



Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County

Alternatives to Domestic Aggression

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What is the purpose of Partner Contact?...

Whose interest is it in?

CONTEXT OF INTERVENTION PROGRAM AND BATTERED PARTNERS

Programs establish procedures for safeguarding battered women which, at a minimum, include:

1. Working collaboratively with domestic violence programs to assure that battered partners are provided advocacy, safety planning and other assistance while men who batter are participating in intervention services;
2. Informing battered partners of their right to be free of violence and to access legal protections;
3. Giving informed referrals to partners to domestic violence programs, victim-witness assistance and legal services;
4. Advising battered partners of the status of the batterer in relation to the intervention service, including application, rejection or acceptance, attendance, and administrative or contractual discharge;
5. Assessing the lethality of all participants at intake and periodically throughout intervention;
6. Warning battered partners and appropriate law enforcement agencies of potential violence by the participant [See *Tarasoff vs. Regents of University of California* (1976), *Jablonski vs. Loma Linda Veterans Administration* (1983) and *Hedlund vs. Superior Court of Orange County* (1983)];
7. Taking appropriate action to protect partners and minor children from dangers posed by program participants (including, but not limited to, seeking involuntary mental health commitment of the batterer and finding emergency safe housing for the endangered partner);
8. Avoiding even the appearance of complicity with the batterer in all work undertaken by the agency; and
9. Focusing primary attention on the safety of battered partners in all contacts made with them and all communications made on their behalf.

This section is excerpted from the Accountability: Program Standards for Batterer Intervention Services © PCADV, 1992 who as it is written in that document Adopted in large part from the Batterer's Treatment Program Guidelines, developed by the Los Angeles County Domestic Violence Council in June of 1988.

The ADA Program has had a very long history of struggling with the issue of partner contact. Since the inception of the Alternatives to Domestic Aggression Program in 1986 we have conducted the following methods of Partner Contact:

1. We have written monthly reports to partners of men in the ADA Program.
2. We have conducted a quarterly informational meeting for the partners of the men in the ADA Program.
3. We have conducted a support group co-facilitated by a staff of the ADA Program and a staff of SAFE House (the local Battered Women's Service Organization).
4. We have had a support group facilitated specifically for the partners of the men in our BIS facilitated solely by staff of SAFE House.
5. We have had regular monthly outreach phone contact conducted by a woman ADA staff member.
6. We have had a monitoring committee which was facilitated by SAFE House and had several partners of the men in ADA on it.
7. We have confronted batterers in group with information partners have relayed information to us, after careful processing with her (and S.A.F.E. House at times) about the possible consequences.
8. We have sent partners of the men in the ADA Program informational packets about our program and services available to them in the community.
9. We have had no contact with the partners of the men in the ADA Program unless of course we believed we had a duty to warn/protect.

Who's interest is Partner Contact in?

The problems of partner contact include:

1. What do batterer intervention services do with the information she tells us? The list could end here as the problems with this are endless.
2. If the battered woman is talking to the batterer intervention service, that organization is usurping the role of the battered women's shelter in the community, Staff of Battered Women's Service Organizations are the experts in offering her services. We believe the battered woman wants to tell her side of the story. We just don't think that the batterer intervention service is the one she should be telling it to.
3. When the battered woman talks about being assaulted to the batterer intervention service, she may feel relief that she has told someone and may be less likely to make another call to the shelter. She may also think regardless of what we say to her about our role that we are able to do something about this.
4. A batterer intervention service contacting the partner of a man, regardless of what we are saying to her about the slim chances of his making the choice to cease his violence, still creates a hope that he is in "therapy" and will get the help he needs to fix him. It is commonly believed that his getting "help" is the number one motivator in a battered woman staying with her assailant or returning to him.

5. Partner contact by a batterer intervention service is conjoint therapy by proxy.
 6. Batterer intervention services do know what he is doing at home, if we want or need to be educated about these realities this should come from other battered women. Partner contact should not be about a reality check for us to gauge whether or not he is telling us the truth. It is most likely that he is not. He is telling us what he thinks we want to hear. Those men who are really struggling with the choice of accountability will demonstrate that in many ways.
 7. We know that batterers are colluding. We should not put battered women at risk to assure ourselves that this is happening.
 8. If we want to offer battered women resources, we should offer her the resource of the local Battered Women's Service Organization and the police, there is no other reason that we should continue to have contact beyond that point. If we are concerned about her safety we should be linking her with resources, which can promote her safety, the local Battered Women's Service Organization or the police.
 9. If contact with her is based on a batterer intervention service wanting a clearer picture of what is going on at home, we must consider the following questions; why do we want this? and is it fair of us to put her in this position?
 10. Batterer intervention services need to be focused on participating in a coordinated community response. This is not occurring if a batterer intervention service is performing the function of a Battered Women's Service Organization.
- ☞ We believe it is an important grounding in reality to hear from battered women. We in the batterer intervention service field must learn and listen to battered women, We just don't believe that those battered women should be our service participants partners.
 - ☞ We believe it is ideal for battered woman to be contacted by the local Battered Women's Service Organization, to talk about the realities of batterer intervention service's, services available for her in the community, safety planning, etc. We need to discuss the function/purpose of partner contact for a batterer intervention service.
 - ☞ After extensive discussions with our local Battered Women's Service Organization, The Domestic Violence Project/SAFE House, as well as others at various gatherings like Phyllis Frank at national National Organization of Men Against Sexism/Ending Men's Violence Taskforce (NOMAS/EMV) conferences we decided **not to** have contact with the partners of the men in our batterer intervention service unless of course we believed we had a duty to warn/protect. We came to the conclusion that there was no purpose in partner contact that promoted her safety.