



Bergen County Alternatives to Domestic Violence

Abuse Intervention Program

For any referral questions please call: 201-336-7582 or email ADVMonitoring@co.bergen.nj.us

Purpose of Program

The purpose of the Program is to provide an opportunity for the participants to examine the costs of violence, consider the benefits of nonviolence and provide ongoing risk assessments that are coordinated with all systems involved. The Program is not anger management or therapy, it is a psychoeducational intervention informed by a cognitive behavioral approach. The focus is to:



Examine the belief systems and behaviors that support violence.



Expand definitions of violence and controlling behaviors.



Survivor- Centered Approach: Victim safety is our primary concern. AIP is committed to ensuring a victim's experiences and perspective are always the basis of the group content.



Identify and practice non-controlling alternatives.

AIP OVERVIEW

The Abuse Intervention Program (AIP) sponsored by the Bergen County Department of Human Services/Division of Alternatives to Domestic Violence (BCDHS/ADV) is a highly structured program built on offender accountability. According to evidence-based research, the curriculum of an abuse intervention program needs to focus on exposing thought patterns related to abuse and violence, restructuring those patterns, and developing alternative behaviors. AIPs are built on the belief that all abusive behavior is a choice and individuals who use violence, abuse and coercive control are capable of change, both in their actions and their beliefs.

PROGRAM LENGTH

Our program length is a minimum of thirty-two (32) weeks, and it consists of group sessions that meet once a week for ninety (90) minutes. A group modality is strongly preferred; individual sessions can be contraindicated and couples counseling or any form of conjoint family therapy is contraindicated and compromises victim safety.



Minimum of 32 weeks



Once a week



90 minutes

CRITERIA FOR COMPLETION

The discharge criteria for completion of BCDHS/ADV-BIP is based on a program participant's demonstration, through self-report, group participation and information obtained through collaboration with collateral contacts, that they:

- ▶ Discontinue all abusive behavior;
- ▶ Are fully accountable for past violent, controlling and abusive behavior,
- ▶ Respond to current situations with an understanding of the ways their past abusive behavior continues to affect those whom they victimized;
- ▶ Understand the use of abuse is a choice and he is fully accountable for future choices;
- ▶ Are in FULL compliance with all Court Orders and legal mandates;
- ▶ Demonstrates ongoing growth in his capacity for empathy and cognitive processes that utilize partner perspective thinking; and
- ▶ Acknowledges an awareness of his risk for recidivism

Why Judicial Collaboration is Critical:

- ▶ Research shows that when AIP's are integrated into the coordinated community response (CCR) recidivism reduces and victim safety improves. Therefore, an Abuse Intervention Program that functions independently of a CCR compromises the integrity of the work to develop offender accountability and compromises victim safety.
- ▶ Evidence-based research shows that when an individual is actively engaged in an abuse intervention program and there are ongoing risk assessments that are communicated within a systematic coordinated community response, the risk of lethality and serious harm towards a victim is reduced significantly.
- ▶ The AIP receives a participant's mandate from the Court or a referral from child protection (DCPP), and other agencies.
- ▶ AIP's provide ongoing feedback regarding participant; attendance, level of participation, and risk factors.
- ▶ This ongoing communication ensures that the judge's orders are enforced and that violations can be consistently and swiftly addressed.



ANGER MANAGEMENT VS. ABUSE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS



Domestic abuse is an issue of dominance, power and control. Anger Management programs put the nexus of the abuse on the perpetrator's anger. Anger management programs obfuscate the issue of offender responsibility by focusing on the expression of anger, rather than the instrumental nature of violence and abuse. Treating abusers without theoretical grounding is dangerous and compromises the safety of victims.

| Aspect | Anger Management | Abuse Intervention Programs |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Core Perspective | Views anger as a loss of control, focusing on managing expression. | Addresses abuse as a deliberate strategy for power and control. |
| Focus | Helps individuals recognize, process, and express anger appropriately. | Holds abusers accountable and confronts harmful belief systems. |
| Impact on Responsibility | May inadvertently justify violence by emphasizing anger expression. | Emphasizes full responsibility for abusive behaviors. |
| Use of Anger | Encourage them to "get in touch with their anger; just learn to express it in appropriate ways." | Abusers will use the tactic of anger, or not, depending on whether it suits their need in any given situation. |
| Group Dynamics | May become a "gripe session" where abusers validate distorted thoughts. | Confronts entitlement and enforces accountability. |
| Self-Esteem vs. Empathy | Focuses on building self-esteem, potentially reinforcing entitlement. | Prioritizes empathy. Self-esteem is built by esteemable acts. |
| Victim Impact | Risks reinforcing the idea that victims provoke anger. | Maintains that victims are never responsible for an abuser's actions. |

CORRELATION BETWEEN SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



Substance abuse will not cause a non-abusive person to use abuse towards their intimate partner. Substance use does not cause domestic abuse, but it can increase the severity of violent incidents. Studies indicate that a quarter to half of men who commit domestic violence also struggle with substance use disorders. On heavy substance use days, an abuser is 11 times more likely to use physical violence. More than 20% of men reported using substances before their most severe violent acts.

Research shows that women with partners who drink heavily are five times more likely to experience intimate partner violence (IPV). Substance use precedes 47% of domestic assaults, with 92% of male perpetrators having used substances on the day of the assault.

An abuser's substance use can:

- 1**
Reinforce a belief in dominance over their partner.
- 2**
Lead to severe injury or death in IPV cases.
- 3**
Serve as an excuse for violent behavior.
- 4**
Cause distorted perceptions, making abuse seem justified.

