ensure quality programming, all providers of batterer intervention services, whether independent providers or the IDAP program, must be periodically reviewed to ensure that they are meeting the expectations set out in these standards. Programs that participate in such reviews and are found to be in compliance with the Standards will receive a certificate with the endorsement of the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence. This certificate will allow the program to receive referrals from the court system and the Vermont Department of Corrections.

The purposes of the review process are to:

- 1) Confirm that the program is providing services in a manner consistent with the statewide Standards
- 2) Provide programs with information about policies and/or practices that are not consistent with the Standards and what programs must do in order to become in compliance with the Standards
- 3) Provide a consistent and recognized method for community members and agencies to verify that a program is providing services in compliance with the Standards
- 4) Provide a structured process for addressing concerns raised by community members and agencies about program practices and policies.

The Review process

To remain certified a program must be reviewed and found in compliance with the Standards on a biannual basis. The Batterer Accountability Committee of the Domestic Violence Council will be responsible for initiating and monitoring the schedule of program reviews.

Application: Each program will be asked to submit an application for certification. This application will provide information about the program and its methods for complying with the Statewide Standards

Review team: Once an application is received, the Batterer Accountability Coordinator will recruit a local review team to conduct a program review. Each review team should be representative of the diverse members of each program's community and include at least five members. The review team membership should include:

1. One representative of the local Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence program.
2. One representative of the Vermont Department of Corrections
3. One representative of the Vermont Coalition of Batterer Intervention Services who is not associated with the program under review.

The remaining members of a review team can include:

1. a victim/survivor of domestic violence.
2. a representative of the Department for Children and Families.
3. a representative of the local State's Attorney's office.
4. a public defender or defense attorney familiar with domestic violence cases.
5. a mental health professional or substance abuse treatment provider.
6. a member of the faith community.

Additionally, at least one member of the review team will be designated by the local domestic violence task force to represent the task force. This person will serve as a liaison between the review team and the local task force.

For programs that provide services in multiple counties, the Committee will approve a local review team for each county and will consider the recommendations from each review team when making a recommendation to the Council about whether to certify the program or not. The Committee may consider proposals for streamlining the review process and approve specific modifications for the program review as appropriate.

Once a review team has been recruited, the Batterer Accountability Coordinator will present the team to the Council Committee for approval. A review team will be recruited and approved within 30 days of receiving a certification application.

Once a review team has been established, a site visit will be scheduled. At a minimum, the site visit should include a meeting with program staff to review the program's application and implementation of the Standards and observation of a group meeting by at least the three mandatory members of the review team. The site visit could also include discussions with community partners such as Network programs, the Department of Corrections, and the State's Attorney's office.

Once the review team has completed the site visit and within three months of the Committee's approval of the team, the team will make a unanimous¹ recommendation to the Council Committee. The review team can recommend any of the following options:

1. that the program is in compliance with the Standards and should be certified with no corrective actions required.
2. that the program is substantially in compliance with the Standards and the program should be provisionally certified if the program submits a plan of action to address specified areas of non-compliance with the Statewide Standards.
3. that the program is not in compliance with the Standards and should not be certified.

The review team's recommendations should include a completed program monitoring form documenting the team's observations about the program's compliance with the Standards and at least three group observation forms. The review team will provide written documentation to the program of its recommendation to the Council Committee.

If a program contests the findings of the review team, it must inform the Council Committee in writing of its decision to contest the findings within 14 days of receiving the review team's recommendation. The program should provide specific information about why it believes the review team's findings were inaccurate and the program is in compliance with the Statewide Standards. The Council Committee will consider this information when considering the review team's recommendation.

If the review team recommends provisional certification, the program will have 14 days to submit a letter of intent to develop a plan of action to address specific Standards identified by the review team. The program may access the support of the Batterer Accountability Coordinator in developing their plan of

¹ If the review team cannot reach a unanimous decision within the given time period, the team can provide the Council Committee with a report of their site visit, including documentation of areas of disagreement. If it chooses, the Council Committee may make a recommendation to the full Council based on the team's report or provide additional guidance to the review team.

action. The plan of action should include specific strategies for addressing the areas of non compliance outlined by the review team and specific timelines for the implementation. The plan must be submitted to the Council Committee within 30 days from the program's receipt of the review team's recommendations.

Council Committee's Recommendation: The Council Committee will review the recommendations of each review team and make a final recommendation to the Council on Domestic Violence. Upon unanimous support of its members, the Council Committee may recommend any of the options outlined previously. The Committee will provide written documentation to the program of its recommendation to the Council and the date on which the Council will consider the Committee's recommendation.

If the Committee's recommendation is different from the recommendation of the review team, the program may submit a written request for reconsideration to the Committee within 7 days following notification of the Committee's recommendation. The Committee will review only those issues that are contested and will not conduct a complete program review. The Committee will respond in writing to any request for reconsideration prior to making its final recommendation to the Council.

In the case of a recommendation for provisional certification, the Committee will review the program's plan of action and ensure that the plan represents a reasonable attempt to address the areas of non-compliance outlined by the review team. The Committee will include an approved plan of action with its recommendation to the full Council. If the program fails to submit a letter of intent to submit a plan of action or fails to submit a plan of action within specific time periods, the Committee will recommend to the Council that the program is not in compliance with the Standards and should not be certified.

Council Committee recommendations to the Council will be warned to all Council members according to the Council's decision making process. The Committee will provide the Council with a summary report of each program recommendation. The summary report will include information about both the review process and the Committee's recommendations. The summary will also include information about any issues that the program asked to be reconsidered and the Committee's resolution of that request and any plan of action that has been approved by the Committee.

No member of the Council Committee will participate in a decision related to a specific program that they are employed by or have a financial interest in.

Council approval: Upon receipt of appropriately warned recommendations, the Council will make a final decision at its next quarterly meeting. The Council will consider recommendations from the committee as a whole, rather than as individual recommendations, unless a Council member requests that an individual recommendation be considered separately. If no member requests to consider a specific recommendation separately, the Council will accept a motion to concur with the Committee recommendations as a whole. If a member requests individual consideration of a specific recommendation, the Council will discuss and act on that specific recommendation separately in accordance with the Council's decision making process. Any remaining recommendations will be considered together as one decision.

Council meetings are open to the public and programs are welcome to attend. If a program wishes to address the Council regarding the Committee's recommendation, it may submit a written request to be included in the Council's agenda. The program's request should indicate the reason for their request and outline any area of disagreement with the Committee's recommendation.

Following a decision about the Committee's recommendation, the Committee will provide written notification to the program and review team of their decision within 14 days. The Committee will also inform local domestic violence task force, Network program, and Department of Correction's office.

Written requests from a program for extensions of any of the timelines above will be considered by the Committee on a case by case basis.

Certification of programs serving multiple counties

Programs serving multiple counties may request consideration of a modification to the certification review process that allows for a unified review of any documents or policies that are used in all counties served by the program. The review of the program's compliance with additional Standards would still require the review by a local review team. Any request for modification should be directed to the Batterer Accountability Committee of the Council.

The Batterer Accountability Committee may approve or disapprove any request for modification of the certification review process. The Committee will ensure that any request provides for appropriate representation of the counties served by the program. All local review teams would be provided with the outcome of the unified review and may incorporate findings related to the Standards reviewed as part of the unified review process if they feel that the local practices or implementation of the documents or policies differs from what is presented during the unified review.

Certification of new programs

New programs may submit an application for certification at any time. Upon receiving an application, the Committee will inform community stakeholders of the application and provide information about the timeline for Council action. Community stakeholders will be reminded that the program would only be eligible to receive referrals if and when the Council approves the interim certification of the new program.

The Committee will review the application and supporting documents. This review is intended to ensure that the program's philosophy, policies, protocol for partner contact, program contract, and plan for community collaboration are consistent with the Statewide Standards. If the Committee finds any of the submitted information to be inconsistent with the Statewide Standards, the applicant will be informed of the inconsistencies and provided an opportunity to re-submit any application documents to address these inconsistencies.

Applications for certification from new programs will be reviewed in a timely manner. The Committee will make a recommendation to the full Council at the next of quarterly meetings of the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence as long as an application is received at least six weeks prior to the Council meeting. The Committee will make reasonable efforts to respond to applications received less than six weeks prior to a Council meeting, but recommendations may need to be acted upon at a subsequent Council meeting.

After conducting a review of the proposed program, the Committee will make a recommendation to the Council on the program's application. The Committee could recommend that the Council approve the program's certification on an interim basis or that the program not be certified. A recommendation for interim certification would include a timeline for the program to complete a full certification review, including a program review and site visit conducted by a local review team, based on the process followed by existing programs. The recommendation may also contain any expectations that the program must comply with in order to maintain their interim certification until a full review is completed.

If a program wishes to address the Council regarding the Committee's recommendation, it may submit a written request to be included in the Council's agenda. The program's request should indicate the reason for their request and outline any area of disagreement with the Committee's recommendation.

The Council will consider the Committee's recommendation and makes a final decision on the applicant's interim certification. After the Council takes action on the Committee's recommendation, the Committee will inform the program and the local community of the Council's decision. If the Council approved the program's certification on an interim basis, the local Department of Corrections office would be informed that the program was eligible to receive referrals. The community would also be informed of the timeline for a full certification review.

Program's approved for interim certification will then complete a full review according to the Council's approved process for program certification.

Community Complaints and De-certification

Community members and agencies may at any point raise concerns about a program's compliance with the Standards. Concerns or complaints should be brought to the attention of the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence Committee on Batterer Accountability. The Committee will develop an objective and impartial process for reviewing concerns and complaints. The Committee will inform the program that a complaint has been received. The program will be allowed an opportunity to respond in writing to the concern or complaint. After reviewing the complaint and the response of the program, the Committee will then determine whether to initiate a program review as described in section 6.3.

If a program review is initiated and finds that a certified program is out of compliance with the Standards, the program will be informed that they are no longer certified. The local domestic violence task force, Corrections office and Network program will be informed of the review team's findings.

Decertified programs may either address the findings of the review team and re-apply for certification or contest the findings in accordance with the process identified in Section 6.3.

Certification and Program Referrals

In order to receive referrals from the Vermont Department of Corrections, a program must be able to provide documentation that it has been reviewed and found to be in compliance with the Standards.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: STANDARDS REVIEW PROCESS

Given that batterer intervention programming is an evolving field, it is important that there is an opportunity to update the Standards to ensure that they remain up to date with current research and trends. The process of reviewing these Standards must also ensure that any changes are considered carefully and involve multiple perspectives from stakeholders involved in the community response to domestic violence.

For these reasons, changes to these standards shall be considered on a yearly basis and must be approved by the Vermont Department of Corrections, the Vermont Network Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault and the Vermont Coalition of Batterer Intervention Programs. Recommendations for changes can be referred to the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence, which will be responsible for initiating a yearly review process.

These Standards will be reviewed in their entirety every five years.

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APPENDIX D Common Acronyms

BIP	Batterer Intervention Program
CCSC	Community Correctional Services Center
CO (or CCO)	Community Correctional officer
CR	Conditional Re-entry (formerly furlough reintegration)
CRSU	Court & Reparative Services Unit
CSC	Cognitive Self Change
CSS	Correctional Services Specialist
DA	Domestic Assault
DAEP	Domestic Abuse Education Project
DCF	Department of Children and Families
DOC	Department of Corrections
DV	Domestic violence
DVTF	Domestic violence task force
FR	Furlough
FRAO	Final relief from abuse order
IDAP	Intensive Domestic Abuse Program
ISAP	Intensive Substance Abuse Program
PAF	Pre-Approved Furlough
PD	Public defender
PO	Probation officer (also referred to as Correctional Services Specialist)
P&P	Probation and parole
RAO	Relief from abuse order
SA	State's Attorney
TRAO	Temporary relief from abuse order
VAPO	Violation of an abuse protection order
VCR	Violation of conditions of release
VOP	Violation of probation
VSS	Victim Services Specialist