

New Mexico Senate Memorial 52 Batterer Intervention Program Task Force Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Program effectiveness and a reasonable return on investment in programs that the state supports are legitimate expectations. To those ends, SM 52 provided for a task force to study the effectiveness of Batterer Intervention Programs (BIP) in New Mexico. The task force reviewed the current state of batterer's intervention services; offender assessment; curricula and implementation, research and the criminal justice system response. There are currently 38 BIP programs across NM, 22 of which receive CYFD funding.

Assessment

- A small subgroup of domestic violence offenders is responsible for most of the re-assaults. 20-25% of offenders commit 75-80% of re-offenses.
- Recommendation: Implement validated assessment tools to identify offender risk and place them in services accordingly. Assess offender needs such as substance abuse, mental health, employment, housing etc. in order to offer appropriate services.

Program Model

- Structured, evidence based curricula should be adopted. A number of curricula, including the four reviewed through the Task Force, are adequate.
- Fidelity to the curriculum, training and supervision are the most important factors in program effectiveness.
- There is no solid evidence to support a 52-week program over a shorter, 24 week one. However, strong anecdotal evidence was offered to support the longer duration.
- The Duluth program is not a BIP; it is an approach that emphasizes cooperation and collaboration among systems, one component of which is a BIP.
- Recommendation: Establish an advisory group to consider and recommend specific curricula to CYFD and to develop training and supervision sufficient to implement selected curriculum.

Criminal Justice System Response

- The justice system exerts a strong influence on recidivism. Program drop out predicts recidivism. By imposing swift and certain sanctions for non-compliance with BIP requirements, drop out rates can be reduced and program effectiveness can be enhanced. No common definition of recidivism exists.
- Recommendation: Work with NM Sentencing Commission to develop criminal justice system strategies to reduce recidivism and promote safety of victims. Develop a working definition of recidivism.

Research

- Research is mixed and sometimes contradictory. Some studies show high levels of program effectiveness; others show little or no impact. Research is confounded by inconsistencies in implementation and criminal justice system response.
- No conclusions should be drawn based on any one study.
- Recommendation: Review variety of studies with attention to applicability.
- Recommendation: A national scientific advisory group, with NM participation, should be established to review and recommend research for purposes of advancing practice and effectiveness.