

Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Inc.
Batterers' Position Paper

Introduction

The Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Inc. (ICADV) recognizes domestic violence as a physically and psychologically damaging cultural, social, and criminal problem and is committed to its eradication. ICADV recognizes that violence occurs in relationships between partners of diverse sexual orientation (heterosexual and homosexual). In heterosexual relationships, the victims of domestic violence are more often women and children, while the batterer is most often the male. Domestic violence is best understood as learned behavior with consequences that negatively affect both the victim and the batterer in different ways.

Domestic violence is best understood as comprised not only of physical violence, but also of other forms of domination and control, including emotional abuse, economic abuse, sexual abuse, threats, intimidation, the use of children and male privilege. Domestic violence, which is progressive in frequency and intensity, has the potential to be lethal.

ICADV supports community responses which hold the batterer accountable for violent behavior and which offer responsible forms of treatment and education. ICADV takes the following position on Batterers' Programs:

Accountability to Domestic Violence Programs

It is crucial that Batterers' Programs collaborate with domestic violence programs which meet the ICADV peer review standards and which offer safety to the victims of domestic violence. An effective program for batterers can be implemented only when the safety of the victim is the primary concern. The local domestic violence program for victims is the recommended consulting agency in the development and monitoring of services to batterers on an on-going basis. The scrutiny which ICADV offers is based upon its expertise in understanding issues of safety for victims of domestic violence.

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Funding for Batterers' Programs

ICADV recommends:

- Batterers' Programs will not compete for limited public and private resources with domestic violence programs for victims.
- Batterers will pay for their own education/treatment whether participation is socially- or court-mandated. Batterers' Programs will not diagnose batterers with a psychopathology or disease model with the primary intent of obtaining third party payments. The ICADV opposes such diagnosis because it tends to take emphasis off the criminality and personal choice of battering behavior, thus further jeopardizing victims' safety.
- Safe housing and support services will be available to the victims and partners of program participants. In communities, where these are not otherwise available, Batterers' Programs will not begin providing services to batterers until their community establishes a meaningful system of outreach, referral, and access for victims to safe housing and other services.
- Batterers' Programs will provide sensitive outreach to partners and victims of program participants. Outreach communications will not imply that the partners' involvement is necessary to program success but should focus upon giving and receiving information and making referrals for her safety. This outreach will be considered part of the cost of operating Batterers' Programs or will be paid by the batterer directly.
- Batterers' Programs will be monitored by domestic violence programs for victims or by trained former victims of domestic violence. Cost of monitoring will be considered part of the cost of operating a program or will be paid by the batterer directly.
- Legislative initiatives for state funding will be developed in collaboration with domestic violence programs for victims.

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Court-Mandated Batterers' Programs

Domestic Violence is a crime and as such falls under the jurisdiction of the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system can initiate effective response by ordering the batterer to attend a batterers' program as one part of the legal consequences for violent behavior.

A court order to attend a batterers' program should not interfere with the batterer also receiving the full legal penalty for the criminal violence. The court must mandate clear, immediate and significant consequences for the batterer for non-compliance with attendance at the batterers' program.

Programs providing mandated intervention must establish a method of information exchange with the criminal justice system. Information exchange is equally important where the batterer is mandated by a civil court.

As representatives of the community, the criminal justice system together with batterers' programs must relay the message that domestic violence is no longer a private matter and that batterers will be held accountable for their behavior.

Standards for Batterers' Programs

The ICADV, as the primary organization of domestic violence programs, has promulgated and updated statewide standards for batterers' intervention programs which pertain to issues of safety and empowerment for victims. These standards were developed and updated in consultation with existing batterers' programs which have a commitment to accountability. ICADV continues to advocate for adoption of such standards on a statewide basis, for any batterers' program which seeks referrals, funding, or insurance coverage for their work. We encourage batterers' programs to develop additional standards in areas of importance which are not within the expertise of ICADV, and therefore not addressed in the ICADV standards.

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Assessment of Batterers' Accountability

Batterers' programs will be allies of ICADV when they assess progress and accountability by a movement from external controls such as courts and peers to internal accountability. Thus, the batterer learns to become responsible for his own behavior. Safety for victims is enhanced only when program principles and public teachings coming from the Batterers' Programs reject notions of provocation or loss of control, and assert that batterers carefully select the targets of their abuse, their victims, and choose the circumstances of their violence, including the amount of injury inflicted by their assaults, the location of those injuries, the use of weapons, the presence or absence of witnesses, and the quantum of terror accompanying the assaults. Safety for the victim is also enhanced when Batterers' Programs do not treat victims as mental health cases by labeling and treating them when the batterer is violent.

Because individuals who batter choose violence, they can also choose to stop violence and eliminate coercive and controlling tactics in their relationships with intimates.

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