

The Ethical Role Of An Abuse Intervention Program (AIP) in a CCR

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Coordinated Community Response (CCR) co-coordinator - Minneapolis

Former children's advocate, victim advocate, director of domestic violence advocacy program for 17 years

Former director of the Duluth Model

Co-author of Addressing Fatherhood with Men Who Batter and Turning Points: A Nonviolence Curriculum for Women

Expert Witness on domestic violence / coercive control in civil and criminal cases

Former Director of International Training – Global Rights for Women

Researcher on women's use of violence in intimate partner relationships

UN Women consultant

Co- Author of Safe Consultations with Survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls and Beyond Training for UN Women

National Network Abuse Intervention Programs – Women Who Use Force co-chair / Steering Committee

“Agreements” to stay curious--



Turn judgment to curiosity



Turn disagreement into shared exploration



Turn defensiveness into self-reflection



Turn assumptions into questions

ETHICS session CCRs

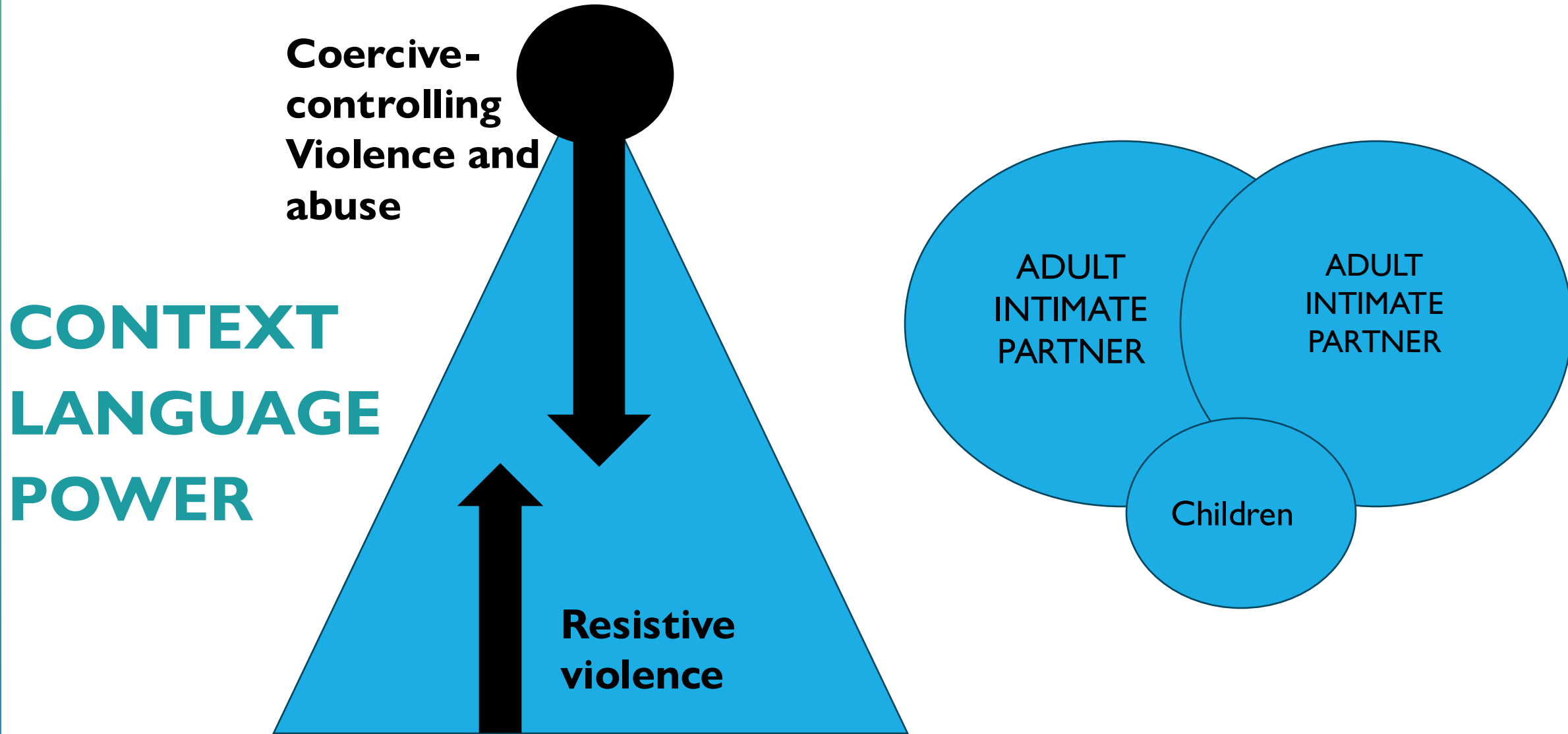
If you are being **ethical** in your practice and interventions as an abuse intervention program.....

- What would I see you doing **outside of the facilitation room** and in your **Coordinated Community Response (CCR)**?

ETHICS session - CCRs

- Can women ever be safe **if men don't change?**
- How can we be more **gender expansive in our language** and terminology outside the male-female binary while accounting for **most of the violence coming from men?**
- Can abusers change if we don't continue to challenge the **institutional practices** that allow their violence to continue?
 - CCRs
 - State
 - **AIP Programs – You have an ethical responsibility to also do systemic advocacy**
- Can men change if we don't challenge the **cultural/social** practices that allow their violence to continue?

From my last session.....



+ • **Coordinated
Community
Response (CCR)**

First developed by “the Duluth Model” in Duluth, MN - USA

World’s Best Policy to Address
VAWG (2015)

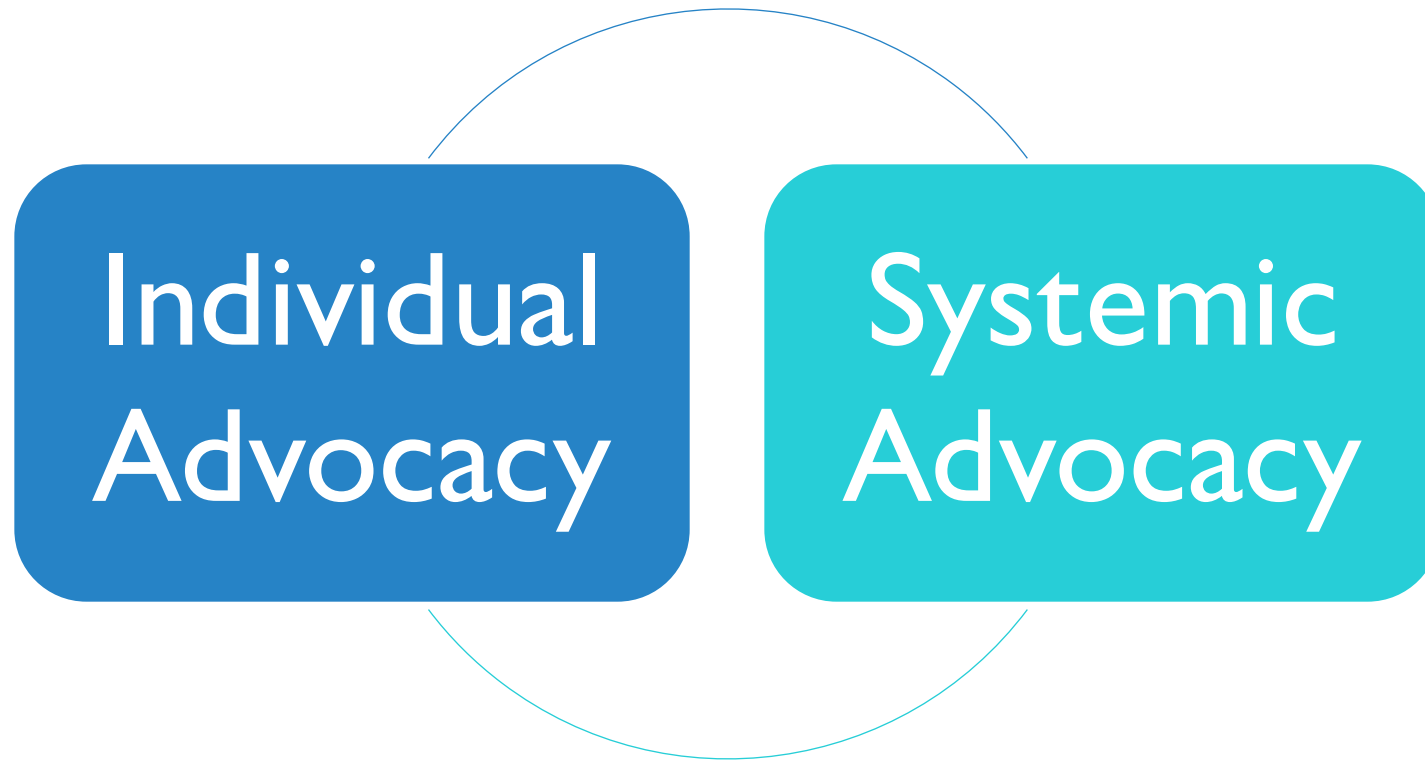
Domestic Abuse Intervention
Programs

An interagency effort to change the climate of tolerance of domestic violence by:

Institutionalizing practices and procedures which centralize

- victim-survivor safety, well-being & autonomy and
- abuser accountability

Two Types of Advocacy





Individual Advocacy

Taking a survivor or offender down the “yellow brick road” to an institution or agency that is not meeting their needs.

And then taking another survivor.....and another...

And another offender.....and another.....

And see their needs not being met.



Systemic Advocacy

Work together to **change the course of the yellow brick road** and **systemic changes** to the institution or agency to better meet the safety, well-being, and autonomy of ALL survivors safety, well-being and autonomy and accountability of abusers



Ethical obligation to work to "change/improve the systemic yellow brick road" that all survivors and abusers walk down

Training workers in institutions is not enough

- Our first response is often to train the workers in the institution we want to change
- Trainings do not create long term, sustainable systemic change for survivors
- 8 ways in which institutions organize workers – **BEYOND TRAINING** handout (Origin resource: Praxis International / UN Women Co-Lead by Melissa Scaia and Laura Williams)
- Find the “gap” between what the institution/system provides and what survivors needs for safety, well-being and accountability and what abusers needs for accountability

The Four Main Activities of a Functioning CCR

- 1) Discuss and try to come to a **shared understanding** of the problems facing survivors.
- 2) Understanding **what is working and what is not working** in the collective response to survivors and their children.
- 3) **Build the identified changes into the infrastructure** of case processing.
- 4) **Evaluate and monitor** the changes for desired outcomes and consistency in application.

CCR ACTIVITY NUMBER 1

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DISCUSS AND TRY TO COME TO A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEMS FACING SURVIVORS

Trauma-informed* Facilitation

Prepares participants for what they will see and experience

- Role play of entitlement, coercive-control, threat of physical violence, resistance, gaslighting and psychological abuse / emotional abuse

Reminds the training participants that this is a role-play

- Parts of this exercise can be difficult to experience and may feel very uncomfortable because it emulates reality in coercive-controlling violence and abuse

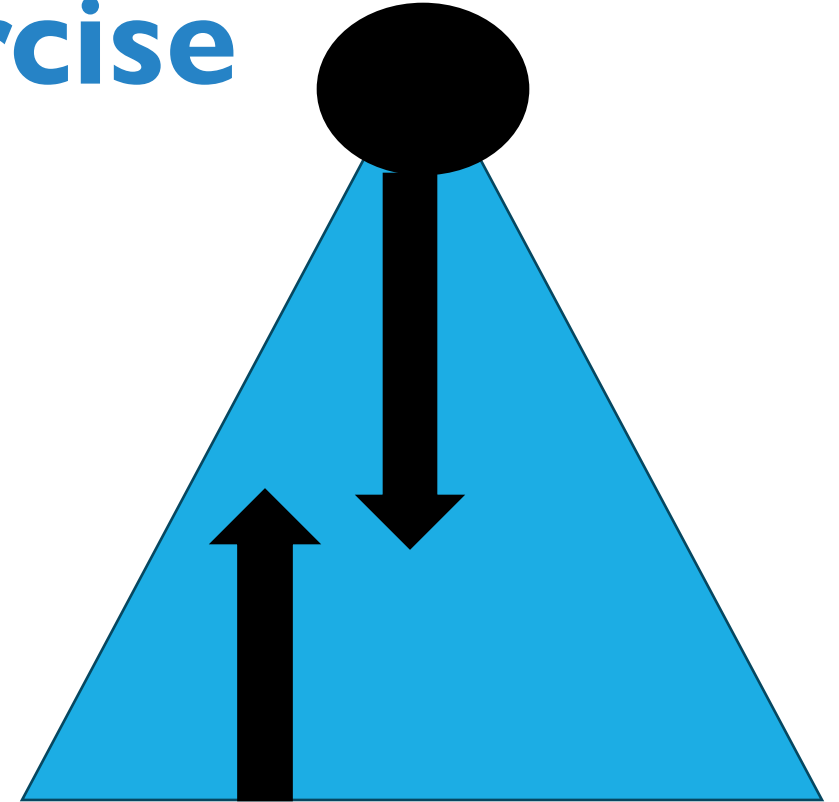
Seeks to maintain a **respectful and supportive group environment** throughout the exercise and discussion

Accounts for the **safety, well-being and autonomy** of all participants

*SAMHSA's (2014) concept of trauma and guidelines for a trauma-informed approach.

Sandbag exercise

- 1 Training facilitator
 - 2 Adult intimate partner
 - 3 Children
 - 3 Younger Children (Zoomies)
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- Some will become the “favorite children”



This exercise is available in writing. You are welcome to replicate this training technique. However, please exercise sensitivity and caution when doing it. Please give credit to the original authors.

How should a CCR respond to different types of domestic violence?

Are most cases of domestic violence treated the same in your system? In your system? Your AIP?

Ethical Question: Can we treat dissimilar cases similarly in a CCR? In an Abuse Intervention Program? Can our AIP state standards treat all domestic violence the same

- Question posed to Mary Asmus, former prosecutor with the Duluth City Attorney's Office to our CCR

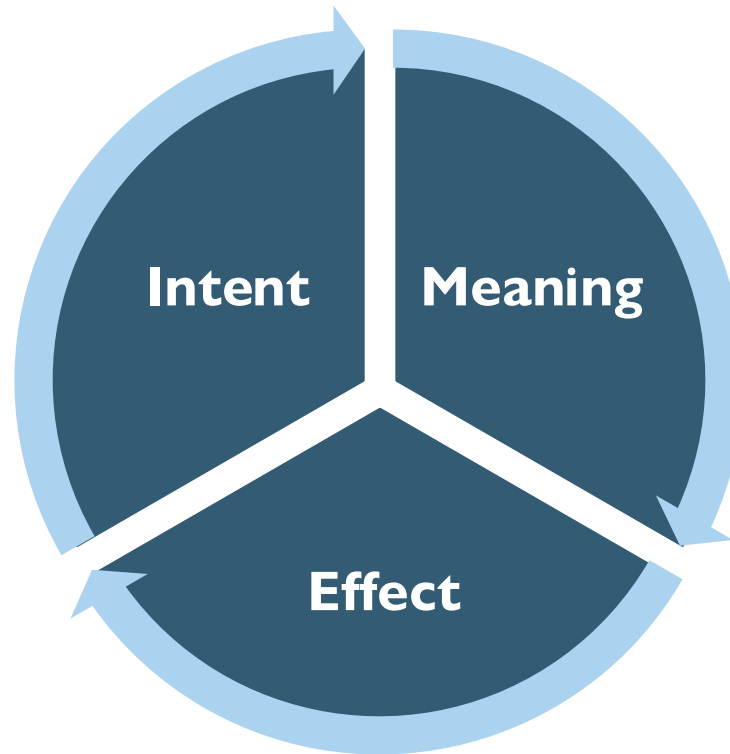
It is a matter of **SAFETY** and **ETHICS**

Failing to account for **CONTEXT**, the words we use (**LANGUAGE**), and/or the **POWER DIFFERENTIAL** in the relationship can:

- **Endanger victims** of ongoing coercive-control, violence and abuse
- **Embolden abusers**
- **Harm children**
- Result in **inappropriate responses** and **ineffective interventions**

Context of an incident means:

Intent: What were they **hoping to accomplish** by using violence?
What was the **intent** of the violence?
What did you want your partner **to stop doing or start doing**?



Meaning: What is the **meaning** of this incident in the context of the entire relationship?

Effect: What is the **effect** of this incident? What has been the **effect** and impact of previous acts of violence?

OVER LAPPING LAYERS

**WHAT IS THE
ROLE OF OTHERS
IN THE CCR TO
ADDRESS?**

**Alcoholism
/ Substance
Abuse of
the abuser**

**Gambling
addiction of
the abuser**

**Abuser has
ADHD**

**Trauma –
childhood
and/or adult**

**Brain injury of
the adult victim**

**Mental Illness
of the Adult
Victim**

**Alcoholism / Drug
Abuse of the adult
victim**

**Trauma –
childhood,
adult, and
currently**

**ADHD
child**

Resistive violence

**WHAT IS THE
ROLE OF AN AIP
TO ADDRESS?**

**Coercive-controlling
Violence & abuse**

**Learning
disability of
the child**



Three Types of Domestic Violence

1) Coercive-Controlling
Violence and Abuse (Battering)

2) Resistive Violence

3) Violence Unrelated to
Coercive Control

Cause of domestic violence theory = leads you to certain interventions

- In a CCR, to be effective, you must have a “shared understanding” of the cause of domestic violence
- What are the prominent theories in your CCR?
- How often do you disagree with others in your CCR about how to intervene?

How are you organized as a CCR/AIP for:

- Addressing the three types of domestic violence?
- When mis-identification of the predominant aggressor happens in the system?
- Survivor respondents? Survivor defendants?
- Not treating all cases the same?
- What can you do as an AIP?

CCR: A Shared Understanding

Identify and respond to three different types of domestic violence

The power of the state should be restricted to controlling the illegal activity of the abuser.

Victims are rarely free to cooperate with the system to hold abusers accountable.

Account for power differences between victim and abuser

Abusers are responsible for stopping their coercive-controlling violence and abuse.

CCR ACTIVITY NUMBER 2

**ANALYSIS OF WHAT IS WORKING AND
NOT WORKING IN THE COLLECTIVE
RESPONSE TO SURVIVORS, ABUSERS AND
CHILDREN**

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How do you know what is working or not working in your CCR? In your program?

- Not statistics or reports
- **Is what you are doing improving the safety, well-being, and autonomy of survivors?**
 - **Which survivors?**

Identify and document problem



Gaps or problems could come to light from advocates, criminal justice partners, abuse intervention programs (AIPs), survivors, and/or observations



Gaps or problems could also be identified through reading reports, policies, protocols or practice guides.

Centering Victim Experience in Systemic Change

Planning focus groups/interviews:

- Who has access to the survivors?
- What time and venue will survivors show up to?
- What common experience are you looking for?
- What will survivors be told about their role in the project and how much will they be paid?
- How will the focus group(s) be recorded?
- What snacks/beverages will be available?
- What support will be available after the focus group is over?
- Who will be there?
- What will be asked?

Centering Victim Experience in Systemic Change

Conducting Focus Groups / Interviews:

- Framing questions is important
- Follow-up questions is where most of the content comes from.
- Make sure all participants have a chance to speak.
- Create a conversation that builds on itself rather than questioning one survivor at a time.
- Know when the energy is waning (typically 1.5 to 2 hours).

EXERCISE: Focus Groups / Interviews

- Decide on the topic for the Focus Group Discussion (FGD)/Interviews
- **One side of the room:** What would you want to learn from **survivors** about your work in an Abuse Intervention Program (AIP)?
- Develop 2-3 questions to ask victim survivors in a focus group/interviews about the work of Abuse Intervention Programs (AIPs)

- **One side of the room/Zoomies:** What would you want to learn from **abusers or women who use force** about your work in AIP?
- :Develop 2-3 questions to **ask abusers or women who use force** in a focus group/interviews

- Write the exact questions you would ask

Centering Victim Experience in Systemic Change

Analyzing focus groups/interviews:

- Who will transcribe/redact?
- Who will be on the analysis team?
- What themes are agreed upon and what supporting quotes will be used?
- Who will format the results into a report?
- Who will see the report or aspects of it?
- How will it set an agenda for further work/change?

What do you want to learn from victim survivors/abusers in your community/CCR/program?

CHALLENGE – One year from now

- Which systemic gap will you focus on for the next year?
- What do you want to learn from survivors / abusers?
- What topics do you want to learn from them about?
- How willing are you to hear their feedback?

CCR ACTIVITY NUMBER 3

- + • **Build the identified changes into the infrastructure of case processing.**
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Do NOT rely ONLY on training

- 8 Methods
- Praxis International
- Beyond Training guidance on conference website



Figure 9. Eight Methods that Standardize Worker's Actions

CCR ACTIVITY NUMBER 4

- + **Evaluate and monitor the changes**
- **for desired outcomes and**
- **consistency in application**

Crossroads Program

CCR that accounts for three different types of domestic violence

- Took five years to develop in Duluth, MN – 1994 and updated in 2015
- Developed from lived experiences of survivors who used force
 - Safe Consultations with Survivors of VAWG
- Enhanced through *Blueprint for Safety* – US DOJ Demonstration project
- CCR leaders in Duluth: Mary Asmus, JD – assistant city attorney in the city of Duluth, MN; Police chief Mike Tusken; and Arrowhead Regional Corrections leader Kay Arola; and Ellen Pence, PhD - DAIP

Question for the CCR

How can the multiple goals of:

- enhancing survivor safety, well-being & autonomy,
- holding abusers accountable for their behavior, and
- deterring future violence

be furthered when the respondent/defendant is the survivor of ongoing physical abuse and/or coercive-control by the person now alleged to have been assaulted?

Crossroads Program 1994

Duluth Blueprint for Safety 2015

Police: Self-defense policy /
predominant aggressor policy / 5
context questions

DVRT team oversight and accountability

Prosecution policy for deferral of
prosecution

Probation interviews survivor defendants
and provides supervision that accounts
for being a survivor

Turning Points group for 20 weeks

Duluth Police – Self-Defense

Policy 310.3.2 – Investigation reveals multiple offenders:

Officers must first determine whether any injuries were inflicted as a result of self- defense.

- ✓ Reasonable force may be used by any person in resisting or aiding another to resist an offense against the person.
 - ✓ The use of force must be reasonable for that person given the nature of the threat and may include the use of weapons.
 - ✓ If one of the persons acted entirely in self-defense, the situation is dealt with as if there were a single offender; arrest the party who was not acting in self-defense as the predominant aggressor.
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- Dual arrest is discouraged by both DPD policy and MN State Statute **629.342 sub. 2(a)**

Duluth Police – Predominant Aggressor

Policy 310.3.2: If the officer determines that neither party acted in self-defense and both parties have committed an act of domestic abuse, then *the officer must make a custodial arrest of the predominant aggressor considering the totality of the circumstances, including:*

- the relative severity of the injuries and fear inflicted in this incident
- the relative use of force and intimidation used in this incident
- information available to officers involving prior incidents involving either party
- the likelihood of either party to commit domestic abuse in the near future

5 Risk/Context Questions from Duluth Police Department

1. Do you think he/she will seriously injure or kill you, your children, or someone else close to you? What makes you think so? What makes you think not? Does he/she have access to guns?
2. How frequently does he/she assault you? Describe the time you were the most frightened or injured from him/her?
3. Does he/she initiate unwanted contact either electronically or in person? Describe the unwanted contact. How often?
4. How frequently does he/she intimidate or threaten you? Has he/she intimidated or threatened you regarding talking to the police or from seeking help from the court?
5. Has he/she ever forced you to do things sexually you didn't want to?

Domestic Violence Response Team (DVRT)

- Conducts assessments for risk and context of every incident of domestic violence
- “In the short term, eradicating wrongful arrests facilitated by mandatory and preferred arrest laws and policies will involve **partnerships among legal experts, retired police officers, and skilled antiviolenence intervention practitioners.**”
- “These partners should first **learn from the experiences of DV survivors** (United Nations, 2022) in their communities and utilize that knowledge to train current police officers about policy limitations and unintended consequences.”
 - Larance, L.Y. (2025). *Arrest Web Entanglement: Female Domestic Violence Survivors’ Experiences with Police Intervention and Coercively Controlling Male Partners*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. Vol. 40 (3-4). 850-875. Page 865.
 - United Nations – Scaia, M. and Williams. L.. (2022). [Safe consultation with survivors of violence against women and girls](#). Ending Violence Against Women Section.

Prosecution / Probation Crossroads Program for Victim Defendants

- **Crossroads Program** involves a two-step evaluation process. Initial eligibility is considered, followed by a second step involving a complete evaluation. Probation assists the prosecution with the second step by interviewing the defendant.
- **Affidavit** from advocacy program or family/friends is allowed
- **Other documentation** about being a survivor accepted but not required
 - Medical records
 - Photos
 - Police reports

Prosecution / Probation Crossroads Program for Victim Defendants

- In most cases, **defer prosecution for one year**, on the condition of participation in the women's non-violence *Turning Points* group at DAIP (or equivalent individual programming for a male defendant.)
- In cases in which abuse of alcohol/drugs appears to be directly related to increased safety risks for the defendant, **consider requiring alcohol/drug treatment** and/or **no use of alcohol as a condition** of participation in the Crossroads Program.
- Consider requiring a **factual basis** on the record from the defendant. If the defendant's safety is likely to be further compromised by an admission to the facts, **consider waiving an admission** to the offense(s).



MATERIALS DEVELOPED BY MELISSA SCAIA
& LAURA WILLIAMS - JUNE 2025
Figure 9. Eight Methods that Standardize Worker's Actions

8 Methods in the CCR Development of the Duluth Crossroads Program

Rules and regulations

- Policy on self-defense for the police
- Policy on predominant aggressor for the police
- Policy on victim defendants for prosecutors for deferral of prosecution
- Policy on victim defendants for probation

Administrative Practices

- 5 Context Questions asked by the police
- Police protocol on report writing
- Crossroads Program criteria
- Crossroads program application that allows for affidavits from family/friends about history of abuse

Concepts and Theories

- Punishment is Rehabilitation or Retribution
- Three types of domestic violence
- What is justice in these cases?
- Concept of discretion
- How the law organizes categories of crimes

Linkages

- Coordination with defense bar for Crossroads program and applications
- Coordination with probation and advocacy

Resources

- Specialized probation officers
- Turning Points group

Mission, role and function

- What is the role of prosecution in cases with survivor defendants?
- Role of probation with survivor defendants
- Role of women's nonviolence programs

Accountability

- Accountability mechanism for the police to ask the context questions
- DVRT Team oversight
- Accounts for safety of the victim defendants

Education and Training

- Training on how to collect CONTEXT information by the police
- Training for probation on how to interview survivors about being a victim defendant

IS MY CCR / AIP DOING THE SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY THEY SHOULD?

How would you know?

CCR – Possible Future Discussion Topic

- Review a video clip or de-identified case
 - What happened? What violence occurred?
 - What was your story about it?
 - What type of domestic violence?
 - What questions do you have to learn more about the context?
 - What systemic issues were uncovered talking about this case?

Reflective Questions for Your CCR

- Do you have a **shared understanding** of the causes of domestic violence?
- How is “safety” used to justify outcomes that impact a survivor’s **“well-being and autonomy”**?
- Do you all **trust** each other? Does the **advocacy agency trust you**? If not, do you just ignore that? Why?
- Who **co-leads the CCR group/meetings**?
- Does systemic reform happen **“beyond training”**?
- How do you **include the experience and voices of survivors** in your multi-disciplinary/CCR work?
- How do you **evaluate and monitor** systemic responses?

Can you feel it?

By the Jackson 5

- Need five back-up singers to join me

- Video with lyrics available at:

<https://youtu.be/9SJ-yrqsRvE?si=Mf8cwFHsDiMWaxvM>

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Resources

The Duluth Model

www.theduluthmodel.org

Domestic Violence Turning Points

www.dvturningpoints.com

Battered Women's Justice Project

www.bwjp.org

Praxis International

www.praxisinternational.org

Melissa Petrangelo Scaia

www.domesticviolenceexpert.net

Research, Duluth Model Policies, Practices, and Programs for Criminalized Survivors

- [Blueprint for Safety – City of Duluth](#) – Policies and practices for victim defendants created in the City of Duluth
- [At a Crossroads: Developing Duluth’s Prosecution Response to Battered Women Who Fight Back](#) by Mary Asmus, JD, Assistant City Attorney, City of Duluth
- [Got Justice? Options for Prosecutors When Battered Women Fight Back](#) by Mary Asmus, JD, Assistant City Attorney, City of Duluth
- [In Their Own Words: Victims of Battering Talk About Being Arrested and Convicted](#) by Melissa Scaia, NCDBW - May 2017
- Research by [Lisa Young Larance](#) – leading researcher on women’s use of force
- [Domestic Violence Survivor’s Justice Act](#) – New York

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