

Court Checklist for Batterer Intervention Programs

Preferred arrest policies for domestic violence in Ohio have increased the number of batterers seen in criminal courts. When available, Batterer Intervention Programs* (BIPs) offer courts a treatment approach that holds batterers accountable, while striving to change their behavior. Unfortunately, poorly run or improperly constructed BIPs also can pose increased risks to victims of domestic violence. Therefore, it is important that courts understand the critical elements of effective BIPs. This guide was adapted from the Ohio Domestic Violence Network's Self-Evaluation Tool for Batterers Intervention Programs to help Ohio judges consider the quality of existing programs.

Does the program have written procedures for victim safety to:

- Screen at intake and periodically thereafter for lethality/dangerousness toward partner and children?
- Warn a victim in cases where a potential risk of harm has been identified by program staff (often referred to as the "duty to warn" policy)?
- Limit the confidentiality of BIP clients (e.g., authorizations to release information)?
- Contact victims safely and appropriately according to the procedure developed with assistance from the local domestic violence programs**?

Does the program seek input from the local domestic violence program to:

- Develop procedures for victim contact?
- Train BIP providers on domestic violence and victimization in general?
- Monitor the BIP through observation by skilled staff trained in the dynamics of domestic violence?
- Provide interventions for women who are arrested for domestic violence, including procedures that determine the primary aggressor and protect victims from being placed in groups with batterers?

Does the BIP have written procedures for providing information to the courts that specify:

- Information exchange between BIP staff and probation officers, judges, court clerks, or another designated agent?
- The necessary information to effectively monitor batterers (e.g., attendance, any non-compliance or lack of progress)?
- Timelines for regular reporting (e.g., weekly or monthly)?
- Requirements for additional reports in exceptional circumstances?

Does the program work collaboratively within the community? Is the program:

- Represented on the local domestic violence taskforce or other coordinating efforts?
- Included in the inter-agency protocols that clarify roles and responsibilities between law enforcement, service providers, and the courts within the community?
- Involved in collaborative efforts to provide education to other professionals and in the community?
- Able to clearly explain the process for receiving referral from all possible sources, including appropriate contact persons and the procedural requirements for each agent (e.g., the information required for a referral and timing)?
- Able to place victim safety as first priority?

Does the program support BIP clients by:

- Informing them of program policies and procedures?
- Providing or making referrals for services to address common problems such as substance abuse, mental health, and or physical disability?
- Providing outreach to underserved populations by building collaborative relationship with diverse communities?
- Ensuring client participation is for a minimum length of 52 weeks with 1.5 hours sessions?
- Including group education and intervention strategies?
- Ensuring regular oversight of sessions by supervisors experienced in batterer interventions?

Does the program support staff with regular, in-service training:

- That includes a core written curriculum that focuses on the behavior of a batterer as a system of oppression, with stopping all forms of abuse and victim safety as the primary goals?
- That teaches the power imbalance between men and women?
- Based on a male/female, co-facilitator model?
- That offers training opportunities for staff to further their knowledge and skills in domestic violence in general as well as in batterer intervention?

Does the program demonstrate its efficacy by:

- Basing its practices on accepted clinical interventions and domestic violence research?
- Establishing measures to evaluate program effectiveness on clients?
- Developing long-term outcome measures on batterer recidivism?
- Working closely with the local research community and domestic violence programs?

* Batterer intervention program refers to a program that provides treatment for male domestic violence perpetrators.

** Domestic violence program refers to a community-based program that directly serves victims, including shelters and other agencies that advocates for victims and their children.

About the Ohio Domestic Violence Network (ODVN)

ODVN is a statewide coalition of domestic violence programs, supportive agencies, and concerned individuals organizing to ensure the elimination of domestic violence by: providing technical assistance, resources, information, and training to all who address or are affected by domestic violence; and promoting social and systems change through public policy, public awareness, and education initiatives.

For more detailed information, contact ODVN at (800) 934-9840 or info@odvn.org. The ODVN Standards for Batterers Interventions and an accompanying Self-Evaluation Guide are available online at www.odvn.org.