

MRS Conference Call Notes
October 2011

Counties Participating 10/12: *Notetaker was not able to be on this call and apologizes for not being able to list participants.*

Counties Participating 10/18: Edgecombe, Dare, Hoke, Nash, New Hanover, Orange, Pitt, Randolph, Stanly, Swain, Wake, Wilkes.

Counties Participating 10/31: Alexander, Bladen, Brunswick, Caldwell, Davie, Gaston, Guilford, Harnett, Madison, Mitchell, Onslow, Pender, Randolph, Rockingham, Sampson, Scotland, Stokes, Swain, Wayne, Wilson.

Partner Agencies: NCSU/CFFACE, Wayne BIP, U Care, PEACE, Mainstay, Charlotte BIP, IMPACT/Be There

Agenda

- Letters from the Division
- Working with Perpetrators of Abuse – Crystalle Williams and Bea Cote
- How DV might impact your CFSR – Discussion with the Review Team
 - Item 3 – Services to the Family to Prevent Foster Care
 - Item 4 – Risk Assessment and Safety Management
- Other Discussion

News from Raleigh

Letters:

- CWS 29-11: Workforce Collaborative – Allows folks looking for jobs in child welfare field to go to one place to look at all sorts of child welfare jobs across the state.
- CWS 28-11: Adoption Promotion Program (several attachments) - Allows the receipt of funding for adoptions past your benchmark.
- CWS 27-11: Multiple Response 2011 Evaluation from Duke – This document is available on the web.
- CWS 26-11: Adoption Assistance Benefits Rules Changes
- CWS 25-11: Child and Family Services Reviews – Schedules for 2012.
- CWS 24-11: Post Adoption Support Services – List of Agencies who were awarded contracts as part of an RFA.
- Change Notice 02-2011– New RIL policy and procedures for counties entering in the RIL. Also includes revised Central Registry policy.

Working with Perpetrators of Abuse

Crystalle Williams, DV Trainer with the Division, and Bea Cote of the IMPACT program. Bea has a background in CPS and began working with DV offenders to make homes safer for the children. Currently works in Mecklenburg, Union, and Jackson counties.

Working with DV Offenders – Powerpoint - Bea

- There are no true types of DV offenders, just as there are no true types of victims.

BUT

- We can make some assumptions:

- They knew what they were doing. At some point, based on their level of discomfort, anger, righteousness, and/or need for control, they passed a point and said “Screw it. I’m going for it.” It is at that point that they made a decision to assault their partner, or gave themselves permission to “lose it”.
- They acted based on the *perceived consequences* of their actions. In many cases, there are few perceived consequences for domestic violence. If the perpetrator does think there’s a chance he’ll get caught, his need to release his “anger”, “justified violence”, revenge, or even, in his head, act in self-protection- outweighs perceived consequences.
- They don’t want to get caught.
 - If they’re caught, they expect you’ll see it as he does: that she brought it on herself.
 - They don’t want to be blamed.
 - Very few believe they should be held accountable- because *she* caused it; *she* started it; *she* hit him first, *she* is BiPolar, *she* is drunk....etc. .. etc...
 - They almost all want us to believe they are good men. Most are very likeable and a whole lot like **us**. This makes it so much easier to believe their stories. He’s indignant; or very *hurt* that he’s being questioned/accused. (And, by the way, he’s often calm at the scene).
 - They may differ from the regular population of offenders in that: they may not have a criminal record and are *horrified* that someone will think they’re criminals.
 - It is never the first act of abuse, though it may be the first act of physical abuse. I’ve talked to many men who say they’ve done *everything* on the Power and Control Wheel except physically assault her.
- So, if you were being accused of doing something that wasn’t *really* wrong (for whatever reason) and there were potentially serious consequences to this accusation, such as: jail, losing credibility, losing your job, your money, power, the relationship - things you didn’t sign up for when you were thinking of those perceived consequences.....
- WHAT WOULD YOU DO?
 - Would you lie?
 - Would you cover up signs of a struggle?
 - Would you blame the victim?
 - Would you threaten or warn her before the police arrive? Or from jail?
 - Would you try to convince the responding officer that you were just arguing, but things are fine, and there’s no risk?
 - Would you calmly express frustration with the victim’s abuse/aggression/drug use/alcohol use/mental illness/hysteria/infidelity?
 - Would you say “I know exactly how far to take things so I’m not breaking the law”?
- Follow me on this journey into the mind of an abuser:
 - “I need to come back to the program.”
 - “I busted my girlfriend’s windshield. I mean, it’s not as bad as the stuff she’s done to my car or nothin’. We have a 1-year old. We’ve been arguing a lot. She never stays home. I caught her cheating.”
 - “Oh, how did I catch her? Well, I had her car. I told her to come to my job and get it. I was done early, so I called her. She didn’t answer my calls, so I went to her apartment and parked down the road and walked up through the trees. I called and told her I was at the apartment. I saw her come running from another apartment building. That’s how I know. That’s why I busted her windshield”

- “I went down to the courthouse to get the paperwork to file for custody. I can’t leave my daughter with a woman who she leaves her with a babysitter and goes out.”
- So...
 - The abuse is part of a thinking problem. He’s talked himself into justifying his anger, his conclusions, and his further attempts to harm her by taking her child! For what? Maybe she’s distancing herself from him; maybe she’s ready to get out of the relationship.
 - He’s not likely to take full responsibility, though a few do.
 - And if he isn’t taking responsibility, and he knows you know *something* happened, then he needs to blame someone else, right?
- The community doesn’t want to think about DV happening in their own back yard, so the abuser may have the support and advocacy of his neighbor, his boss, his mama, his pastor.
 - We’re not saying he’s not miserable and unhappy. He very well may be.
 - But misery and remorse don’t mean he didn’t do it, either.
 - Remember, if he abused her, he already controls her; he therefore has power, very rarely in heterosexual relationships does the power change and put the victim in charge. So if the victim does attack the abuser, it was in self defense. May be an act of violence, and it may be assault, but it is not an act of abuse.
- The 3 biggies to look for:
 - MINIMIZATION
 - DENIAL
 - BLAMING
- What does all this really mean?
 - Holding abusers responsible for their abuse and/or their violence- criminal or not.
 - We must all be part of a system that holds abusers accountable for their behaviors.
 - Questioning, blaming and holding victims responsible for the abusers’ behavior decreases the responsibility they have to take.
 - Even asking why she hasn’t left makes it appear her fault. Instead maybe ask her what you can do to help her get the resources she needs to leave.
 - The biggest motivator for her to leave is her children.
 - I still fall for the lies occasionally. I’m amazed later, when in group, they start revealing increasingly more about what they’ve done. This strengthens my resolve to know as much as possible about each offender and each situation.
- “Thank you, thank you for keeping the communication open with me. I take some comfort in knowing that someone within an organization specializing in this type of abuse is aware of the situation. Should anything happen to me there won’t be complete silence when they try to figure it out. Sorry to be dramatic, but I live in a state of heightened awareness every day that this could be the day he snaps.” (Comment from the girlfriend of a police officer who voluntarily came to a DV program and left after two weeks.)

Additional Information (contact Bea for these documents)

- A revised Power and Control Wheel – somewhat different from the “normal” one as because it includes Obfuscation.
- Council of Women: <http://www.councilforwomen.nc.gov/programs.htm>

- Handout that points out the differences between Batterer Intervention Program and Anger Management.
- Collusion – men supporting other men who are abusers. For example, when working with military families often the abuser's CO or others will stick up for him.

Holding Batterers Accountable – Powerpoint – Bea and Crystal

- Important Points to Remember:
 - Risk of collusion
 - No couples' counseling
 - No MH/SA counseling for the DV
 - No Anger Management
 - SA & MH counseling should occur at the same time as BIP when possible
 - Thoughts on pastoral counseling
 - When there is no BIP available
- Look For:
 - Minimization, Denial, Blaming & Obfuscation
 - Behaviors on Power & Control Wheel
 - Use of non-physical tactics such as veiled threats once DSS is involved
 - Opportunities to support the battered parent & to hold batterer accountable in court. SW should be supported in going to all court hearings- criminal, 50-B & Custody- when possible.
- Ask:
 - Is batterer in jail?
 - Is he manipulating or threatening her in calls from jail?
 - Are there high risk behaviors such as: Stalking (lots of text stalking going on), Strangulation, Use of weapons, Pet abuse, Threats of homicide/suicide, Escalation, Substance Abuse, Order violations
- Other Points:
 - File charges and follow up on prosecution of those who threaten DSS employees. If you don't, why should AV?
 - Many "custody" cases are actually DV cases. When a victim leaves, 1 of the first things they will do is file for custody to protect the children.
 - 1 of the first things a batterer will do is file for SOLE PHYSICAL custody. If batterer is granted unsupervised contact, victim will often go back to protect the children
- Safety Responses & Service Agreements
 - No "cookie-cutter" statements (ex: they will not engage in DV in presence of the children)
 - Be behaviorally-specific-What will he/she do to stop violence, protect children, reduce risk, etc.?
 - What steps will they take to undo the damage that has been done?
- Will they agree to:
 - Be non-violent?
 - Develop non-abusive strategies?
 - Learn about how DV has affected the child?
 - Learn that their behavior is intentional and not caused by anger?
 - Learn how to support their child in recovery efforts, regardless of the relationship status?
 - Support partners attempts to be equal, to have power & control?
 - Demonstrate responsible parenting? Economic partnership? Co-parenting?
 - Support the battered parents' efforts to parent?
 - Establish a nurturing & safe environment for child?

- Partnering With Your BIP
 - Homework & class activities can serve as activities on FSA.
 - SW can follow up, ask what was learned, assess behavioral change, etc. during FTF
 - Ask BIP provider for curricula contents so you will know what is being taught.
 - Should not ask anyone to do assessment for DV- SW makes that determination first
 - BIP has a mandate of assessing lethality
 - BIP facilitators should be in close contact with DSS on CPS and Foster Care cases
 - BIP facilitators should be included in CFT's- either to provide information or provide input on specific case
 - MOU's & Cross-Training
- How to choose a BIP if you can
 - Must be certified by the state. See <http://www.doa.state.nc.us/cfw/abuser.htm> for list of certified by the state as well as the rules they promise to comply with.
 - Make sure the program has a presence in court and does case management. Do they talk to SW's?
 - Very few have programs for CPS offenders. If you have one in your area consider it the most appropriate for your client.
 - Consider a program with clinical staff IF your abuser/client also has clinical issues.
- BIP Victim Issues to Consider
 - Batters may use the participation as evidence to coerce the victim into reconciliation
 - It can become "de facto couples counseling", putting the BIP staff in the middle of the two.
 - It can be seen as a "cure", encouraging her to "stay"
 - Partner Contact: program may place victims at risk if they share info.
 - Focusing on his change processes can divert victim's attention from her own needs and her progress.
 - His participation may create the illusion of safety for the victim.

Questions/Comments:

- One county said that their social workers were informed that we should not write that the victim will seek a restraining order on our safety assessment, due to court/judge complaints.
 - Be careful that you do not tell her what to do and take the place of her abuser.
 - She is 75% more likely to be murdered if/when she leaves so she needs to be ready to do this on her own.
- In Chatham County, the PEACE (People Ending Abuse through Counseling & Education) is part of the DV/Sexual Assault agency. We work closely with local DSS. We also have an annual conference on "Working Together to Keep Families Safe" on Dec 15th that addresses DV and related issues. If interested, email mary@fvrc.org
- DV resource for pastors: theraveproject.com
- Good tips on this website that could be used as objectives in a service agreement: Assessing Change: <http://www.lundybancroft.com/> (Lundy says that the biggest negative effect batterers have on their children is: disruption and interference with the mother/child bond.)

- Resources for Enhanced Practice:
<http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/csm-60/man/CS1409f1.pdf>
- Link to DV Policy(Chapter 8, Section 1409), Interview Tools:
<http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dss/csm-60/man/>

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How DV might impact your CFSR

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- On the CFSR, DV falls primarily under two items in Safety Outcome Two.
- Item 3 – Services to families to protect children in the home and preventing into foster care.
 - Are we making diligent efforts to provide *appropriate* services to families to protect children in their home?
 - If looking at a DV case, they are looking to see that services are appropriate – MH and couples counseling does not address the unique issues of DV situations.
- Item 4 on the Risk and Safety Assessment – looking at ongoing risk assessment through the life of the case.
 - One of the things they consider under item four is the Assessment process – are allegations of DV being handled appropriately.
 - Safety Planning Process – is it considering the power and control issues that are in place?
 - Premature Case Closure – We may throw a bunch of services at a family or refer them to other providers, but then don't evaluate that process but don't re-assess the family to ensure safety before we close the case.

November Meetings: 28th, 29th, and 30th.