WHAT QPS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PERPETRATOR INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

When a man perpetrates domestic violence which emerges out of his desire for coercive control over his partner, it is a deliberate, purposeful, and intentional choice. It isn't random, or accidental, or isolated. His violence is a decision he has made to gain power and control over his partner. It is a dynamic pattern of behaviour, driven by his beliefs of ownership of her, superiority to her, and his rights over her. Even if a man is a first-time offender, with his first contact with police, and courts, he is a long-time abuser. The preferred rehabilitation intervention of domestic violence offenders since the 1980s has been perpetrator intervention programs (sometimes unfortunately called men's behaviour change programs). These programs in this submission will be referred to as men's domestic violence intervention programs.

However, for this man to change his beliefs, his worldview, his mind-set towards women and children and his entitlement over them, he needs external motivation initially (from Courts, Police, Corrective Services, Child Safety) to instigate and accelerate his internal motivation to change, which can take place in men's domestic violence intervention groups (sometimes called men's behaviour change groups). These programs, in Qld, vary in length in terms of hours of intervention, in terms of theory of change, and in content and curriculum, and in facilitators' experience and training, in terms of evaluation and follow-up post program. They are not all the same. So, the question "do these programs work" needs to be better framed as to "which programs work for which men under which conditions". What follows is a response to that last question through the lens of recent research into program effectiveness.

1. **Voluntary or Involuntary Groups**

    a. When a man is 'ordered' to a program via a court, his external motivation is far stronger, and our community's leverage over him is stronger, and he is more likely to complete the program and comply with his orders, than if it is up to him alone, 'voluntarily' deciding if the program is for him or not. 'Voluntary' men tend to drop out of the program at higher rates and are not accountable to courts, QPS, or to Corrective Services. They 'volunteer' to 'fly under the statutory radar'.

2. **Only one component of a coordinated community response, driven by Courts, and QPS**

    a. The men's dv intervention program needs to be embedded within a tightly coordinated community response, where courts, police, corrective services, child safety and non-government organizations work closely with the men's dv intervention program. The men's program is one component of a coordinated community response and is not the isolated remedy for their violence. The program works as part of an integrated and coordinated response to their violence, never just on its own.

3. **Women's advocate as integral to the men's program**

    a. Information and feedback from the partners/ex-partners of the offenders who are on the men's dv intervention group needs to be fed back to the program facilitators and staff, via the women's advocate, whose role is to connect with partners/ex-partners and provide information about the reality of these women's experiences while the men are on the program and after they complete.

4. **Structured curriculum focused on stopping gender-based violence, replacing abusive mind-set, with respectful and responsible mind-set, aware of harm caused to women, children, and self.**

    a. These are not men's support groups or self-help groups. The programs that are most effective are those that focus on change from gender-based violence beliefs and behaviour, to beliefs of gender equality, respect, and responsibility. Men who understand the enduring harm to women and children caused by men's abusive control fare better on these programs. These programs are not punishment but opportunity for change for men. Men need to hear a strong message that if this opportunity is not taken, then a stronger response will be forthcoming.

5. **Swift and Certain Assignment to a Men's DV Intervention Program**

    a. Once the domestic violence perpetrator has come to the attention of statutory authorities, the quicker he can be referred (officially) to a men's dv intervention group the better his chances of rehabilitation. Waiting for long periods of time, on long waiting lists, is not conducive to men's change. Action needs to happen as soon as possible, to support the victim and to hold him accountable.

6. **Swift, Certain and Transparent Consequences for non-compliance**

    a. Researchers for the last 20 years or so have shown that when there are swift and certain consequences for men's non-compliance recidivism rates drop and program completion rates increase. This is a sign that the community takes men's behaviour and women's safety seriously. Men's violence will not be overlooked or dismissed by the community.

7. **Brief programs or longer-term program**

    a. Programs in Qld vary from 16-week community programs to 27-week Corrective Services programs. Research indicates that longer programs tend to produce better results for long term change. Higher risk perpetrators will need more intensive and more long-lasting interventions. Men who are in jail for severe and serial dv offences will need long term programming to rehabilitate from their violent ways.

8. **Risk assessments with information sharing**

    a. While risk assessment is not an exact science, facilitators using DV risk assessment tools can provide information for High-Risk Teams as to the level of risk the perpetrator may pose. It is better to use risk assessment tools as a preventative strategy rather than solely as a predictor of future violence. Information from risk assessment tools can be indicative of a man's pattern of abusiveness and alert those who work with him to the level of intensity the intervention will require.

    b. The risk information gained should be shared with relevant stakeholders the risk is to be managed effectively.

9. **Case management for those with other needs (mental health, AOD, housing/employment, etc).**

    a. A significant number of men on the programs will have multiple challenges, e.g., AOD, mental health issues, housing/employment, etc. While these do not cause their violence, they can disrupt a man's ability to complete his dv intervention program effectively. Therefore, there is a need for case management of these men to work with them to address these challenges to

support their successful completion of the dv intervention program. This can also intensify the level of supervision and surveillance of these men while completing the intervention.

10. **Majority of men will make significant changes but around 20% will not be amenable to this intervention and will likely require more intense, longer-term supervision and surveillance.**

    a. For most men who complete a comprehensive structured DV intervention program that is one component of a coordinated community response, where there are consequences for non-compliance, and case management and referral for other related issues, positive changes will be likely (according to partners/ex-partners; self-report, and official recidivism records).

11. **An awareness of unintended consequences, where perpetrators may use the men's intervention program for their own manipulative purposes.**

    a. Typically, perpetrators of domestic violence are manipulative and scheming in their use of the system to further abuse their partners. Those responsible for men's programs must be aware and alert as to how these men may use the program itself to further abuse and control their partners. Program staff must work to avoid the misuse of their program to further abuse partners.

    b. Men who use program in unintended ways must be called to accountability and consequences should ensure.

Readings:

The research and writings of Russell and Rebecca Dobash, Ellen Pence, Michael Paymar, Graham Barnes, Ed Gondolf, Lundy Bancroft, David Adams and others have informed the above summary.

DV OFFENDER FOCUSED INTERVENTION/CONSEQUENCES

By the time DV offenders have come to the attention of police and courts, there are criminal offences committed that require swift and strict responses, if victim/survivors are to be protected, and perpetrators are to be held accountable. As a practitioner who has worked with DV offenders in men's domestic violence intervention programs, and as an academic who has trained professionals and researched DV perpetration, I am constantly concerned about the apparent lack of criminal justice consequences for men who:

- Fail to show at the service where they have been court ordered to go for assessment and intervention via the men's DVIP
- Drop out of programs without completion of that program
- Disrupt programs via behavioural non-compliance through
  - Threats to facilitators
  - Unwillingness to engage or participate
  - Argumentativeness
  - Other breaches of program contract
- Breach DVOs while on programs.

Research has shown that swift, appropriate, and certain consequences for non-compliance send a clear message of community zero-tolerance for DFV, and a willingness to take a committed stand against an offender who disregards court-orders and DVOs. When consequences do not ensue for non-compliance the message that is sent is that as a community, we do not take these elevated risk factors seriously and therefore we run the risk of emboldening perpetrators and further endangering victim/survivors.

In my work now, which includes teaching, training, and supervision, I want professional practitioners to know that when managing perpetrators, we need to send strong consistent messages that:

1. Victim/survivors are not responsible for stopping or containing his violence
2. Perpetrators are responsible for their choices to abuse and to be violent
3. Our job is to hold them responsible for their violence and to hold them accountable to safety standards inherent in our legislation
4. Domestic violence is no 'private family matter' but a crime against our community legislation
5. Men's domestic violence intervention programs (with a court order to attend and complete) are an opportunity to unlearn the violent response, take full responsibility for their violence, understand the serious harm they have caused (and continue to cause) partners and children, and to change their violent and abusive beliefs and behaviour. Should perpetrators not take that opportunity, then there will be consequences. We do not stand by and let his 'reign of terror' over her continue.

I am also aware (and we all need to be aware) that whatever we do or don't do in terms of intervention may carry unintended consequences for victim/survivors. This must be always factored into our work at all levels.

I do not have a legal background, but I believe it is incumbent on criminal justice professionals and courts to ensure proactive measures are taken to reduce risk to victims and ensure offenders are held to account for any non-compliance of clear court and criminal justice directives.

I believe it would be helpful to our work as facilitators of men's domestic violence intervention programs to know and understand just what is available in Qld in terms of criminal justice consequences for high risk and non-compliant offenders. Our work would be bolstered and supported by the statutory system is swift and certain consequences could be relied upon.

Could the list below be verified, confirmed, critiqued, corrected, and added to, in terms of what is available or what could be available, to our systemic response for non-compliant offenders:

- ❒ Court orders perpetrator to 'please explain' if he has not complied with order to attend men DVIP
- ❒ Highest risk offender meets with Detective and Intervention workers to be warned about serious consequences if behaviour continues and offered support to change via DVIP, AOD program, etc. This is like the focused deterrence initiative
- ❒ Detective contacts and warning letters to high-risk offenders, before reaching the highest risk category.
- ❒ Consistent criminal justice response for perpetrators who violate probation and parole orders
- ❒ Completion of DVIP as a DVO condition, meaning if he does not complete the program then he has breached the DVO
- ❒ Completion of DVIP as suspended sentence conditions
- ❒ Weekend detention or house arrest.
- ❒ Intensive probation supervision and daily reporting

- ❒ Electronic monitoring
- ❒ Psychiatric and mental health evaluation as conditions of DVO or probation
- ❒ Arrest and detention for criminal conduct toward victim
- ❒ Arrest and detention for other criminal conduct
- ❒ Revocation of weapons permit and confiscation of weapons until DVIP completed
- ❒ Jail, fines, community service
- ❒ Financial restitution for victim/survivors where appropriate
- ❒ Completion of DVIP with a court review
- ❒ Deportation

If consequences were clearly and consistently conveyed to offenders and carried out, when necessary, then disregard for court orders, DVOs, recidivism, breaches, and ongoing violent behaviour for many offenders could be reduced.

Some further reading below:

Smart Justice: A New Paradigm for Dealing with Offenders
Sabet, Kevin ; Talpins, Stephen ; Dunagan, Matthew ; Holmes, Erin
Journal of drug policy analysis, 2013-08-22, Vol.6 (1), p.1-17

The Effect of Perceptions of Sanctions on Batterer Program Outcomes
HECKERT, D. ALEX ; GONDOLF, EDWARD W.
The journal of research in crime and delinquency, 2000-11, Vol.37 (4), p.369-391

Court Compliance as a Predictor of Postadjudication Recidivism for Domestic Violence Offenders
Kindness, Alana ; Kim, Han ; Alder, Stephen ; Edwards, Alison ; Parekh, Asha ; Olson, Lenora M.
Journal of interpersonal violence, 2009-07, Vol.24 (7), p.1222-1238

Targeting repeat domestic violence: Assessing short-term risk of reoffending
Morgan, Anthony ; Boxall, Hayley ; Brown, Rick
Trends and issues in crime and criminal justice, 2018-06-01 (552), p.1-16

Predicting dropout of court-mandated treatment in a British sample of domestic violence offenders
Bowen, Erica ; Gilchrist, Elizabeth
Psychology, crime & law, 2006-10-01, Vol.12 (5), p.573-587

Court Compliance as a Predictor of Postadjudication Recidivism for Domestic Violence Offenders
Kindness, Alana ; Kim, Han ; Alder, Stephen ; Edwards, Alison ; Parekh, Asha ; Olson, Lenora M.
Journal of interpersonal violence, 2009-07, Vol.24 (7), p.1222-123

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