
Virginia Standards for Batterer Intervention Programs

Responding to Male Violence Against Women

We believe that Batterer Intervention Programs in Virginia make a difference in interrupting violence and abuse.

The Virginia Standards for Batterer Intervention Programs are the result of a collaborative effort between the Coalition for the Treatment of Abusive Behavior (C-TAB) and Virginians Against Domestic Violence (VADV). Together, these two groups built upon the work of the Virginia Commission on Family Violence Prevention to develop standards for effective batterer intervention services in order to ensure that the goals of victim safety, offender accountability, and community collaboration are the focus of these services.

I. Background and History

In 1994, the Virginia General Assembly established the Virginia Commission on Family Violence Prevention pursuant to House Joint Resolution 279. The Commission was charged to: study family violence; identify existing services and resources to address family violence; investigate ways to coordinate the delivery of services and resources; increase public awareness of available services; and, determine services, resources and legislation needed to address, prevent and treat family violence.

In 1997, Senate Joint Resolution 272 requested that the Commission develop standards of practice for statewide Batterer Intervention Programs. The Commission formed the Batterer Intervention Task Group, a collaborative group representing diverse multidisciplinary interests, to begin the process of developing certification standards for batterer intervention services in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

In 1998, the Commission introduced legislation during that year's session of the General Assembly that would have charged the Department of Criminal Justice Services with the responsibility to promulgate standards for Batterer Intervention Programs. The legislation was tabled to explore whether such standards would be more effectively developed and monitored by the private sector.

This shift forged the opportunity for the development of a working partnership between an existing coalition of batterer intervention service providers and domestic violence victim service providers. In May 1998, the Coalition for the Treatment of Abusive Behaviors (C-TAB) and Virginians Against Domestic Violence (VADV) proposed to the Commission on Family Violence Prevention that these two private agencies take over the leadership of the standards development. The Commission endorsed this proposal.

The Coalition for the Treatment of Abusive Behaviors (C-TAB) was created in June 1994 to provide an informal gathering of statewide batterer intervention service providers. Initially, the group met to share statewide expertise and staff cases, seeking improvements in the overall outcomes of intervention services for domestic violence offenders. In 1998, C-TAB became more

formally organized to address statewide batterer intervention efforts and to enhance the coordination and communication among statewide batterer service providers. At the time these standards were drafted, C-TAB was comprised of over 35 individual and/or institutional service providers statewide.

Since 1979, Virginians Against Domestic Violence (VADV), the state domestic violence coalition, has been committed to the elimination of domestic violence. Their work includes: technical assistance to community-based domestic violence programs, batterer intervention programs, and related professional organizations; training and resources to improve the professional response to domestic violence; public awareness materials on a variety of family violence related subjects; a statewide, 24-hour, toll-free Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline; and, monitoring and development of public policies that affect battered women and their children. Through education and advocacy, VADV endeavors to ensure that all survivors of family violence in Virginia have access to safety and the support services they need.

The mission of the Virginia Community Criminal Justice Association (VCCJA) is to enhance public safety through the development and expansion of pretrial, community corrections, and other criminal justice programs in the commonwealth of Virginia. Community corrections and pretrial services allow an individual to remain in the community while under supervision. Rather than filling jails, they work, attend school, receive treatment, pay taxes, pay child support, pay restitution and pay court fines and costs.

The partnership formed in 1998 between Virginians Against Domestic Violence and the Coalition for the Treatment of Abusive Behaviors was a natural working relationship, blending the expertise of victim service and offender service providers. This group was supported by the early work of the Commission on Family Violence Prevention's Batterer Intervention Task Group and used their early draft version of standards as a starting point. The C-TAB/VADV Standards Committee began to meet monthly in the summer of 1998 to create Virginia Standards for Batterer Intervention Services. In 2003, VCCJA joined the C-TAB/VADV partnership to enhance the offender's accountability to the greater community.

II. Purpose

The purpose of these standards is to establish monitoring and certification criteria for Batterer Intervention Programs that provide services for perpetrators of domestic violence in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The purpose of Batterer Intervention Program standards is to aid in the reduction and elimination of domestic violence by supporting services that establish that domestic violence is a crime and will not be tolerated.

These standards were written to address programs that provide services to men who abuse women with whom they are or have been intimate. Both Virginia and national statistics confirm that the majority of batterers are men who commit violent acts against women. The causes of abusive behavior and intervention techniques best suited for women and men who batter their same sex partners remain unsettled, and little research has addressed these populations. The drafters of these

standards acknowledge the need for standards for programs for gay men and lesbians who batter and for women who batter their male partners. Such standards should be developed in the future.

It should be noted that the standards stated here are meant to be a reference point from which batterer intervention programs (BIPs) in Virginia should establish a minimum level of program performance. These standards are not meant to specify what psycho-educational materials should be used by a BIP, nor are they meant to limit programs from incorporating more into their curricula than stated here.

III. Nature of Batterer Intervention Programs

Batterer Intervention Programs are a court-ordered sanction and often an alternative to incarceration. The confidentiality of program participants is restricted, and program personnel shall conceptualize and describe their work with batterers primarily as treatment focused on intervention and behavioral change.

The mission of Batterer Intervention Programs in Virginia is to aid in the elimination domestic violence by providing services to batterers, promote safety and justice for victims of domestic violence, and affect social change leading to cultural values that prohibit rather than support abuse within intimate relationships.

Rationale for Standards

The Virginia Certification Standards for Batterer Intervention Programs are intended to:

- Maximize the safety of victims and their children
- Assure that batterers will receive services that hold them accountable for their behavior
- Aid in the reduction and elimination of domestic violence by providing standards for effective and accountable intervention programs to change the behavior of batterers, while protecting their victims
- Establish program elements for the approach to batterer intervention that will be made uniform throughout the state
- Provide criteria against which the performance and efficacy of a program can be measured and the need for programmatic changes assessed
- Promote inter-agency communication and collaboration regarding batterer intervention and victim safety
- Provide stimulation for data collection and research, the results of which may be used to improve intervention methods
- Inform the public about the nature of intervention programs
- Provide support for batterer intervention service providers to collaborate with victim advocates, share expertise, and seek common ground

IV. Accountability

Program Accountability

- Programs are responsible for working with the criminal justice system to ensure that there is appropriate monitoring and consequences for batterers' noncompliance with the program

- Each program shall invite a cooperative and accountable working relationship with local battered women's advocates
- Procedures shall be established for collaboration with community partners regarding the following: information sharing, mutual problem solving, victim safety issues, accountability to the criminal justice system, program evaluation/improvement, and for the external monitoring of Batterer Intervention Programs
- Programs shall establish clear and expeditious lines of communication with the justice system
- Exchanges of critical information shall be timely and lead to uniform, consistent responses
- Programs shall track batterers and apply immediate consequences for noncompliance
- All Batterer Intervention Programs shall engage in internal monitoring to ensure that the program joins and supports the community based effort to stop violence against women and to hold batterers accountable
- Batterer Intervention Programs shall compile adequate documentation to ensure continuity of interventions and facilitate communication with community partners
- Such documentation also may be used to establish a database for research purposes, provided that the maintenance of the data and the research based on the data are carried out in a manner that ensures victim safety
- Programs shall include components to target prevention including, the development of materials and programs to: increase community awareness of domestic violence and available resources; and, reinforce community support for batterer accountability

Batterer Accountability

The optimal outcome of programs is for batterers who complete the program to comply with the following:

- Stop all forms of abusive behavior
- Hold themselves accountable for abusive behaviors
- Recognize that domestic violence and all forms of coercive behaviors are wrong
- Recognize that they are solely responsible for their abusive and violent behavior
- Understand that abusive behavior has negative effects and consequences
- Cease any denial or minimization of their abusive behaviors or blaming the victim

As critical components of batterer accountability, programs shall require participants to do the following:

- Sign a contractual agreement with an intervention program
- Pay a fee for intervention services. If a batterer is determined to be indigent, fees may include restitution to the community or other payment

Programs shall administratively enforce batterer accountability through their tracking, monitoring, and reporting functions.

V. Program Principles

- The safety of victims is the Batterer Intervention Program's highest priority.
- Family Abuse is a crime.

- Domestic Violence is not an illness. Therefore, there is no “cure”. Services are aimed at changing behavior.
- Programs shall focus on ending violence.
- Domestic Violence cannot be condoned, and batterers must be held accountable for their behavior.
- Batterer Intervention Programs represent one link in the chain of a comprehensive community response to end domestic violence and are only effective in collaboration within the larger intervention system.
- Program providers shall cooperate with interrelated agencies, such as law enforcement, domestic violence programs, victim advocates, the courts, Commonwealth's attorneys, probation, social services, substance abuse and mental health services, and community task forces /coalitions.
- Some batterers are not appropriate for Batterer Intervention Programs.
- Batterers should be educated that the abuse impacts not only the identified victims but the children as well.
- The responsibility for payment for services is an important part of the batterers’ accountability for their violent behavior.
- Program providers shall make every reasonable effort to provide for individual batterers’ differences and needs.
- As knowledge about current, effective intervention methods are discovered, philosophical and programmatic changes may be necessary to improve programs.
- Programs are expected to recognize that collusion and victim-blaming are detriments to effective interventions and have the potential for re-victimizing domestic violence victims.
- Standards are designed to ensure that each program addresses its jurisdiction's unique needs.

VI. Program Structure

Program Format and Structure

Batterer Intervention Programs are required to use groups as the primary source of intervention, the purpose of which is to educate batterers and change behavior. The goals of the intervention program shall be: the cessation of batterers’ coercive, dominating, violent, and abusive behavior; and, the safety of the victims and their children. Research has indicated that group intervention is the most effective model for batterer services. Service providers, through their respective programs, may decide whether groups will be open (accepting new members on an ongoing basis) or closed sessions.

Inappropriate Interventions: Providers may not begin batterer intervention utilizing couples or family counseling and may not have offenders and victims in Batterer Intervention Program groups together. Programs which attribute the primary cause of domestic abuse to anger are insufficient and inappropriate.

A limited number of batterers may need individual counseling. Individual treatment may be provided on an individual, supplemental basis under special circumstances but not as a substitute for group intervention.

Intake

The Batterer Intervention Program (BIP) is responsible for performing intake procedures. A written assessment of an individual's suitability for the BIP will be made during the intake and may be made in part based on a recommendation from a local community corrections program or any other outside referring agency.

The following information shall be collected at intake and included in the batterer's file:

- Identifying Information
Name, current address, and telephone and/or pager number of batterer
Social security number
Employer's name, address, and phone number
Partner and/or victim's name, address, and telephone number
- Information on the batterer's children and partner's children or other children in or outside the home with whom the batterer has contact (including name, age, frequency of contact, and with whom the child is living and the address)
- Emergency family or contact address and phone number
- Arrest, conviction, batterer intervention and other treatment history
- Name and number of referral source
If applicable, the name and number of the local community corrections officer to whom the batterer has been assigned
- Consent for Release of Information
At intake, the batterer shall sign a Consent for Release of information that permits information to be released to the victim/partner or designated representative, any applicable agency of the justice system, related service providers, and others as appropriate or needed.
- Statement of Confidentiality
At intake, the batterer shall sign a statement of confidentiality that notifies the batterer of the program's policy, circumstances under which information may be released, and to whom information may be released.

Timeliness of Intake

- Programs shall have a policy that the batterer be required to contact and make an appointment for intake within five (5) working days of the referral to participate in a Batterer Intervention Program.
- If the batterer does not make contact in five (5) working days, the Batterer Intervention Program shall contact the referral source and report the noncompliance.
- The Batterer Intervention Program shall begin intake and assessment procedures within ten (10) working days of the initial contact from the batterer.

Assessment

An assessment of appropriateness for admission to the program shall be performed prior to participation in the program. At a minimum, the assessment should include the following:

- Assessment of risk/dangerousness/lethality
- Most recent violent episode
- Reason for referral, including details of the violent episode and precipitating events
- Documentation of batterer's attitudes toward abuse (i.e., sense of responsibility, remorse, justification of behavior)

- Perception of internal/external control over actions, behaviors and emotions
- Presence of, conditions of, and compliance with protective orders
- History of abuse against partner(s), frequency and severity of abuse, history of violence in his family of origin, and a generalized violence history
- Criminal history as reported by the batterer
- Current social network/social connectedness or isolation
- History of depression and/or other emotional disorders, including suicidal and/or homicidal ideation
- Proximity and access to the victim
- Current status of relationship and attitude toward that status
- Degree of possessiveness towards the victim including, if possible, any forced periods of isolation of victim and children
- History of injury to pets or animals
- Relationship with children including, history of physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse
- Possession of, access to, or a history of using weapons
- Substance use/abuse, including its relationship to violent behaviors
- Signs of severe mental health problems or disruptive behaviors

Documentation

- Referrals made for further chemical dependency evaluations and treatment
- Referrals made for further evaluations and appropriate treatment for severe mental health problems
- Corroboration of assessment information from referral source or other sources, as possible

Rejection from Program

Programs have the right to deny services to batterers based on the assessment criteria.

If the program rejects a court-mandated batterer for intervention services, it must advise referral source of the basis for rejection and, where appropriate, may make recommendations for other intervention, treatment services, or criminal justice action.

Notification must occur within three (3) working days of the rejection.

The Batterer Intervention Program may not reject any batterer based on race, class, age, personal disabilities, religion, educational attainment, ethnicity, national origin, or ability to pay.

Program Contract

The Batterer Intervention Program must require that each batterer enter into a contract for services. The program shall review the contract with the batterer and require that he sign it. The batterer's signature indicates that he agrees to comply with the terms of the contract.

The contract must include both participant and program obligations and must include the following:

- ***Program Information***
 - The length of the program, attendance policies, and consequences for deficient attendance
 - Specified fees, methods of payment, and the consequences of failure to comply with payment agreements
 - A copy of the program's drug and alcohol policy
- ***Participant obligations***
 - Compliance with the program's attendance policy

- Compliance with program rules
- Compliance with program expectations including, participation and homework
- Cessation of violent, abusive, threatening, and controlling behaviors (including stalking) against victim and/or children

- Respectful behavior toward other group members, group facilitators, and program staff
- Compliance with program policy to bring no weapons to group
- Development of and adherence to a safety plan as outlined in the curriculum
- Compliance with all court orders and protective orders
- Agreement that the batterer will not seek the disclosure of any information about the victim, either directly from the victim or in any judicial or administrative proceeding
- Agreement to be drug and alcohol free while attending program services
- Compliance with financial agreements made with the program

- ***Program obligations***
 - Provide services appropriate to participant's needs
 - Provide a copy of all written agreements
 - Notify the batterer of changes in group times and schedules
 - Report to the court, local community corrections program, or other appropriate authority regarding participant's progress and compliance with court orders and program rules
 - Report to the appropriate person(s) including the victim, courts, local community corrections, or other justice system agency:
 - any bodily harm or threats of bodily harm to the victim or any other person
 - any threats or attempts to commit suicide
 - any belief that child abuse or neglect has occurred
 - Report regularly to the batterer regarding his progress
 - Provide fair and humane treatment

Victim Contact

Purpose: The goal of intervention programs is to stop the violence and increase victim safety. For that reason, victim or partner contacts are an integral component of an accountable community response to domestic violence.

Providers shall develop mechanisms for referrals between victim service providers and Batterer Intervention Programs that ensure that victims are offered outreach, advocacy, safety planning, and other appropriate assistance while batterers are in their programs.

Attempted victim contact should occur within 10 business days of the batterer's intake.

- Victim contact should offer victims information about:

Batterer intervention services
Program structure and content
Program limitations

Information for contacting appropriate agency with any future concerns

Victim contact should also address safety of children and other members of household.

The provider shall make every effort to notify the victim/partner immediately when a batterer is terminated from a program. This contact shall be direct (by phone or in person) and shall be documented. If efforts to contact the victim by phone or in person fail, a letter must be sent.

Non-Compliance

Non Compliance is the failure of a participant to comply with terms of Batterer Intervention Program Contract as outlined in Section VI. A Program may determine that a participant is not in compliance when the following circumstances occur:

- Program receives reports of further acts of violence against victim and/or children
- Participant has deficient attendance
- Participant has failed to pay fees
- Participant has violated group rules

Programs must establish consequences for non-compliance. Examples of options for such consequences include:

- Extra sessions
- Re-entering the program from the beginning
- Moving out of the house shared with the victim
- Restitution
- Community service
- Referrals to the justice system for legal sanctions
- Termination from group

Termination for Non-compliance

Batterer Intervention Programs shall agree to notify the referral source by phone or fax of an offender's termination within two (2) business days. The provider shall make every effort to notify the victim/partner immediately when a batterer is terminated from a program. This contact shall be direct (by phone or in person) and shall be documented. If efforts to contact the victim by phone or in person fail, a letter must be sent.

Completion

- Batterer Intervention Programs will establish criteria for completion based upon the participant's compliance with the program's contract, group rules, and other requirements. Completion of the program does not guarantee future nonviolence.
- Communications with courts, the batterer, victim, and current partner of batterer, shall specify that the batterer has complied with program requirements and shall not imply that the batterer has been rehabilitated or is a "graduate."

Concerns regarding a participant who has completed shall be documented and forwarded appropriate agents in the community.

VII. Program Curriculum

The goal of Batterer Intervention Program curricula is to end the violence and abuse. Programs shall have written curricula that define topics and content of sessions. Curriculum content shall, at minimum, include the following:

- Identification of all forms of physical, emotional, economic, sexual and verbal abuse and violence
- Impact of domestic violence on the victim and the abuser
- Impact of domestic violence on children including, children who are abused and children

who witness domestic violence

- Emphasis on the responsibility of the batterer for his violence and abuse
 - Identification of personal, societal, and cultural values and beliefs that legitimize and sustain violence and oppression
 - Alternatives to violent and controlling behaviors
 - Identification of healthy relationships
 - Promotion of accountability, self-examination, negotiation, and fairness
 - Examination of the relationships between substance abuse and domestic violence
 - Examination of the relationships between mental illness and domestic violence
- Identification of the behavioral, emotional, and physical cues that precede escalating anger

Attendance Policy

Programs must have a written attendance policy that defines “completion,” “missed groups,” and “make-up.” This policy will address the need for batterers to complete all 36 hours. Programs may develop individualized procedures for make-up groups.

Group Size

Programs will have a maximum of 15 regularly attending members per group session. Two group facilitators are required for groups with more than 10 members.

Program Duration

The minimum duration of a Batterer Intervention Program shall be 36 hours during a minimum of 18 weeks. Individual sessions with batterers (i.e., intake, orientation, evaluation, counseling, etc.) shall not be included in the required 36 hours. Longer programs are encouraged where feasible.

VIII. Administrative Guidelines

Fair Employment Laws

Programs shall comply with all applicable state and federal employment and anti-discrimination laws regarding their employment and personnel policies and practices.

Record keeping

Each program shall maintain a case record management system on batterers receiving program services.

- Each file shall contain an assessment form, a signed program contract, a signed statement of the nature and limits of confidentiality, and signed release forms.
- Each file shall document all significant actions, decisions, and services rendered.

The program shall document in writing all noncompliance with the intervention contract between the batterer and the program, relevant court orders, or group rules.

Victim and child safety is of primary concern and any information not obtained from the batterer regarding the victim and children shall be kept in a separate confidential file.

Fees

Payment for services is an important part of the batterer’s accountability for violent behavior. Batterer Intervention Programs must be financially structured to allow for delivery of a quality program. A fee for services, no matter how minimal, shall be assessed and paid by the batterer. If a

batterer is determined to be indigent, fees may include restitution to the community or other payment.

Each program shall have a clearly defined payment policy including provisions for assurances for indigent batterers. The payment of fees will be made a condition of the completion of the program.

Confidentiality

All programs shall develop policies regarding the programs' confidentiality and provide notice of the policies to all who provide direct services and those with access to participant records. Program staff shall not disclose, without the consent of the participant, any confidential communications made by a participant to the program staff during the course of the program, and program staff shall not disclose any confidential information acquired through that individual's employment. However, limitations to confidentiality include the following:

Batterers shall sign a Consent for Release of Information that permits information to be released to the victims/partners and/or their designated representatives, any applicable agency of the justice system, related service providers, and others as appropriate or needed.

Releases of information may be restricted to attendance records, compliance, criminal behavior including, violent behavior or threats of violent behavior that may be dangerous to the lives of others, and violation of intervention contract.

Program staff has the duty to warn third parties about the potential for violence or other serious harm directed against them. Virginia Code §54.1-2400.1 outlines the scope of this duty, actions which discharge this duty, and applicable civil liability protections for proper discharge of this duty. If the intake evaluation or subsequent contact reveals suspected incidents of child, elder, or disabled adult abuse or neglect, program staff must report this to Child Protective Services or Adult Protective Services, respectively.

All employees and contract workers shall sign written agreements of confidentiality, and those agreements shall be kept in their files for at least four years.

Programs shall have a policy, which addresses confidentiality between group members.

Policies and Procedures

Manual:

Each program shall develop an administrative manual that incorporates all written policies and procedures. The manual shall contain all internal policies and procedures governing operation of the program including, but not be limited to, the following items:

- Batterer Intervention Program Standards
- Written job descriptions for all employees
- Employee hiring, retention and termination
- Confidentiality policy
- Duty to Warn policy
- Organizational chart
- Code of ethical conduct for staff
- Sexual harassment policy
- Detailed emergency plan for facilitators (e.g., disruptive or dangerous participants) ("Call 911 is not sufficient) that includes victim notification, when appropriate
- Program evaluation policy
- Drug free work place policy

All program employees shall have access to a copy of the policy and procedure manual and will sign to verify that they have read it.

All program employees shall receive training on the materials included in the policy and procedure manual as a part of their employee orientation (see personnel section).

Cooperation with Other Agencies and Community

Each program shall maintain collaborative working relationships with domestic violence programs serving battered women and criminal justice agencies, as well as with social services and mental health and substance abuse service providers who are involved in court cases and working with victims.

To maximize community coordination, accountability and service delivery, programs shall enter into collaborative agreements with community providers. Each program shall have a written collaborative agreement with the Domestic Violence Program(s) in the program's service area. These agreements shall be reviewed bi-annually by the parties to ensure ongoing viability.

Communication with Referral Source

The provider shall assure that releases appropriate to the two-way flow of information between the provider and the referral source are on file.

The provider will determine appropriateness and acceptance of referral and communicate decision to referral source within 14 days of intake assessment.

- Referral sources must formally develop a mechanism to notify providers about batterers referred for services.

The provider shall, at minimum, provide monthly progress reports to the referral source. Progress reports shall include any batterer non-compliance.

- The provider shall provide formal notification of program completion to the referring agency within 30 days of completion or upon request.

The provider shall provide notification of termination from program within 2 business days.

IX. Personnel

Employee Files

Program staff records must contain the following information regarding each staff member, direct service volunteer and all contract workers:

Name, address, date of birth, and a recent clear photograph or photocopy of a valid driver's license

Name and contact information of closest relative and emergency contact

Documentation of Criminal History and Sex Offender Registry check (State Police Form SP167); licensed practitioners are exempt from this Standard

A signed job description

Completed resume and/or application for employment
Documentation of required education, training and experience

Education/Training Qualifications

All staff providing direct services employed by certified Batterer Intervention Programs must meet the following educational/work experience requirements:

A bachelor's degree or education and/or experience relative to the position

At least three months of weekly direct co-facilitation or observation of batterer intervention groups under the supervision of staff in a certified program

- A minimum of 32 hours of domestic violence training which must include the following content:
 - Theory and dynamics of domestic violence
 - Historical and societal context of domestic violence
 - Assessments for risks of homicide, suicide, or further domestic violence
 - Information on state and federal laws and procedures pertaining to family abuse
 - Significance of a coordinated community response to domestic violence
 - Unique role of a facilitator within batterer groups
 - Teaching non-controlling alternatives to violent and controlling behavior
 - Understanding and preventing collusion
 - Relationship between substance abuse and domestic violence
 - Relationship between mental illness and domestic violence
 - History of battered women's movement in Virginia
 - Safety planning with victims of domestic violence
 - Effects of domestic violence on victims
 - Effects of witnessing domestic violence and the impact of physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse on children
 - Relationship between child abuse (particularly child sexual abuse) and domestic violence
 - Reporting requirements for child and elder abuse
 - Community resources responding to domestic violence, including the services of the local domestic violence program and the Statewide Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline
 - Overview of the research related to the effectiveness of a variety of treatment models for batterer intervention
 - Orientation and training specific to the program or agency

Alternative qualifications may be considered on a case by case basis by the certifying body.

Of the 32 hours of domestic violence training, 16 hours must be received prior to the staff person providing unsupervised direct services. The remaining 16 hours of training must be provided within the first 3 months of employment.

Volunteer Staff

All volunteers providing direct services in a certified program must be working under the supervision and direction of staff in a certified program and must meet the following educational/work experience requirements:

At least three months of weekly direct co-facilitation or observation of batterer intervention groups under the supervision and direction of staff in a certified program

A minimum of 16 hours of domestic violence training which must include the following content:

- ▶ Theory and dynamics of domestic violence
 - ▶ Historical and societal context of domestic violence
 - ▶ Assessment for risks of homicide, suicide, or further domestic violence
 - ▶ Information on state and federal laws and procedures pertaining to family abuse
 - ▶ Significance of a coordinated community response to domestic violence
 - ▶ Unique role of a facilitator within batterers groups
 - ▶ Teaching non-controlling alternatives to violent and controlling behavior
 - ▶ Understanding and preventing collusion
 - ▶ Relationship between substance abuse and domestic violence
 - ▶ Relationship between mental illness and domestic violence
 - ▶ Relationship between child abuse and domestic violence
 - ▶ History of battered women's movement in Virginia
 - ▶ Safety planning with victims of domestic violence
 - ▶ Effects of domestic violence on victims
- Effects of witnessing domestic violence and the impact of physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse on children
- ▶ Community resources responding to domestic violence, including the services of the local domestic violence program and the Statewide Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline
 - ▶ Overview of the research related to the effectiveness of a variety of treatment models for batterer intervention
 - ▶ Orientation and training specific to the program or agency
 - ▶ Reporting requirements for child and elder abuse

All 16 hours of training must be received prior to the volunteer providing unsupervised direct services. Interns providing unsupervised direct services shall meet the same requirements as volunteer staff.

Continuing Education

All direct service staff and volunteers shall complete 12 hours of continuing education annually in any of the following areas as they pertain to batterer intervention:

- Domestic violence and substance abuse
- Domestic violence and the law
- Domestic violence and sexual abuse
- Other issues which pertain to domestic violence

Experiential education, such as:

- Court attendance during domestic violence hearings or trial
- Ride-along with local police
- Work with a domestic violence service provider, including attendance at a volunteer training and observation of their hotline
- Attendance at a local coordinating council meeting
- Attendance at a fatality review team meeting

Criminal History

- Potential program staff and direct service volunteers shall not have engaged in conduct resulting in a criminal conviction deemed to impair the individual's ability to provide services. Potential program staff and direct service volunteers with criminal convictions (felony or misdemeanor)

may be hired if the program director is satisfied that the potential staff member or direct service volunteer can function as a professional and has remained crime free for a period of at least five (5) years.

- No program staff shall be under any form of community supervision, administrative or otherwise, by any law enforcement agency or county, state or federal authority. This includes but is not limited to, any form of misdemeanor or felony probation, community control, pre-trial diversion, or parole.
- No program staff may be the subject of a protective order or any other judicial restraint within the last five (5) years.
- Program staff shall be free of criminal convictions while providing domestic violence intervention and treatment.
- All program staff shall undergo a local criminal background check, Virginia Criminal Information Network (VCIN) check, a National Criminal Information Center (NCIC) check, and Child Abuse Registry check. Licensed health care providers (i.e. LCSW's or LPC's) are exempt.

Racial, Ethnic and Gender Composition

In order to provide culturally, racially, linguistically and gender appropriate services, intervention programs, to the extent possible, should hire staff whose cultural/racial backgrounds and gender reflect those of the individuals within the larger community served.

Ethical Standards

Program staff and direct service volunteers working with perpetrators of domestic violence must meet the ethical standards outlined by their professional groups e.g., American Psychological Association, National Association of Social Workers, American Association of Pastoral Counselors, American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy, American Counseling Association, or the American Medical Association. Unaffiliated and unlicensed practitioners must adopt a professional ethical standard.

In addition to the above standards, program staff and direct service volunteers must meet and maintain the following standards:

- No program shall employ a convicted perpetrator of domestic violence or person who has been the subject of a protective order because of domestic violence unless that individual has successfully completed a certified Batterer Intervention Program or has remained violence-free for a period of at least five (5) years.
- Program staff and direct service volunteers must be free of an ongoing substance abuse problem or involvement in substance abuse treatment. Current use of drugs/alcohol must not impair the provider's ability to function as a responsible and competent professional.
- Program staff and direct service volunteers shall not engage in sexual conduct with program participants.

X. Program Evaluation and Accountability

Batterer Intervention Programs shall develop evaluation mechanisms that address compliance with standards, program policies, and procedures. This policy shall provide for both an internal program evaluation and an external evaluation of services.

Self Evaluation

The internal evaluation of services shall include the review of internal data that offers an indication of program effectiveness for the public. Internal data includes referral, dropout, and completion rates. Internal evaluation also shall include feedback from former program participants and, with sufficient protection, from their victims/partners.

External Evaluation

The external evaluation of services shall include an assessment from domestic violence programs and other related agencies to provide an objective evaluation of the program from someone outside the program. Evaluation **may** include the observation of group sessions or tapes of sessions by battered women's advocates.

XI. Program Certification and Monitoring

Batterer Intervention Program (BIP) Certification Board

The Certification Board is responsible for overseeing the Certification Process for Batterer Intervention Programs.

- The Certification Board is responsible for developing recommendations for revisions.
- The Certification Board is responsible for reviewing and approving all applications through the selection of rotating teams comprised of one (1) BIP provider, (1) Domestic Violence Advocate, and one (1) Representative of VCCJA. Each application will be reviewed by a team consisting of representatives from each member organization. Representatives will not review applications from an organization with which they have a conflict of interest.

The Certification Board is responsible for developing and maintaining the following documents related to Certification:

- A Certification Application
- An Evaluation Form for the Certification Review Team to use to determine how effectively Batterer Intervention Programs meet the Certification Criteria
- Guidelines for Site Visits
- Certification Documentation, including Certificates and a list of Certified Batterer Intervention Programs.

The Certification Board will ensure the provision of training and technical assistance to Batterer Intervention Programs for the purpose of assisting Programs in achieving Certification.

The Certification Board shall consist of seventeen Members:

- Five representatives from C-TAB

- Five representatives from (open)
- Five representatives from VCCJA
- Two at large members

The Certification Board members shall be selected for two, two-year terms; however, At Large members will be nominated and elected by the Board for terms of one year. Ideally the At large member shall not be a Certified BIP provider, nor a certified Domestic Violence Program advocate, nor a Representative of VCCJA that falls within the DCJS guidelines as they are already represented on the Board

Certification Board Members shall:

- a) Respect Program individuality;
- b) Attend Certification training and Board meetings;
- c) Be available for site visits; and
- d) Demonstrate an understanding of the philosophy and principles of the Virginia Standards of Batterer Intervention Programs

In addition, representatives from member organizations shall also

- a) Have experience working with a Batterer Intervention Program or Domestic Violence Program or be a member of C-TAB or VCCJA; and
- b) Represent the diversity of the C-TAB and VCCJA membership

Certification Process

Application

Any Program desiring Certification shall complete and submit a Certification Application Package. The Certification Application Package will include all required documentation and the non-refundable Certification Fee. These applications become the property of the Batterer Intervention Certification Board.

The Certification Application shall include:

Documentation that Batterer Intervention Program meet the legal requirements to operate in the Commonwealth of Virginia; and Materials that enable the Certification Review Team to make a reasonable determination as to the Program's compliance with Virginia Standards for Batterer Intervention Programs.

- Batterer Intervention Programs that do not meet all Certification Criteria at the time of application must submit a Plan of Action. Each Plan of Action must detail how the program will come into compliance with the Criteria within 90 days.

Programs are encouraged to involve staff, Board of Directors, Advisory Boards and other governing bodies in the completion of the Certification Application and to use this process as a tool for program evaluation. Programs are also encouraged to seek technical assistance from Certification Board members, C-TAB members, , VCCJA members, other Batterer Intervention Programs, Domestic Violence Programs, and Community Corrections Agencies.

- The Certification Application Package or Renewal Form is available on line at vabipboard.org Certified programs will be notified when the renewal is due.

A completed Certification Application Package, including one original and three copies of the complete application, must be received by the BIP Certification Board. .

Committee Review of Applications

The Certification Review Team will score the Certification Application Package submitted by each Program and will make one of the following determinations:

Certified

If the application indicates that the Batterer Intervention Program is meeting the Standards established for Virginia Batterer Intervention Programs, the program will be certified for a one-year period.

Denied

The application indicates that the Batterer Intervention Program does not meet the minimum standards established for Virginia Batterer Intervention Programs.

Denial of Certification:

Certification may be also denied to programs that clearly do not meet the definition of a Batterer Intervention Program and do not provide all of the required program components.

The Certification Review Team will provide a written explanation outlining why Certification was denied. This decision may be appealed according to the procedure outlined on page 19 of this manual.

Program Non-Compliance and De-Certification

Throughout the initial Certification process and at any time the Batterer Intervention Program has achieved Certification, the Certification Board may review information relative to a Program's performance or failure to adhere to Standards.

The Certification Board shall have the authority to suspend or revoke any Certification Status issued by the Certification Review Team or deny an initial application or application to renew, based on (but not limited to) the following:

- Violation of the Standards by a program or employee of a program holding Certification. Violations include deliberate or repeated acts of non-compliance under these Standards or acts found to endanger the victim and/or partner, or others, or acts of gross negligence.
- Misrepresentation of any material fact in obtaining Certification Status or subsequent approvals.

The Certification Board shall develop and maintain a protocol for responding to information about Certified Batterer Intervention Programs' compliance with Standards. This protocol shall be subject to approval by the C-TAB membership and the VCCJA Board.

Appeal of Certification Decision

This procedure is used to appeal a Certification Determination.

- 1) Batterer Intervention Programs may appeal the decision of the Certification Review Team by mailing an appeal letter to the Certification Board within 30 days of receiving notice of the Program's Certification Status. The appeal letter should include the basis for the appeal and any additional information for consideration by the Board.
- 2) The Certification Board will assess the appeal, make a final determination, at the next scheduled board meeting.
- 3) Batterer Intervention Programs and the Certification Review Team will be notified by the Board in writing of the final Certification Status of all Programs filing appeals.

The process of appealing a Certification decision will not affect any Program's ability to re-apply for Certification in subsequent years.

Site Visits

- Programs will receive 48 hours notice of site visits. Site Visits may occur randomly on an as-needed basis.
- The purpose of the Site Visit is to promote compliance with the Standards for Batterer Intervention Programs and to assist programs in achieving and maintaining Certification.
- The Certification Board and staff shall strive to visit Certified programs at least once every three years.

Cost of Certification

A non-refundable application fee of \$250 will be due with the return of the completed Certification Application package. This fee will fund the work of the Certification Board.. To maintain certification, programs will be required to submit annual renewal paperwork and fee of \$75.00.

Revisions to Criteria or Process

1. Any member of C-TAB or VCCJA may submit a written proposal to the Certification Board recommending revisions to the Standards for Virginia Batterer Intervention Programs or Certification Process. The proposal shall contain the current language, the proposed revision, and a justification for the revision.
2. Any member organization that opposes a BIP Certification Board decision may appeal through their representatives.