

State Standards for Batterer Intervention Services: Serving Gay, Lesbian and Female Clients

Funded by CULMA State Policy Center

Research Team

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Goals of the Project

- Evaluate how existing state standards for batter intervention services address service provision to females and individuals in same sex relationships
- Examine existing models for intervention
- Assess current practices in the state of Michigan
- Discuss recommendations for development of standards for women in Michigan

Background

- Most states have developed standards for service provisions to males in batterer intervention counseling.
- Arrest rates of women are increasing.
- States are examining best practices for women to develop standards for providing effective and appropriate services.
- Illinois is the only state which has standards that specifically address women.
- No states provide standards for batterer intervention counseling with lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender clients.

Why Practice Guidelines?

- Rapid expansion of need for services in the mid-1980's due to stronger arrest and prosecution policies with respect to DV.
- Increase accountability of programs to clients and their families
- Improve service provision and share practice knowledge

Who are the Perpetrators

- National Institute of Justice considers intimate partner violence (IPV) to be primarily a crime against women.
- Arrest rates, injury reports and counseling statistics indicate that women make up the vast majority of victims of IPV.
- Some research suggests women are just as aggressive as men.
- Lesbian and gay male couples have similar rates of aggression as heterosexual relationships.

Contextual Differences in IPV

- Four categories of partner violence (Johnson 2001)
 - *Intimate Terrorism* - violence used by one partner to obtain power and control over the other (most common)
 - *Mutual Violent Control* - both partners are violent and controlling
 - *Common Couple Violence* - both partners are violent but not controlling
 - *Violent Resistance* – one partner uses violence in response to Intimate Terrorism

Motivations for IPV

- Female motivation (Smith 2002)
 - Response to ongoing abuse by partners instead of desire to control (violent resistance)
 - 60% of women's motivation is self-defense
 - 10% of women were found to be the primary aggressor (intimate terrorism)
- Male motivation
 - Anger, control and power
 - 80% of primary aggressors are male (Johnson 2001)
- Dual arrests result when police can not or do not assess who is the primary aggressor

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Methods

- Available state standards collected from BISCMi.org
- For remaining states, agencies and state coalitions were contacted.
- Each standard was initially coded for:
 - Existing standards for women
 - Beliefs about women and violence
 - Services for women
 - Gender neutral language

Methods continued

- Subsequent waves of coding examined:
 - Same sex violence
 - Practice models
 - Specific treatment procedures
 - Discussion of additional needs
- Each standard was coded by a second team member to increase coding reliability. Differences were resolved to the satisfaction of both coders.

Existing Standards

- 53 standards found
 - 42 states
 - 7 counties
 - 2 cities
 - 1 island
 - 1 tribal association
- All were developed between 1981 and 2003
- 17 had been revised

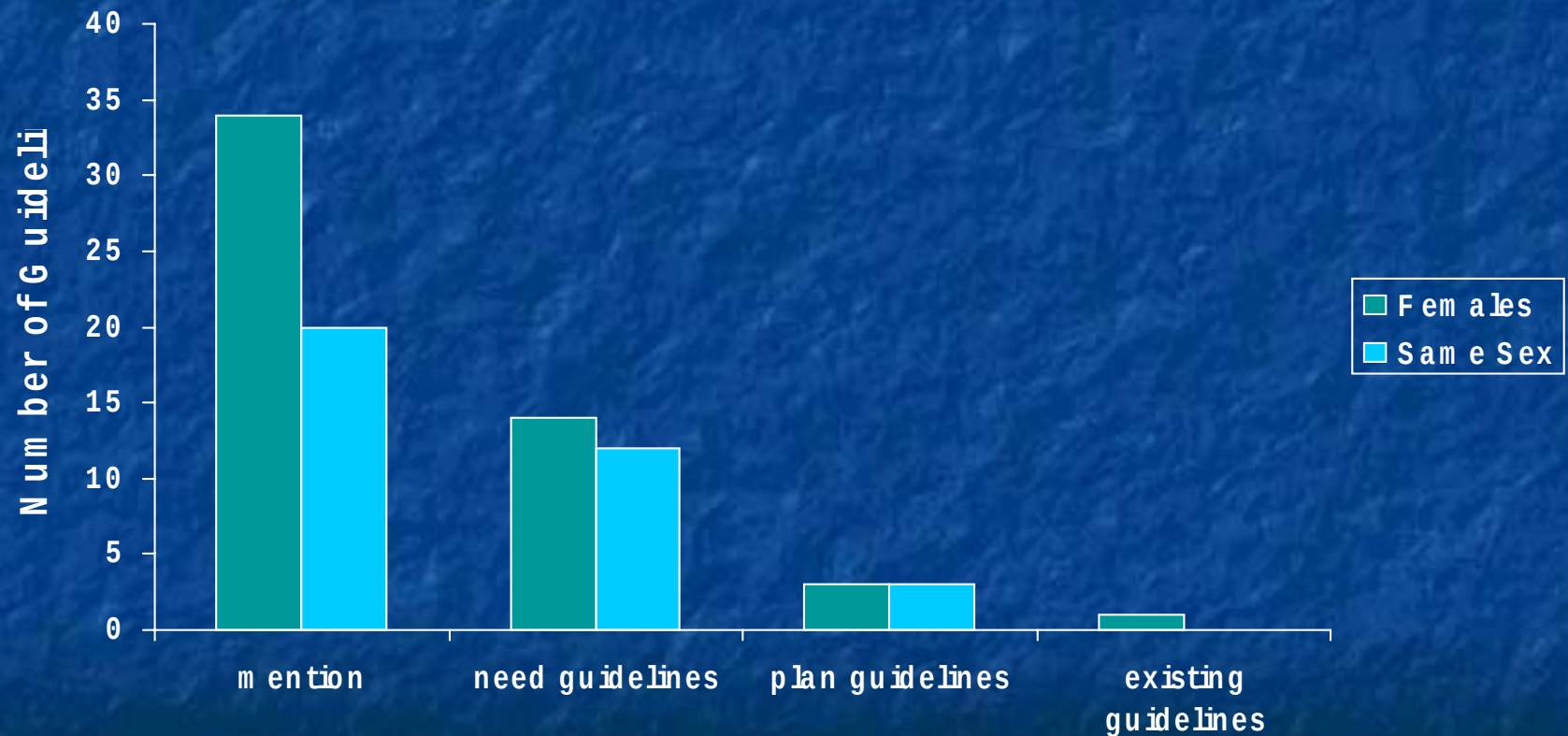
Common Themes

- Most (78%) use an educational format
- Few (6%) focus only on therapy and support
- 15% suggest a combination
- 89% suggest no victim contact except when mandated
- 94% suggest that batterer intervention programs should be affiliated with a victim service agency

Gendered Focus

- More than half are written for males only
- 29 (58%) state specifically that, in heterosexual violence, violence is typically perpetrated by males against females
- 1/3 make any mention of offering services for women and/or people in same sex relationships

Statements about Guidelines



Current Guideline Practices

- 35 (70%) state that counseling should be offered in gender segregated groups
- 13 (26%) state that heterosexuals and people in same sex relationships should receive treatment separately.
- Most state that couples counseling is not an appropriate intervention.

Identification of Appropriate Intervention in Guidelines

- Alternative or Concurrent Services
 - 16 (32%) exclude for mental health reasons
 - 10 (20%) exclude for substance abuse
- Assessment of History of Violence
 - 3 screen for prior victimization in the relationship (2 do not use in making treatment decisions, Illinois does)
 - 2 assess to identify the primary aggressor (Illinois, Iowa - Police)

Illinois: A Model Protocol

- Only state standard to specifically address female perpetrators
- Incorporates the most up to date ideas for violence prevention
- Does not address same sex partners
- Identifies the need and plans for future standards for same sex partners

Important Components

- A comprehensive screening/intake process, ensuring appropriate placement
- Includes alternate treatment for offenders who are primarily violent resistors
 - address both victimization *and* accountability
- Programming needs to reflect the cultural diversity of communities served
- A plan for future program innovation

Services in Michigan

- Michigan standards are written for males only
- Contacted 35 domestic violence agencies
- These agencies provide service in 71 of Michigan's 83 counties
- Performed an informal survey of services for women mandated into batterer intervention services

Batterer Intervention for Women in Michigan

- 27 of 35 programs offered some batterer intervention for women
- Approaches were varied
 - treat women individually instead of in a group
 - screen women for victimization and treat in either counseling groups for survivors or perpetrators depending on history
 - provide services for women using the same models designed for men.
 - refer all women into victim's program

Recommendations for a Michigan Standard

- Include screening/assessment for *both males and females* for primary aggression and/or violent resistance to determine the appropriate placement
- Create gender and sexual orientation specific programs
- Alternative/concurrent treatments for mental health issues, substance abuse, and violence victimization
- Improve education of law enforcement and court officers
- Comprehensive evaluation component of developing programs to measure effectiveness

Challenges

- Complex family dynamics
- Police and court cooperation
- Limited resources
- Rural communities

Future Research

- Further research is needed on women's experiences with violence as well as interventions with women and the LGBT community to improve services.
- We want to know what you think.