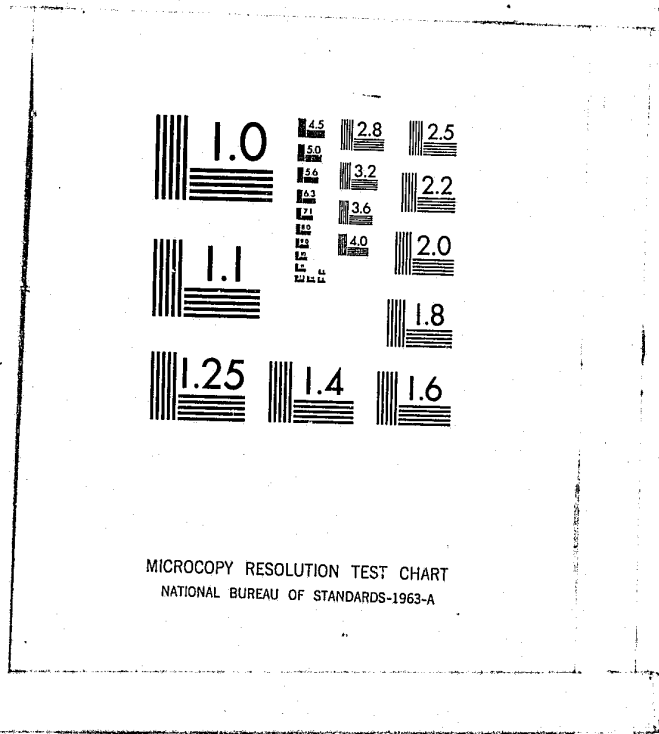


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U.S. Department of Justice  
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# The Report from the Conference on Intervention Programs for Men Who Batter

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THE REPORT FROM THE CONFERENCE ON  
INTERVENTION PROGRAMS FOR MEN WHO BATTER

Sponsored by Special Programs Division,  
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration

Prepared by Mott-McDonald Associates, Inc.  
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The Center for Women Policy Studies

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INTRODUCTION

Within the last 15 years greater attention has been given to the problem of violence within the family. But until recently, one form of domestic violence--spouse abuse--has been largely ignored. By accepting values of male dominance and aggression and believing in the privacy of the family our society has shrouded the problem or excused it.

Awareness of the magnitude of spouse abuse and the development of causal theories have been gradually evolving. Over the past few years, a movement to provide protective shelter and support to abused women has been steadily growing. As awareness has increased, more public and private agencies are directing their attention to the problem. To meet the needs of battered women, federal legislation is being considered and many local programs are currently being funded by a variety of agencies.

Important as these efforts are, they do not deal with the human source of the problem - the batterer. Because spouse abuse is both a cultural and an emotional issue, it engenders reactions ranging from intense anger against the batterer to indifference and even support for him. All of these reactions make it more difficult to get public support for programs to assist or punish the batterer. Also, there is

no organized base of support parallel to the women's movement which can interpret the problems and needs of men who batter and offer services to them.

Yet, providing a range of services to the batterer is of critical importance, because, unless the batterer is helped to stop his violent behavior, the abuse continues, either with the same spouse or with another woman who subsequently becomes involved with him.

To gain a better understanding of the problems and issues involved in providing services to the battering spouse, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) sponsored a conference on this subject in May 1979 in Belmont, Maryland. Persons directly involved in service programs for batterers or for other types of offenders, and representatives from various federal agencies, were invited. The purpose of the conference was to provide guidance and direction for LEAA planners in the development of criminal justice mandated interventions for battering spouses and to make recommendations on methods and strategies to support such efforts.

Because of the scope of the problem of family violence and the largely unexplored dimensions of working with batterers, boundaries were placed on the discussion to enable an in-depth focus on selected key issues. Although child abuse is a related concern, the agenda was limited to a discussion

of abuse involving adults. Because long-term physical abuse is almost always perpetrated by the man, batterers for the purposes on the conference, were defined as being male and victims as female, although it was recognized that acts of violence can be committed by either sex. Conference participants were also asked to focus on efforts at tertiary prevention, i.e., efforts aimed at rehabilitating the offender rather than preventing initial acts of violence. More specifically, they were asked to concentrate on those situations where batterers come under the purview of the justice system which can mandate their participation in an intervention program. The question then became: What forms should those intervention programs take?

This report describes the responses discussed during the two-day conference and attempts to capture the main ideas, concerns and opinions expressed by the conference participants. Although major emphasis was placed on examining methods and techniques to help men who batter stop their violent behavior, participants also addressed such areas as assessing the problems of batterers, training staff who work with batterers, and evaluating programs. It is hoped that disseminating the information in this report will be useful to practitioners, community groups, justice agencies, and others who are exploring new ways to solve the problem of spouse abuse.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The nature of spouse abuse. Spouse abuse is rarely an isolated violent episode, but more often follows a pattern in which the attacks increase in both severity and frequency if they go unchecked. In such situations, spouse abuse cases may also result in homicides. A Kansas City police study found that in 85 percent of those cases, they had previously been called five times or more.<sup>1</sup> In 1975, FBI Crime Reports recorded 20,510 murders in the United States. About 25-30% of these killings were committed by people who were relatives or friends of the victim. One spouse killing another accounted for over half of the family homicides.<sup>2</sup>

The problem of spouse abuse is exacerbated by its familial context. The existence of violence in the family is reluctantly acknowledged because the image of the family as a haven of love and nurturance is so desirable. Also, the man is generally regarded as the head of his household with legitimate power over the women and children he supports. It is illegal to hit a stranger on the street, and regardless of the power structure within the family, the marriage license should never be a hitting license.

The extent of the problem. A recent study of a nationally representative sample of 2,143 couples found the following:

for the twelve month period preceding the interview, 3.8 percent of the respondents reported one or more physical attacks which fall under the operational definition of wife-beating. Applying this incidence rate to the approximately 47 million couples in the United States, means that in any one year approximately 1.8 million wives are being beaten by their husbands.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, 28 percent of the couples surveyed experienced at least one violent episode during their relationship. Murray Straus, one of the researchers, considers these figures to be underestimates because of the self-reporting nature of the survey. He cites failure of memory and reluctance to admit violent acts as some of the major reasons for skepticism, and concludes "that the true incidence rate is probably closer to 50 or 60 percent of all couples than it is to the 28 percent who were willing to describe violent acts in a mass interview survey."<sup>4</sup>

Local statistics also bear out the findings that spouse abuse is widespread. For instance, in 1973, 14,671 cases of wife beating were reported in New York State--three times the number of reported rapes. In Atlanta, Georgia, 60 percent of all calls received on the police night shift are reported domestic disputes. At Boston City Hospital, approximately 70 percent of the assault victims received in the emergency room are women who have been attacked in the home. The police department in St. Paul, Minnesota, makes written reports on approximately 100 wife beating episodes each week, and this figure does not include police responses to domestic incidences in which the women decides not to press charges.<sup>5</sup> In Wilbraham, Massachusetts, the



staff of Heart House, a shelter, reported that during August 1978, 117 women and children came to them; during the first week of October 1978, approximately 50 women and children made use of the facility.<sup>6</sup>

Cumulatively, these data illustrate that spouse abuse is both a local and a national problem. The repercussions of the problem extend beyond the bound of one family or a single relationship. The acceptance of spouse abuse today has the potential to maintain incidence rates of violence in families for successive generations. Researchers have found that children who witness violent acts between their parents or who are the victims of parental violence often grow up to become the wife abusers and child abusers of their generation. A British study of abusive husbands revealed that over one-half the husbands had witnessed their fathers assaulting their mothers.<sup>7</sup> A recent report which estimated that there are one million abused and neglected children in the United States also noted that in 20 percent of the child abuse cases a spouse was also being assaulted.<sup>8</sup> Research needs to be conducted to determine more specifically the nature of violence across generations. Yet preliminary findings indicate that the justice and social services systems have an important role to play in curtailing violence in the family.

The victims of spouse abuse. The best information available at the present time on the victims of spouse abuse is found in the writings of academics and professionals who are

analyzing data obtained from residents of shelters. Demographic profiles indicate that victims come from varying ethnic groups and generally fall between the ages of twenty and sixty. A wide variety of educational backgrounds and religious upbringings are represented.

Psychological inventories reveal that low self-esteem, a negative self-image, a lack of self-confidence and depression are characteristics shared by many adult victims of abuse. Such characteristics can be a product of living in an abusive environment.

Victims of spouse assault may have unrealistic or stereotypic expectations of themselves and their marriages. Often, they have entered the marriage expecting it to serve as a panacea for all their problems. Many of these women are socialized to believe that the man should be the head of the house and the major breadwinner. Abusive husbands take advantage of the marital expectations of their wives and as a result become increasingly controlling and dominating. The balance of power in the marriage relationship is clearly weighted in the husband's favor. The social lives of these women are often directed by the husband as well.

Victims may have difficulty expressing their feelings and emotions appropriately. A study comparing battered with nonbattered women found that it was the nonbattered women who were more inclined to oppose someone physically or verbally.

By contrast, the battered women were "more apt to submit to rules and orders even when it does not please them."<sup>9</sup> This finding runs counter to the belief of many uninformed people that women who are beaten by their husbands are rebellious and abusive themselves.

It should be remembered that such findings are clearly tentative and that service providers will encounter battered women of many different personality types.

Battered women who stay. The question of why battered women stay with their husband is one asked frequently by professionals who encounter victims of spouse abuse in their work. One answer is that not all of them do. Many women extricate themselves from violent relationships without seeking the help of the police or district attorney. These women often have the advantage of a strong support system of friends and family and are not economically dependent upon their abusive husbands.

Many battered women initially remain in the relationship because they love their mate and believe him when he says he will change. A call to the police is often a call only to have an outside authority figure stop the beatings. When the man is allowed to remain in the home, such calls may have the effect of triggering retaliatory beatings, even more severe than the initial violence.

Battered women who remain with their abusive partners over a period of time perceive the criminal justice system as

a last resort and will seek help there only in desperation. Such women are likely to have no means of supporting themselves, and are highly dependent emotionally on their husbands. Many of them live socially isolated from friends and family. Their isolation may be imposed by the batterer out of possessiveness and jealousy, or may be self-imposed from shame about visible signs of the battering.

A woman who stays experiences deep feelings of powerlessness and immobilizing fear. She may believe she has no alternatives, particularly if there are no shelters in the area or if she has met with insensitive or ineffective treatment by police or social service agencies when she has attempted to find help. Over a period of time, these feelings can lead to psychological paralysis. They can also culminate in a desperate, self-defensive homicide or her suicide.

Either emotional paralysis or homicide may be grounded in a realistic assessment of the capacity of the justice and social service systems to aid her in her plight. Either may also stem from a fear of retaliation by her spouse, should her efforts to extricate herself permanently prove unsuccessful. These realities contrast with theories of early psychologists who claimed that women who stayed in violent situations were innately masochistic.

A recent theory posits that feelings of powerlessness, far from being inherent in women, are created by early sex-role socialization. Women are still often trained in the mode of



helplessness as a method of attracting men and male attention. As a result, even women who are well-educated and professionally ambitious may utilize traditional, deferential behavior in their relationship with men. Such women give much control and power to the men with whom they have intimate relationships. The propensity to "being a victim repeatedly is socially learned behavior."<sup>10</sup> The result often is that the victim justifies or rationalizes the violence by concluding either that she deserves to be beaten because she is bad or provocative, or that the batterer is not responsible because he is under stress, unemployed, alcoholic, etc.

The justice system can play a crucial role in aiding women to extricate themselves from violent relationships. Equally important is the catalyst function the justice system can have in restoring to them a sense of self-esteem and their individual value as human beings.

The batterer. The sparse information available on battering husbands indicates that they represent a wide variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds. They are of all ages and all educational backgrounds. A sample of 70 batterers revealed that "55 percent of the men were raised in families in which one or both parents were alcoholic. And, at least 63 percent either witnessed or experienced physical abuse while they were growing up."<sup>11</sup> Similarly, a British study of abusive husbands revealed that 74 percent of them had a drinking problem and that over one half of them had witnessed their fathers assaulting their mothers.<sup>12</sup>

Service providers who work with adult batterers describe them as often having a negative self-image, a lack of ability to be open about their feelings, and, in fact, very little understanding of their true feelings. They often lack maturity and, like their mates, may have unrealistic expectations of marriage. Most of these men also believe the man should be the head of the house and the major breadwinner. They may feel oppressed by circumstances; beating their wives may give them a chance to be the oppressor rather than the oppressed.

Wife batterers may feel guilty or ashamed of their brutality and thus may deny their behavior. Or, they may feel that their actions are justified and acceptable as a mode of controlling their wives. If this is the case, they may not feel either ashamed or guilty, and will appear mystified that the justice system considers them criminals.

Role of alcohol in abusive behavior. Conventional wisdom assumes a simple cause and effect relationship between violence and alcohol. Many battered women believe that their husbands' drinking causes them to be abusive, and that if they could stop them from drinking, the violent behavior would cease.

However, recent theories suggest that the relationship between alcohol and abusive behavior is considerably more complex. In many relationships, spouses may drink without ever displaying aggressive behavior. In other relationships, where no one uses alcohol, violence nevertheless occurs. In still

other families, violence may occur both when the offender is drinking and when the offender is sober. Thus, the great range of individual behavior when drinking is present undercuts the notion of a simple cause and effect relationship between violence and alcohol.

Drinkers may use the commonplace notion that alcohol causes out of character behavior so that they will not be held responsible for their actions in order to shift the blame for violence from themselves to the effects of alcohol. Drinkers use these tactics to deny their behavior to themselves: "Thus, individuals who wish to carry out violent acts (may) become intoxicated in order to carry out the violent act."<sup>13</sup>

What methods of intervention are effective in stopping spouse assault? Social service personnel, emergency room workers, law enforcement officials and shelter staffs are experimenting with various methods of intervening in spouse assault. Because the problem is a relatively recent issue of public concern, these interventions are largely experimental. Much evaluation and analysis needs to be conducted to determine which methods are most effective for which types of batterers.

The Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) is currently working on these issues through its Family Violence Program. The Family Violence Program offers a source of funding for model programs attempting to provide innovative criminal justice interventions. The Center for Women Policy Studies is closely observing the development of these programs

and their Resource Center should be contacted for further information.\*

Major problems and issues in providing services to batterers. Perhaps one of the greatest barriers to the development of services to help the victims and the men who batter is the acceptance of varying degrees of family violence by society as a method of resolving problems. An attitude which discourages any intrusions into the privacy of the home minimizes the significance of violent acts occurring with the family. Unless cultural and community standards clearly view family violence as an offense which will not be tolerated, the justice and social service systems will probably not be asked to intervene.

The reluctance of victims to report incidences of abuse hampers the ability of the justice and social service systems to respond. Although the criminal justice system can provide a source of support and protection for women who have been abused, it is also recognized that the system has often failed to provide that support. Appropriate roles for various levels of the justice system such as the police, prosecutors and courts have not been defined clearly for cases of spouse abuse and, therefore, the response to a complaint of abuse may be very inconsistent. Police responses to such complaints may

\* The above information concerning the Statement of the Problem was adapted from The Victim Advocate, National District Attorneys Association, 1978, "The Nature and Extent of Spouse Assault" by Diane Hamlin, Director of Technical Assistance, Center for Women Policy Studies, Washington, D.C.

range from verbal warnings or reprimands to arrests of the batterer. Because she is uncertain of the justice system's response, a victim may be less inclined to risk increasing the wrath of the spouse by calling the authorities. Also contributing to the reluctance of victims to report incidents of spouse abuse is the financial dependence of the victim upon the batterers. If the spouse is incarcerated, the victim may be left without any source of income.

Because of the lack of motivation of many men who batter to change their behavior, it is often difficult to keep them in any type of treatment program. The role of the justice system becomes critical, then, in holding the batterer accountable for participating in a treatment program or otherwise facing punitive action.

Conference participants strongly emphasized the need for police, prosecutors and judges to respond to abuse cases in a serious and consistent manner. The message conveyed through the actions of justice agencies to the community and to the batterer should be that spouse abuse is a crime and will be treated as such. Men who batter will be less inclined to treat their participation in treatment programs lightly if they are clear that they will otherwise face strong sanctions.

The relationships between the justice system, particularly the courts, and projects for the treatment of batterers need to be very carefully planned and articulated. As indicated

earlier there are many barriers in the justice system that promote a continuation of the problem. For example, the courts are often unwilling to handle battering with sufficient seriousness, preferring to dismiss spouse abuse cases, unless the charges are very grave. On the other hand, they are often willing to use a less punitive sentencing alternative than jail because they think alternatives will change behavior but jail will not.

Diversion project staff should work with the courts to encourage the use of the court's authority in a way that will facilitate the therapeutic process. For example, the pre-sentence investigation can be coordinated with the goals of intervention programs. After assessing the problems and needs of men who batter, an intervention program might make recommendations in the pre-sentence report regarding potential for rehabilitation and approximate length of time needed in a treatment program. The length of the probationary period should be structured to coincide with the time needed to complete the case plan. Failure to participate in the program would then constitute a violation of probation and bring the batterer back into court. Without the threat of court sanctions, the intervention project has a greatly reduced chance of success given the characteristics of most batterers.

One of the recurring themes of the conference was a recognition that the state-of-the-art of treating the battering spouse is in its infancy. There are few research findings which

can shed light on the most effective methods of treatment. The pioneers in the field are testing different approaches and refining their methods. Few avenues of communication exist by which professionals can share information; the ability to build on the experiences and insights of peers is limited.

Another barrier to the development of services to batterers is the lack of training programs for service providers. Few schools provide training concerned specifically with battering spouses, and there is a dearth of training material that can be used for in-service training programs.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF MEN WHO BATTER

It might be expected that batterers would appear to be very unlikeable people who could easily evoke feelings of anger and dislike in practitioners who work with them. However, there seems to be a greater risk of the opposite occurring. As one conferee noted, many batterers often appear to be very personable and display another side which is a dramatic contrast to the violent side of their personality. By minimizing the seriousness of their actions and putting blame on their wives they try to convince others into liking them and sympathizing with them. Practitioners, therefore, need to be aware of these kinds of characteristics which can interfere with the treatment process.

On the other hand, practitioners will also see a range of characteristics quite opposite those cited above. Some batterers are frightened, insecure men who avoid contact, friendly or otherwise. Some are genuinely likeable. Others may be chronically depressed and overwhelmed with guilt.

Several methods for categorizing abusing spouses can be found in the professional literature. Margaret Elbow<sup>14</sup> creates four categories of abusing spouses, each based on a specific emotional need: controller, defender, approval seeker, incorporator. The controller, for example, needs autonomy. He cannot tolerate limits being placed on him by others. His mate becomes significant as his main object of

control. On the other hand the defender's main need is for protection. To protect himself from harm, he harms the person who threatens or who is perceived as a threat to his well-being.

Another approach is to divide abusing spouses into hitters and batterers. The hitter takes responsibility for his behavior and is inclined to come to treatment. The hitter often responds with some degree of logic, warning the spouse before he hits her, and doing so upon provocation. The batterer refuses to take responsibility for his actions and is not motivated to change his behavior. Threats are used by the batterer to terrorize his spouse rather than to stop certain of her behaviors. The major distinction between the hitter and batterer is in the type, intensity and frequency of the abuse.

The conference participants questioned whether such systems were accurate or useful in developing methods of intervention. Trying to fit individuals into categories is difficult because their behaviors may vary greatly at different times. For example, although certain behaviors can be described as hitting or battering, the same person may exhibit both types of behavior at different times.

It was generally agreed that descriptions of the behavioral characteristics of battering men would be more useful to service providers than broad categorizations. It was recognized that no batterer exhibits all of these characteristics all of the time, but knowing them can help develop effective intervention programs.

Among the most prevalent characteristics of batterers is a tendency to minimize or deny the seriousness of their violent behavior. Some batterers are very manipulative and can appear to be very charming and seductive, reflecting a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde type of personality. The Dr. Jekyll component of batterers' personality is amplified in a manipulative way in therapy but is not always a manipulation in his everyday life inside or outside his home. This side of his personality is not necessarily gregarious and kindly, but often just non-objectionable. Some batterers are also violent outside of the home, while others direct the abuse only toward their spouses. Sexual abuse may or may not be a part of the violent behavior.

Additional characteristics identified by the conference participants included:

1. Externalizes problems
2. Jealous
3. Verbally Aggressive
4. Minimizing and/or denying and/or lying
5. Impulsivity
6. Self-deprecation
7. Suicidal gestures
8. Depression
9. Inability to sustain, express, or accept intimacy consistently
10. Not willing or able to compromise
11. Resolves problems physically

12. Cannot empathize with others
13. Makes unrealistic demands
14. Compulsive use of drugs or alcohol
15. Demonstrates lack of interpersonal and coping skills
16. Manipulative
17. Demonstrates sociophobic behavior (self-isolation)
18. Exhibits demeaning attitudes towards women
19. Shows compulsive reference to sexuality
20. Defies limits
21. Has past history of violence
22. Has low tolerance for stress

These characteristics may be exhibited in different combinations at different times. Rarely, does a batterer exhibit them all. Certain general themes appear. Many batterers have low self-esteem as reflected in their depression, suicidal gestures, and lack of qualitative relationships with others. Extrapunitiveness is also marked by their denial of the seriousness of their acts, their willingness to blame others, and their use of physical force. Anger and rage are key motivational forces, but the men who batter do not always exhibit or feel their anger and rage until it begins to peak. The causes of anger and rage may be feelings of frustration, powerlessness, inferiority, insecurity, or an inability to identify and express non-hostile feelings. Their strong psychological dependency on their spouses is partly grounded

in their low self-esteem and in their need to project their rage on an external object. Many batterers have learned to mask these characteristics beneath a veneer of charm, but the effort is imperfect because of the enormity and compulsiveness of the rage.



### DESIGNING INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

Examining the possible elements of an intervention program for men who batter was a major focus of the conference. Strong community support and a high level of cooperation between justice and social support agencies were underscored as factors influencing the success of a program. Consideration was also given to the following topics:

- goals
- planning and program development issues
- intake
- intervention techniques
- intervention formats

### GOALS

The conferees were unanimous in their agreement that the primary goal of intervention programs must be to stop the abuse. Initially, and repeatedly, if necessary, the batterer must be reminded of the seriousness and illegality of his action. The message that violence is an unacceptable method of resolving problems must be clearly communicated to the batterer, who will otherwise always discount the seriousness of his behavior. After the violence has stopped, strategies can then be directed to the achievement of other goals.

### PLANNING AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

General planning consideration. Service programs specifically designed to help the abusive spouse stop his battering behavior are very few in number. When the magnitude of this problem finally began to come to public attention, the initial response was to come to the aid of the victims out of compassion and a recognition of their immediate needs for safety and assistance. Yet, unless there is intervention in the cycle of abuse, the violent behavior will probably continue with the same or a different spouse.

Planners of social service programs for batterers are advised to gain broad community support. Public awareness campaigns which clarify spouse abuse laws and focus on the illegality of spouse abuse are important for bringing community pressure to bear on the problem. Until community standards clearly view family violence as unacceptable behavior, it is not feasible to expect the justice or social service systems to be able to deal effectively with this problem.

One of the recurring themes of the conference was the need for a coordinated network of appropriate services for batterers. As the profile above suggests, men who batter may exhibit a range of problems that require varying combinations of supportive services. The following steps should be taken in constructing a service network:

- Determine what services are needed in the network.

- Identify available services.
- Develop services to fill the gaps in available community services.

In addition to program content, planners will also want to consider the range of program formats and designs that might be included in a comprehensive system. For example, most existing therapeutic programs specifically for men who batter are non-residential. However, the need for and advantages of a residential program could also be considered for inclusion in a service network.

In support of a network concept a common vocabulary concerning abuse would be helpful in facilitating communication among different types of agencies. Misinterpretations are bound to occur and mutual understanding becomes difficult when some agencies are using a highly technical clinical vocabulary, the courts are using a legal vocabulary, and the lay public is using everyday speech.

Also of critical importance is the development of a system of accountability to ensure that needed services are delivered. If, for example a batterer is ordered by the court into a service program but never appears at the service agency, this information must be relayed back to the court so that appropriate action can be taken. Although coordination and accountability are important for the success of any service delivery system, they are of critical importance to a system focusing on batterers.

Training. Working with men who batter requires some special skills that are not ordinarily acquired in the training of social service or mental health workers. Service providers for example must be able to deal with risks of homicide or suicide and risks to their own personal safety. They must confront their own values concerning violence and their feelings of anger or empathy toward batterers and victims to determine if their own internal biases may be a barrier to serving their clients effectively.

Three distinct types of training were suggested by the conference participants: initial, ongoing, and maintenance.

Included in the initial or orientation type of training would be basic information on violent behavior and an orientation concerning the justice system and related service agencies that may be involved in the intervention process. Another important part of this initial training should be the exploration of trainee attitudes concerning all aspects of violent behavior. Consciousness raising and values clarification techniques should be used to help trainees examine their own anger towards violent behavior, fear of violence, or dislike and disapproval of batterers.

Ongoing training should include both in-service and university-based training programs. The focus should be on basic counseling skills, the roles of family members, crisis intervention techniques, and approaches to group, individual and family therapy. University-based programs in

victimology or criminology would also be appropriate in ongoing training.

Maintenance training should include clinical consultation on individual cases and also peer support groups which would help overcome worker "burn out." The need for clinical training centers which offer intensive short term courses in working with men who batter was strongly emphasized.

Evaluation. The practice of treating batterers is in an experimental stage of development. Different professional groups are using a variety of techniques, some of which are described in this report. Few, if any, of these techniques are being evaluated for their impact on program outcomes; i.e. the elimination of battering among batterers. The conferees urged that an effort be made to evaluate these programs in terms of their process and outcome in order to provide more definitive direction to the field about the most appropriate techniques to use with batterers.

Because of the diversity of the experimentation in the field, it is very difficult to develop a single evaluation design which will serve all needs. Therefore, it is probably the most practical option to tailor the designs to individual projects and to provide for self-report evaluation. Evaluations might also be done by a locally-based person, who has sufficient familiarity with the program, and therefore, would not intrude much on the processes of the project. Evaluation

designs, whether self-report or independently generated, should contain the following elements:

- Inputs: data about funding sources, budget amounts, types of professional staff, uses of volunteers.
- Processes: documentation of the precise therapeutic and related techniques used by the projects to work with batterers.
- Output: data about the numbers and proportions of batterers who complete the program, data on frequency of episodes of battering and related behaviors during the period in the program.
- Outcomes: simple measures of outcomes such as the length of time after completing the program that the batterer does not engage in battering or related behaviors. Baseline and long-term follow-up data on the severity and frequency of violent behavior can be obtained from the client and his spouse. Measures can also be obtained on the proportion of families that are reunited as well as measures of the quality of family life and individual self-esteem.

Evaluations are most likely to be valid and timely if they are built into the basic case management processes of the project. In other words, the basic elements of the evaluation design should be built into the forms used by the project for collecting information from clients. About 75 percent of the information needed to do the evaluation can be generated in this manner. Supplementary data can be obtained from such sources as budgets and follow-up telephone interviews with former clients.

Conference participants expressed concern that funding in the initial life of the project should not be contingent on

the outcome of the evaluation. A minimum of three years was suggested as the time needed by a project to test its methods and format and allow for modifications in the design. Evaluation during this phase should be used as a constructive tool to improve the program, rather than as a decision guide for continued funding.

#### INTAKE

Intake and assessment are difficult, but crucial tasks in the rehabilitation process. Usually, the batterer is not seeking help. He comes into a program involuntarily through court order. He believes he did nothing wrong and wants the courts and service agencies to stop interfering in his private life. If the court order does not include strong sanctions governing the batterer's participation in the program, he is unlikely to be seen after the first interview.

Another barrier the practitioner faces is the batterer's attempt to cover the violent side of his personality. During the assessment, the practitioner will often encounter charm and seductiveness that mask underlying anger and rage. Penetrating this veneer is not easily accomplished, but is an essential first step that will influence the success of intervention. The batterer's sometimes real, sometimes manipulative repentant attitude and behavior can offer misleading potential for rehabilitation. Practitioners may also encounter a fanatic, often overwhelming need of the batterer to reestablish or maintain the marriage. While refusing to be misled by the batterer's

attempts to gain favor and sympathy, the practitioner must also convey concern and understanding that will foster the development of trust, essential to the therapeutic process.

Decisions are made based on the assessment information, that determine the specific design of the intervention. The assessment should, therefore, be comprehensive to insure that other problems related to the abuse are also identified. Information should be gathered from as many sources as possible. Because of a batterer's tendency to minimize and deny the seriousness of his actions, it is important to obtain data from other family members, or agencies that can help to provide a more accurate and complete assessment of the batterer and the problem(s).

Whether the spouse should be included in a treatment program, and whether the batterer and the spouse should be seen together or separately at the sessions was debated among the conference participants. Those favoring family-centered or couples counseling believed that problems in the relationship would appear more rapidly if the family is seen together from the beginning. Others doubted the efficacy of joint assessment believing that the battered spouse would be unlikely to say anything negative in front of her spouse that could possibly lead to further battering. Others believed that while it is useful to obtain information from the spouse and other family members, it is inappropriate to include the victimized spouse in treatment focussed on stopping the man's violent behavior.

In addition to factors directly related to the abuse, such as intensity and frequency of battering, an assessment of contributing or related factors such as the following is necessary:

1. Alcoholism
2. Drug abuse
3. Organic disfunctions
4. External life-stress factors (housing, job, etc.)
5. Victimization of other family members

Although organic disfunctions and substance abuse are present in some men who batter, it was pointed out that treating these problems does not necessarily reduce the violence. Abusive behavior must be handled separately. Problems such as alcoholism can contribute to or foster violent behavior and, therefore, should be assessed. Referrals for these types of problems should be made to the appropriate service agencies.

The potential for lethality (homicide or suicide) is high among men who batter and therefore, should be assessed early in the intervention process to protect the spouse and the worker as well. Some of the risk factors that might be considered in screening for lethality include: history of assaults, involvement with weapons, presence of alcohol abuse or psychiatric disorders, history of blackouts or amnesia, and the potential for crisis at the point of separation from the spouse.

Other factors to be assessed that have an impact on intervention approaches include: the nature of the abuse (hand swinging vs. burning), chronicity and severity of the violence, response of the victim to the violence, number of different types of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual), availability of other community resources, presence or absence of spouse, the batterer's attitude toward violence (normative v. unacceptable), and the point of intervention (early vs. later stages of battering).

Conferees pointed out that there are no definitive answers in how to link assessment data to specific intervention methods. Until further research can offer some guidelines, practitioners must depend on their own experience, intuition, and trial and error efforts to make such judgments.

#### SOME INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES

The state of practice in the prevention of further battering is characterized by trial and error. There are few solid guides to effective practice. Practitioners are experimenting with a variety of techniques in an effort to determine what will eliminate the violent behavior.

Recognizing that the accumulation of stress or anger is often a precursor of battering, many of the intervention techniques being used are designed to help batterers recognize the mounting stress and to react to it differently than they have in the past. This basic approach is reflected in many of the practices that are described in this section. It must

be remembered, however, that evidence to support the effectiveness of these techniques is at best limited and, in many instances, nonexistent. A bibliography is attached to this report to enable the reader to obtain more detailed information on some of the techniques highlighted below.

Behavior Modification. Behavior modification techniques are being used as emergency interventions to prevent immediate crises and then to develop long term skills in how to resolve problems that could lead to battering.

An example of a specific technique is the "time out". Its purpose is to terminate reinforcement of behavior which leads to abuse. The time out is a warning to stop everything immediately and retreat to neutral corners. The batterer is taught to use a verbal cue or to flash a hand signal to communicate to his spouse that a "time out" is needed. When the signal is given, the couple immediately separates. After a specified length of time, usually thirty minutes to an hour, the couple comes back together to resolve the situation. If one partner needs additional time to relieve tension further, this is negotiated.

Couples can also contract to change the usual consequences of abusive behavior. For example the batterer may agree to pay a fine or leave for a couple of nights as punishment.

Cognitive Restructuring. Often it is not the situation, but rather what a batterer tells himself about it that

gets him angry. An example offered by one of the conference participants involved a situation in which the wife came home with a new hair cut. The situational definitions made by the husband increased his anger: "Since she cut her hair, she's going to have an affair" or "She should have asked me first."

Cognitive restructuring involves changing the way a batterer talks to himself about his experiences. Even in situations in which anger is justified the batterer must learn to talk to himself in ways which will not escalate the anger to the point of violence.

Biofeedback Techniques. Biofeedback techniques can be useful in teaching men who batter awareness of physical arousal or to feel small cues. Tension continues to build to the breaking point resulting in an act of violence. Using biofeedback instruments the men see a visual reflection of their tension levels. They then have a better understanding of what it feels like to be physically tense. After their awareness of their tension increases the men can then be instructed in methods of reducing tensions.

Stress Reduction Techniques. Stress reduction techniques are used to reduce the tension level which leads to violent behavior. Once batterers have been taught to be aware of mounting stress, they can then communicate to their partners that tension is building and use reduction techniques to stop further escalation.



Deep breathing and progressive relaxation training are examples of stress reduction techniques that can be taught as exercises. Routinely repeated, they can become habitual responses whenever tension is building. Relaxation then becomes an automatic response to stress rather than the response of violence. Physical exercises such as jogging were also suggested as methods to reduce tension, but aggressive techniques, such as hitting a punching bag, for example, should be avoided.

Communication Skills Training. Often the batterer has difficulty identifying feelings of sadness, fear and rejection, or may interpret these feelings as anger. Communication skills training help men who batter to identify and express their full range of feelings. The batterer also learns to describe behaviors which they do not like in their spouse and to constructively ask for changes. They are taught to accept and to give criticism in a positive manner, and become more cognizant of the rights of self and others.

Role-playing is one technique used to teach communication skills. This technique gives men an opportunity to offer alternative behaviors to violence, and to rehearse them in a supportive setting. They can practice new ways to communicate and get feedback on what was effective and how the communication could be improved. Some of the key concepts taught to the batterer are: direct communication; feedback;

active listening: avoidance of anger producing red flag words/issues, and the art of compromise solutions.

Aggressive Ventilation Therapy. Aggressive ventilation therapy encourages a person to release his anger through techniques such as screaming, punching a bag, or hitting a pillow. It was suggested that aggressive ventilation therapy is inappropriate in working with men who batter. Encouraging aggressive behavior can increase that behavior. A strong penchant for physical responses to stress already exists in most men who batter and should not be encouraged in intervention programs.

Other Techniques. Additional ideas, suggestions, and techniques for working with men who batter were described during the conference which do not fit into discreet categories. The Buddy System, for example, is often used in group therapy with batterers. Buddies check up on each other during the week or call each other if they need help in a problem situation that may lead to violence. Challenging another man who is about to batter can help the batterer to solidify his own position and integrate his new beliefs about battering.

An anger diary is used to help the batterer become more aware of situations which lead to violence. He keeps a record of those situations that bring on anger and abusive behavior. Different options for handling these situations can then be suggested.

Teaching men who batter methods of self-reward can reinforce the positive effects of the various intervention methods. When a situation occurs which might have resulted in violence but instead was controlled, the batterer rewards himself. The reward might be a verbal statement to himself or an activity like going to the movies.

#### INTERVENTION FORMATS

The type of format that is used in assisting men who batter and their families can vary depending upon the severity of the situation, the specific needs of the individuals, and the theoretical preferences of the practitioner. The specific methods and techniques described earlier can be used in an individual, group, or family centered format and in settings which are residential or non-residential. Ideally, all of these options should be available and a joint decision made by the client and the practitioner should determine which is most appropriate.

Individual vs. Family/Couples Intervention. One of the areas of greatest debate at the conference was whether the initial phase of intervention should focus on the family or the individual. There was agreement that the objective of this initial intervention is to stop the violence, but different views emerged on how this is best accomplished. The family-centered approach takes the position that the more effective way to stop violence is to see the family together. By seeing

family members interact, it is easier to assess the interaction patterns which can add to and maintain the violent behavior. It was emphasized that the purpose of seeing the family together is not necessarily to keep them together, but can help them work through a decision either to separate or continue the relationship without further violence. Individual or group treatment for one or both members of the couple may also be included as part of the total rehabilitation program.

The opposite view, stressing an individual approach, emphasizes that violence is individually learned behavior which can be changed. Therefore, in order to stop the violence, the intervention is focused directly on the batterer. The underlying assumption is that the victim is not responsible for violence. It is the batterer who is responding inappropriately to stress and, therefore, must learn to take responsibility for his actions. There was also some concern that the stresses of family therapy may lead directly to abusive behavior. Family therapy can be used as a follow-up if the couple decides to stay together.

Several issues emerged from the discussions of individual vs. family/couples intervention approaches that remain unresolved but point to the need for further study and sharing of ideas and experiences. The first issue concerns the relationship between the intervention format and the decision to separate or maintain the relationship. Does a couple or family approach force the abused wife to accept the notion of staying

together as the only option? On the other hand, does separation of treatment for the batterer reinforce the feelings that only through divorce or separation can the abuse be ended? Another issue involves the relative success of the two approaches in stopping the abuse. A need for hard data on the effectiveness of each method was clearly recognized. It was suggested that values regarding the importance of the family vs. that of the individual also play a role in the selection of the intervention format. An issue was raised concerning how the values and theoretical biases of the practitioner may influence the clients' choice of an intervention format.

Group Methods. Although the individual vs. family debate was unresolved, there was a consensus on the value of using group methods with batterers. The group method often breaks down the social isolation that is characteristic of men who batter and permits the development of an emotional support system. Greater self-esteem develops from the mutual support and caring that is shared among the members of the group. The batterer learns that he can help others and receive help when he needs it. Seeing the progress that is made by other men encourages the batterer's belief that he too can change. The group provides a setting in which the men can practice new behaviors and new ways to communicate with others. By watching others rehearsing new roles, providing feedback to other members, and listening to comments and suggestions of other

men, the batterer discovers a range of new options for dealing with stressful situations.

In addition to the therapy group, a self-help group may have benefits for the abusing spouse. Typically, this model involves people with a common problem coming together to provide mutual understanding, help, and support. Alcoholics Anonymous and Parents Anonymous are perhaps the most well-known self-help groups.

Another type of self-help group discussed at the conference was Parents United, whose members have dealt with the problem of incest in their families. A unique focus of this group is their express concern to look outward and become involved in social change activities. Parents United members meet with police, psychiatrists, and social workers, to help sensitize them to a range of family problems with which their work may bring them into contact.

The self-help concept with a social action component may have potential for working with battering spouses. A self-help group composed of batterers and perhaps victims of spouse abuse could raise public awareness of the problem, advocate for needed services, and work with community agencies in areas such as service planning and staff training.

Practitioners have also been using the format of consciousness-raising groups in working with batterers. Objectives of this type of group may include: raising men's awareness of their cultural conditioning in aggression; deflecting anger

away from women, particularly their spouses, and towards their cultural conditioning: and building a group support system. A technique used by one of the participants who leads such a group is to ask the men to list gains and losses resulting from the women's movement. Handouts provide a stimulus for discussion on various topics such as the benefits for men in liberating sex roles.

Educational Workshops. Assisting men who batter through an educational workshop format is being tested by some of the conference participants. Sessions are run once a week for a period of four to six weeks. the content of the sessions may include a variety of intervention techniques. Initial sessions confront the batterer with the seriousness and the illegality of his actions. The message is clearly conveyed that the abuse must stop. Continuing sessions are concerned with cultural values that accept family violence, societal messages that encourage male aggressive behavior, and family experiences that may have condoned physical abuse. Intervention methods such as assertiveness training or communications skills training are then used to help the batterer learn new ways of behaving without using violence.

One of the problems cited by the conference participants in working with batterers is the difficulty in maintaining their participation in treatment. an upwardly mobile middle class batterer, whose job may be threatened because of his actions, is motivated to enter a diversion program rather than

face a jail sentence. Even if the marriage is dissolving, he is likely to continue treatment rather than face a potential loss of his job and status. Batterers who are unemployed, working in blue collar jobs, or even professionals, such as doctors or lawyers, are more likely to drop out of treatment, if the marriage is ending. Therefore, a short-term educational program that conveys the message that spouse abuse is unacceptable may be more effective with these people than a more in-depth rehabilitation program.

Residential Programs. Although existing programs specifically designed to help the battering spouse are primarily non-residential, the advantages of a residential program should also be considered. One of the conference participants, who had developed a residential program for men who batter within a veteran's hospital, provided insight on the benefits of this design.

The intensity of treatment that can be provided in this setting was cited as one of the major advantages. Residents have the opportunity to work with staff on a daily basis in a range of treatment approaches. Separation from the spouse is also seen as beneficial in breaking the negative symbiotic bond that often exists in these relationships. Developing support systems outside of their marital relationship helps batterers reduce their sense of isolation and emotional dependency on their spouses. Upon completion of the residential program, follow-up services such as marital

counseling, parenting education classes, or a self-help group can be offered.

Community Organization. One of the conference participants described a community organization approach to family violence that was used in a large county with two and a half million people. The underlying assumption was that in a community of this size a wide power base was needed to bring greater attention to the problem. The main objective was to build a county-wide structure that would take responsibility for studying the dimensions of the problem, enlisting the support of police and other community agencies, and influencing legislators to act on their recommendations. An open conference was held in which the general public and representatives from community agencies were invited. The conference provided the momentum for the development of a county-wide coalition which includes women's service organizations, law enforcement agencies, and other public and private community organizations. This kind of structure facilitates planning and program development. It also increases the likelihood of long-term community-based funding for batterers programs.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

##### RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION

The efforts at forming a partnership between the justice and social service systems in order to help batterers are very recent. The support needed to promote the objectives

of this partnership suggested by the conference participants are the following:

Develop a technical assistance network for service providers. Although the effectiveness of various types of intervention approaches has not been validated through research and evaluation, the experience and insights of those working in the field would be extremely valuable for those developing service programs. Technical assistance from the pioneers in this field could be obtained through funding from various federal agencies and offered to new and developing service programs. Additional technical assistance might also be offered in such areas as developing community service networks, formalizing working relationships, evaluating service programs, utilizing the services of volunteers, and developing public media campaigns.

Conduct research on the effectiveness of various intervention strategies. Although many different types of interventions are being tried, there is very little solid evidence to support their effectiveness. Providers operating on limited budgets often cannot afford to hire outside evaluators or do not have the expertise to design internal evaluation methodologies. Providing funding for independent evaluations of service programs, assisting in the design of self-evaluation systems, and conducting longitudinal studies of various intervention approaches were suggested as appropriate and useful activities for federal agencies.

Provide continued funding. To assess the long-term impact of the service intervention for batterers, it is recommended that program funding be continued for a minimum of three years.

Produce audio-visual materials and training packages.

A very tangible type of support that can be provided to service programs are audio-visual materials and training packages. Such materials are usually too expensive for service programs to produce. Such materials can be useful in community education programs targeted on the prevention of abuse, educational programs directed at batterers, and in-service training programs for various levels of staff and volunteers working with men who batter.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO LOCAL JUSTICE AGENCIES

Local justice agencies can also play a critical role in supporting efforts at the community level to resolve the problem of spouse abuse. Conference participants suggested that local justice agencies could be most helpful in the following ways:

- Conduct public awareness campaigns which make clear that spouse abuse is against the law;
- Insure that laws governing spouse abuse are enforced;
- Support victims who bring charges against the batterer, e.g. develop victim advocates programs to help persons through the system;

- Designate a specific liaison person in the justice system to work with community service agencies which are addressing spouse abuse; and to formalize reporting on batterers participation in treatment programs to the justice system.
- Provide training for police in spouse abuse crisis intervention techniques and in effective ways of using service networks;
- Provide prosecuting attorneys with the power to refuse to withdraw complaints against batterers;
- Develop a policy for including recommendations from diversion programs into pre-sentence investigations of abuse cases and alternative sentencing.
- Provide clinicians with education about the legal system - its abilities and limitations in responding to family violence.



SUMMARY

In addition to providing services to the victims of spouse abuse, strategies are needed for stopping the abuse at its source. Working with the batterer to end the violence, however, is a difficult task, particularly because of his lack of motivation to change. The criminal justice system can provide the leverage needed to force the batterer to recognize the seriousness of his actions and to motivate him to change through the threat of punishment. Developing a range of alternatives to incarceration then becomes the responsibility of the social service system.

In assessing the problems of men who batter, practitioners need to examine a broad range of factors in order to determine the most appropriate types of intervention. The danger of lethality should be a concern in each case. Risk factors which signal a potential for homicide or suicide should be examined in order to determine the need for protection.

Because a batterer may have other problems that relate to the abuse, such as alcoholism or unemployment, a comprehensive network of services is necessary to respond to the total needs of the batterer and other members of the family. Coordination is a key function because of the many different types of agencies that can be involved in the service network.

Although the state of the art of working with batterers is not very advanced, the intervention methods and formats outlined in this report show promise of being effective. In the absence of outcome data, a healthy debate continues over the long-range effectiveness of various methods. New approaches to the problem, such as educational and community organization strategies are beginning to be tested. A greater sharing of information is needed about these and other intervention models among those working with men who batter.

Building a diversion strategy for men who batter as an alternative to incarceration requires strong linkages between the justice and social service systems. Monitoring the batterer's progress and feeding back information to the appropriate justice authority is an essential process requiring a formal mechanism. Lines of communication must be very clear to prevent the batterer from becoming lost between the two systems.

FOOTNOTES

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- 11 Barbara Star, "The Psychological Dynamics of Battered Wives," unpublished paper presented at the California Attorney General's Conference on Domestic Violence (Los Angeles, 1978).
- 12 J.J. Gayford, op.cit.
- 13 Richard Gelles, The Violent Home (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1972): 117.
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\* This reading list was prepared by Phil Oxman and Dan Saunders.

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