Batterer Intervention Program Models and Their Approach to Intimate Partner Sexual Assault

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INTIMATE PARTNER SEXUAL ASSAULT: ADJUDICATING THIS HIDDEN DIMENSION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES
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The Duluth Model: The Leader

The Duluth Curriculum, Creating a Process of Change for Men Who Batter, was developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) of Duluth, Minnesota and is based on a psycho-educational and skills-building model delivered in a classroom format.¹ The program is designed to last twenty-eight weeks,² though the curriculum has been shortened or extended by service providers to as few as six weeks and as many as thirty-two weeks.³ The curriculum addresses eight key themes:

(1) nonviolence;
(2) Non-Threatening Behavior;
(3) Respect;
(4) Trust & Support;
(5) Honesty & Accountability;
(6) Sexual Respect;
(7) Partnership; and
(8) Negotiation & Fairness.⁴

Each topic is discussed in two to four sessions,⁵ with the initial session time devoted to a vignette or other demonstration of the abusive behavior for educational purposes, and later session time used to address individual abusive behaviors. The Family Crisis Center⁶ in Bastrop, Texas spends the first two weeks of the thematic section on sexual respect and sexual abuse, conducting educational training on the topic using video vignettes. The last two weeks of the theme are spent requiring batterers to conduct an accounting of their sexually abusive control tactics. All participants are required to complete a questionnaire indicating which of various sexually controlling and/or abusive behaviors (e.g., begging for sexual acts, using degrading sexual language, withholding sex as a punishment, etc.) they have engaged

⁵ HEALEY & SMITH, supra note 9 at 6.
⁶ All following information re: Family Crisis Center obtained from: Telephone Interview by Heather Parker with Susan Farris, Director, Family Crisis Center (June 1, 2007).
in, which they then share with the group. Group members then discuss alternative non-
controlling sexual behaviors together.

**Emerge**

In an Emerge program, the issue of sexual assault/abuse within the context of
battering is discussed first during an educational stage within a topic on “What Counts
as Violence.” During this section, participants are introduced to the various forms of
violence, including sexual violence. Appropriate and inappropriate sexual
communication, as well as sexually abusive, controlling, and alienating behaviors are
discussed, covering acts ranging from unwanted sexual attention in public, to making
partners uncomfortable during sexual encounters to rape.

During the second stage of the program, participants are required to document
and outline personal patterns of abuse. During this accounting, facilitators ask
participants questions related to their own sexually abusive, controlling or alienating
behaviors, such as whether the abuser has had affairs, sexually demeaned his partner
in public or coerced his partner into sexual encounters. This is meant to reinforce in
participants' minds the many facets of sexual abuse and/or assault that may be present
in the abuser's behavior.

**AMEND**

Like the Duluth Model and Emerge, the AMEND (Abusive Men Exploring New
Directions) curriculum includes a section on sexual violence. Participants are
introduced to various types of sexually controlling behavior and to the use of sexual
assault as a control technique. The discovery of sexual abuse tactics in any
participant's history is cause to add an additional session on sexual abuse for the entire
group. This discovery may take place during group sessions or through AMEND’s
contact with victims. With the permission of victims, AMEND maintains confidential
contact with abuse victims through victim advocates. If a victim reveals to the advocate
that she has been sexually abused by the offender, the entire group of which the
offender is a part is required to attend additional sessions on sexual violence.

**Other Inclusive Programs**

While the Duluth Model, Emerge, and AMEND are the three largest and most
often used and adapted models currently utilized by batterers intervention programs,
many organizations have chosen to develop and use their own models and curricula.

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7 All following information on Emerge obtained from: Telephone Interview by Heather Parker with Christopher
Hall, Coordinator, Emerge (June 6, 2007).
8 All following information on AMEND from: Telephone Interview by Heather Parker with Linda Petit, Executive
Director, AMEND (June 6, 2007).
9 It is important to note here that no offender is made aware that his or her partner has indicated the offender has
engaged in sexual violence. The entire group is given additional training on the topic as a means to protect the
reporting victim’s safety.
Cain Atwell & Associates\textsuperscript{10} ("Cain Atwell") in Washington State has developed an independent BIP curriculum that appears to thoroughly address the issue of intimate partner sexual violence. At Cain Atwell participants are enrolled in open-ended groups that last a minimum of one year (per state standard requirements). In order to graduate from the program, participants are required to complete mandatory assignments – similar to homework assignments – to the satisfaction of the group facilitators.

Like most other inclusive BIP programs, Cain Atwell first addresses sexual violence during an intake process where a screening is conducted for sexual deviancy. The program has noticed a substantial increase in reports of sexually deviant behaviors during their intake screening over the past ten years. During this intake, participants are given a packet of information for which they are responsible. The packet contains information on sexual abuse and assault which is later discussed during group sessions. Participants are then held accountable for their sexually violent actions through the program’s client self-abuse inventory. The self-abuse inventory is an ongoing writing process which culminates in a clarification letter detailing all of the participant’s abusive behaviors – what they did, how they did it, what types of abuse did the act entail, and where did the abuse fit on the program’s continuum of abuse. During the course of the program, participants develop seven to ten drafts of the letter as they learn more about various types of violent behavior and are forced to recognize and name as violence the acts they have committed.

Men Stopping Violence: A Program for Change\textsuperscript{11} in Decatur, Georgia is another program with a specific focus on intimate partner sexual assault. The curriculum for “A Program for Change” includes a unit on male sexual violence against women during which participants are asked to define sexual violence against women, describe the scope of the problem, describe the effects of male sexual violence against women, and identify their personal beliefs and attitudes about this violence. This program is also developing a new curriculum that includes a much larger section dealing explicitly with the issue of sexual assault within the context of battering.

Alternatives Professional Counseling, Inc. (“Alternatives”) in Washington state is yet another BIP that covers the issue of intimate partner sexual assault outside of the confines of the three most-utilized models. While Alternatives uses a newer BIP model – Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT) – which does not itself directly address the issue of sexual violence, Alternatives supplements the MRT model with additional training on this topic. In the Alternatives MRT program participants complete a workbook with sections devoted to various topics. During the course of the program, participants are introduced to the various types of sexual abuse and taught to identify modes of coercion and threats related to sexual abuse. During group counseling/treatment sessions, participants are then required to conduct an individual accounting of past behaviors related to sexual coercion using power and control wheels.

\textsuperscript{10} All following information on Cain Atwell & Associates from: Telephone Interview by Heather Parker with Peg Cain, Director, Cain Atwell & Associates (June 7, 2007).
\textsuperscript{11} Phone Interview, Dick Bathrick, Co-Founder, Men Stopping Violence (May 31, 2007).
Less Inclusive Programs

Unfortunately, while many programs include a focus on the intersection of sexual assault and battering, others fail to fully address the issue either through education or through group treatment and/or therapy. Many of the less inclusive providers include information about sexual assault during the educational portions of their program, but fail during later group sessions to hold batterers personally accountable for their sexually abusive behaviors.

For instance, the Domestic Abuse Project in Minneapolis, Minnesota has developed a twenty-two-session program divided into education and process groups. While the program includes some discussion of intimate partner sexual assault during one of the ten educational sessions, it does not appear that the issue is discussed during any of the twelve process groups unless a particular participant indicates that he has engaged in sexually violent behavior.

Similarly, Non-Violent Alternatives in Indianapolis, Indiana has developed a program based largely, though not exclusively, on the Duluth model. The Non-Violent Alternatives program confronts the issue through an educational program that identifies sexual assault as a power and control tactic, using Duluth-style vignettes. After viewing vignettes of controlling and/or violent behavior, participants are instructed on how to name and identify the abusive behaviors portrayed in the vignettes; however, participants are not required to recognize and identify their own behaviors as matching those portrayed in the vignettes.

Programs that Ignore Intimate Partner Sexual Assault

Other programs do not address the issue at all unless an individual offender is known to have engaged in sexually violent and abusive behavior. For example, NonViolence Alliance in Middleton, Connecticut runs a nine-week pre-trial diversion program for first-time domestic violence offenders, the Family Violence Education Program (FVEP). In the FVEP, sexual violence is addressed only when “appropriate,” i.e., when known sex offenders are participants in a group. Similarly, Catholic Charities Family Growth Program provides no training on the subject unless an individual offender divulges that he has engaged in sexual violence against his partner.

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12 “Therapy Programs – Men’s Services” http://www.domesticabuseproject.org/services.asp#Train
13 Phone Interview by Heather Parker with Deena Anders, Director of Communications and Community Relations, Domestic Abuse Project (June 9, 2007).
14 Phone Interview by Heather Parker with Terry Moore, Program Director, Non-Violent Alternatives (June 8, 2007).
15 Phone Interview by Heather Parker with Dave Mandel, Co-Founder, NonViolence Alliance (June 6, 2007).
16 Phone Interview by Heather Parker with Audrey Snyder, Clinical Social Worker, Catholic Charities Family Growth Program (June 4, 2007).
New Batterers Intervention Programs that Fail to Address Sexual Abuse

A growing number of providers are using two recently developed BIP Models that fail to address sexual assault/abuse – Moral Reconation Therapy and the Compassion Power Model. Moral Reconation Therapy ("MRT"), a cognitive-behavioral offender therapy model, was developed in the early 1980s;\(^{17}\) the MRT-based domestic violence treatment program, Bringing Peace to Relationships, was developed approximately fifteen years later in 1995.\(^{18}\) Though the MRT domestic violence curriculum does not address the issue of intimate partner sexual assault at any stage, it is currently being used by agencies in eighteen states,\(^{19}\) including being adopted as a pilot program by the state of Iowa. The Compassion Power program is another newly developed program currently being used by various batterers intervention programs. Like the Moral Reconation Therapy model, the Compassion Power curriculum fails to place any emphasis on sexual violence within the context of a battering relationship.

Conclusions

Knowing the model that a particular batterer intervention program utilizes can be an important indicator of whether or not a BIP addresses the topic of sexual violence. However, it should not be the only indicator used to gauge a program’s effectiveness in addressing the issue. For instance, although Alternatives Professional Counseling, Inc. uses the Moral Reconation Therapy model, which omits sexual violence training, Alternatives supplements the curriculum to ensure that the topic is addressed. While Non-Violent Alternatives (“N-V A”) uses a model based largely on a Duluth curriculum that addresses sexual violence, N-V A fails to fully address the issue in group therapy/treatment sessions. Close attention should be paid to the individual curricula of various programs in order to determine whether or not an individual BIP is fully addressing the issue of intimate partner sexual assault with offenders.

In addition, state standards can play a key role in ensuring that BIPs address intimate partner sexual assault. Currently, less than fifteen percent of states have mandatory standards for batterers intervention programs that require curricula to address the issue. State standards that do not include such a requirement should be amended, and non-mandatory standards should be made mandatory to provide better intervention services for batterers and better protections for victims.

A model curriculum can be found at:


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\(^{18}\) Id.

\(^{19}\) These states are: Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Washington. See