

BREAKING THE CYCLE FATHERING AFTER VIOLENCE

**CURRICULUM
GUIDELINES
AND TOOLS
FOR BATTERER
INTERVENTION
PROGRAMS**

Produced by the FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION FUND

Made possible with support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

BREAKING THE CYCLE

Fathering After Violence: Curriculum Guidelines and Tools for Batterer Intervention Programs

Produced by:

Family Violence Prevention Fund

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Made possible with support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

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The contents of this publication may be adapted and reprinted with the following acknowledgement:

“This material was adapted from the
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We first would like to thank Juan Carlos Areán, the primary developer and lead consultant for the Fathering After Violence Project. His stamina and leadership enabled us to untangle and reflect on many important issues that can support men as fathers without foregoing accountability. Juan Carlos enlisted many advisors to help us understand the varied perspectives of what fathers need and how to help them – Lundy Bancroft, Meg Crager, Maria Delgado, Scott Girad, Malaquias Gomes, Judge Sidney Hanlon, Steve Jefferson, Andy Klein, Barbarah Loh, Betsy McAlister Groves, Stan McLaren, David Mandel, Fernando Mederos, Nikki Paratore, Carolyn Rexius, Haji Shearer and Van Straughter. These individuals, as well as present and former participants of the Nurturing Fathering Program, Emerge, Inc., and Men Overcoming Violence, all provided critical insight to the development of the Fathering After Violence framework.

In November 2002, the FVPF convened a national advisory committee to critique the framework, review the curriculum and identify gaps in the project. This vastly-talented group of leaders and experts is listed in Appendix I.

Technical development and assistance were provided by Luis Alvarenga and Steve Gousby. We would like to extend a special thanks to the Men's Collective for Equal Relations (CORIAC) in Mexico for permission to use in the pilot project and then reproduce in the guidelines artwork by children as tools for Batterers Intervention Programs (BIPs) in the United States.

Parallel to the development work, the FVPF turned to Mercedes Tompkins, Executive Director of the Boston-based Dorchester Community Roundtable (DCRT), to partner with us in order to further develop and implement a pilot test of the ideas and materials for BIPs. Monthly meetings with staff at DCRT, as well as with Mitch Rothenberg from Common Purpose, Inc., David Adams from Emerge, Inc., and Wayne Williams from the Roxbury Comprehensive Community Health Center, were fundamental to a thoughtful learning process. Ann Fleck-Henderson, our primary evaluator, worked with David Robinson and Nelson Ochoa from the Simmons College School of Social Work to evaluate the impact of the project at the three BIPs. We are extremely grateful to the group facilitators and staff of the BIPs, who took the extra time to learn new material, make outreach calls to women partners, and participate so fully in the evaluation process.

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Bilingual Curriculum Tools (*in pockets*)

Exercises on Empathy, Modeling and the Reparative Framework (<i>in English</i>)	
Exercises on Empathy, Modeling and the Reparative Framework (<i>in Spanish</i>)	
Children’s Drawings	
CD (<i>in English and Spanish</i>)	
Script for Michael’s Story (<i>in English</i>)	
Script for Michael’s Story (<i>in Spanish</i>)	

Introduction: Engaging Men in Prevention

The Batterer Intervention Program curriculum guidelines and tools presented in this document are part of a larger effort to engage all men – both non-violent men and those who have used violence – in domestic violence prevention initiatives. These materials were developed as part of the Fathering After Violence Project that the Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPPF) initiated in 2002 with support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

All men have important roles and influence in the lives of children. Whether from a father, uncle, mentor, coach, teacher or neighbor, children learn from what they see and hear, from what men do. Interrupting the cycle of domestic violence means that all men must take an active role in supporting the healthy, non-violent development of children.

Men who have used violence and are fathers or father figures have a particular challenge. In order to break the cycle of intergenerational violence and support the life-long health of their children, these men must first stop their violence and understand what their children need from them. Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs) provide a unique and promising setting in which to start this conversation with men.

Upon completion of a BIP, some men may be appropriate for and motivated to seek more intensive work on repairing relationships with the children in their lives. Possible settings for long-term work include specialized groups or aftercare programs operated by BIPs, as well as responsible fatherhood programs, visitation centers or other venues that focus on fatherhood and men who have used violence.

Guiding Principles For Fathering After Violence

Helping men renounce their violence, acknowledge the damage to their children and, when appropriate, transform rela-

tionships requires partnering with survivors and collaborating with other programs and systems in the community that are working with families experiencing domestic violence.

Before collaboration begins, each entity must examine how it supports or *doesn't support* the following guiding principles of the Fathering After Violence Project:

1. The safety of the victim and the children should always be the first priority of any intervention or policy regarding men who have used violence.
2. All interventions involving children who have witnessed or experienced violence should be guided by the voices of the non-abusive parents.
3. Violence against women is harmful to children in multiple ways, including their safety, development, and relationships with both their violent fathers and non-offending mothers.
4. Fathers (and father figures) are important to children and children are profoundly affected by their fathers, for better or worse.
5. It is possible for some violent men to renounce violence.
6. Interventions with fathers who have used violence must be implemented with awareness of the cultural context in which parenting happens.
7. Relationships damaged by violence are sometimes repairable, and some men can be helped to achieve constructive and healing relationships with their children.
8. Contact between the offenders and their children or parenting partners should only occur when it is safe and appropriate (e.g., contact does not compromise the physical and emotional safety of mothers and children, or undermine mothers' parenting, etc.).

Overview and Purpose of Curriculum Guidelines

Over the last 25 years, Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs) have developed around the country to help men stop their violence in intimate relationships. BIPs vary widely, with most curricula taking a psycho-educational approach that focuses on beliefs and assumptions participants hold about women and relationships with women. The primary goal is to help participants examine their beliefs that support violent behavior, stop the violence, and learn alternative, non-abusive behaviors. Curricula have not, traditionally or systematically, addressed men's relationships with their children. However, more recently, a few programs, recognizing the danger of domestic violence for children, have included attention to parenting.

This workbook presents new curriculum guidelines and tools on children and domestic violence for fathers who have been violent. These materials address men in their roles as fathers or father figures to children, and are designed to increase men's:

- ▶ awareness of the effects on children of domestic violence,
- ▶ motivation to stop abusive behavior,
- ▶ capacity for healing and having constructive relationships with their children, and
- ▶ support of their partner's parenting.

The curriculum guidelines and tools in this workbook are designed to help BIPs begin conversations about fatherhood so that as men initiate a process of renouncing violence, they can understand and take responsibility for the harm caused to their children, and, when appropriate, consider what it takes to repair and transform relationships. These materials:

- ▶ provide a rationale for working with men on fathering issues, and discuss the benefits and challenges of using BIPs as the vehicle;
- ▶ provide background information on the cultural and parenting contexts of the work;
- ▶ present organizational readiness considerations;



Drawn by a 14-year-old-boy; text in drawing reads "on the the inside" (left) and "on the outside" (right)

- ▶ propose staff training activities;
- ▶ present evaluation findings from the pilot groups; and
- ▶ identify areas for further learning and inquiry.

Drawings by children in Mexico City depicting their feelings about their fathers appear throughout the text. An organizational self-assessment appears in the appendix to help programs create mechanisms for monitoring and learning from experience, along with a directory of additional resources.

Bilingual (Spanish-English) curriculum tools can be found in the workbook pockets. These include:

- ▶ three exercises on empathy, modeling and the reparative process in English and Spanish;
- ▶ a compact disc containing the real-life story of a man named Michael, told in Spanish and English, who both witnessed and perpetrated domestic violence;
- ▶ the English language script for Michael’s Story;
- ▶ the Spanish language script for Michael’s Story; and
- ▶ the Mexican children’s drawings.

The curriculum guidelines center around three parenting exercises that are meant to be implemented over a four- to six-week period, but we recognize that four to six sessions is only a beginning. Men will bring to these sessions varied attitudes and openness to change, and not all men will renounce violence. The exercises encourage men to consider children’s perspectives and their own behaviors as fathers and father figures, and introduce the concepts for repairing damaged relationships with children.

Programs that implement the curriculum guidelines should consider potential next steps for men who renounce violence, and who are invested in improving relationships with their children and supporting their partner’s parenting. Such steps might include fathers’ groups for men who have renounced violence; parenting groups under the auspices of a BIP, a supervised visitation center, or elsewhere in the community; or services at a family agency. In such groups or services, men could be supported – and at the same time held accountable

“There may be well-founded anxiety about men who are identified as batterers being supported in their roles as fathers.”

– as they begin the hard work of actually repairing damaged relationships with children.

There may be well-founded anxiety about men who are identified as batterers being supported in their role as fathers. This material is not an endorsement of contact between violent fathers and their children. Courts and others must assess whether it is safe for the children and the mother for a father to have ongoing contact with their children, and the nature of that contact (Salcido Carter, p. 2). When decisions about safe contact have been made, these tools should be used within the constraints of those decisions.

Curriculum Exercises and their Incorporation

The three parenting exercises, developed in English and Spanish, focus on: (1) creating empathy for children’s experience of domestic violence; (2) identifying behaviors that constitute positive modeling by fathers for their children, while supporting the mother’s parenting; and (3) understanding men’s roles in the process of repairing a damaged relationship with their children.

In 2003, the Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPPF) partnered with the Dorchester Community Roundtable and three BIPs – Common Purpose, Emerge, and Roxbury Comprehensive Community Health Services – to pilot test the exercises

in Boston, Massachusetts. About 60 men in six groups participated.

Two years of planning preceded the piloting of the exercises, which were based on learning from victim service agencies, BIP staff, literature, focus groups with battered women, including specific sessions with women of color, and focus groups with men in BIPs and fatherhood programs. Program directors of the three pilot sites – Mitch Rothenberg, David Adams and Wayne Williams – met with the project staff monthly for more than a year and contributed significantly to the development of the exercises, implementation planning, and evaluation measures.

The exercises do not instruct men in BIPs to have direct contact (or assume or encourage contact) with their children

nor to engage their children in work with them on the topics covered. Men without children or without any contact with their children could participate and potentially increase empathic capacities, identify and work on new behaviors, and begin to understand what is involved in repairing relationships damaged by their violence. The exercises are designed to support men's motivation to renounce violence, to develop their abilities to envision the experiences and perspectives of the children in their lives, and to create behavioral goals for themselves. Nonetheless, BIPs may decide that for some men the materials are not appropriate because of the implication of future, if not ongoing, relationships with their children. This is a question that requires more understanding and continued reflection. Safety for partners and children must always remain the first priority.

Cultural Context

The battered women's movement has been grounded in a feminist analysis of domestic violence, an analysis that emphasizes sexism and patriarchy as important explanatory concepts. Despite the involvement of women of color in the movement, its programs and approaches have historically neglected attention to race and ethnicity. Like the larger battered women's movement, BIPs were created, designed, and run by individuals whose primary focus was gender oppression. As the movement has matured, it is clear that for families of color, domestic violence must be viewed within the intersection of racism and sexism.

Since the first BIPs in the 1970s, legal sanctions have increased, police and prosecution practices have become more effective, and abusive men are more likely to receive court-ordered treatment. The demand for BIPs has grown dramatically. Today, there are estimated to be at least 1,500 programs in the United States. Many BIP participants are men of color; many are poor; many are marginally employed or unemployed. The work of batterer intervention occurs within larger socio-political and cultural contexts, which should inform the programs. Central to those contexts are issues of oppression.

Despite the demographic profile of BIP participants, programs have been hesitant to include an analysis of cultural context and oppression. This may be in part a function of the dominant analysis of sexism. In addition, programs have feared that men will use their culture and racial victimization as a way to justify their violence. This fear is not totally unfounded because men who batter often seek justifications for their behavior. However, it is believed that skilled and well-

trained BIP facilitators can affirm culture and acknowledge oppression while at the same time keep participants accountable for their abusive behavior. Fear should not be an excuse for avoiding these issues.

In the last few years, a number of people of color who work in BIPs have pointed out that if culture and oppression are ignored, these elements will work against the intervention.¹ These experts agree that to stop violence in a given cultural group, the intervention has to be based on values generated by that community, rather than the dominant culture. If participants perceive that the intervention is being imposed from outside their cultural framework, they might interpret it as one more way in which the dominant culture seeks to oppress them. There is the risk that participants will see family violence as a "white" issue and, therefore, dismiss the relevance of stopping their violence.

Talking about fathering in BIPs provides an opportunity for programs to start exploring issues of culture and oppression. Oppression and domination have been systematic efforts to dehumanize the target populations. One of the strategies of oppression has been to deprive men of their ability to provide and protect. This strategy has been utilized consistently in different manifestations of dominant behavior from the most extreme (genocide, slavery) to the more accepted (colonization, marginalization, racism, discrimination, poverty and so on). The progressive, on-going mutation of this strategy has profoundly impacted the communities and the psyches of men of color and affected their ways of parenting. BIPs have to make a concerted effort to create a context worthy of the participants' trust. This necessarily involves recognition of and respect for their cultures and the structural barriers they face in establishing a constructive family life.

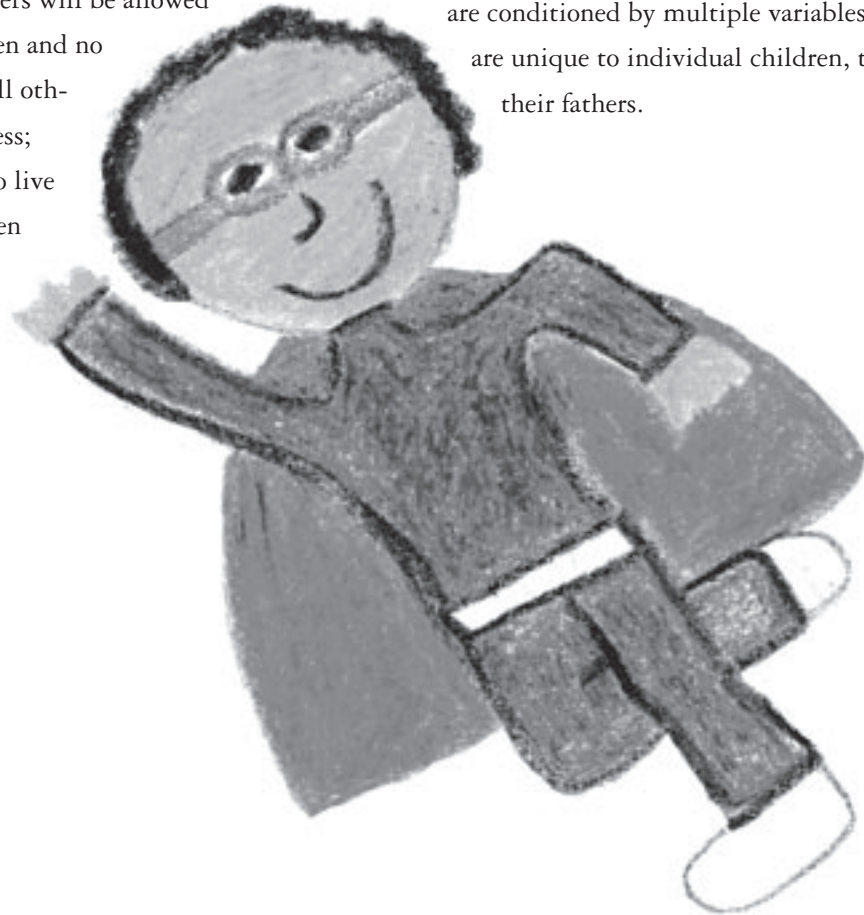
¹ We want to acknowledge the work of Fernando Mederos, Ricardo Carrillo, Jerry Tello, Julia Perilla, Oliver Williams, *Mending the Sacred Hoop*, Benjamin R. Tong, Lee Mun Wah, *the Men's Resource Center of Northern New Mexico and others*.

Parenting Context

Men in BIPs may have dual identities. As sons, they may have few models in their own lives of consistent, nurturing parenting by men. As fathers and father figures, BIP participants may have some form of parental relationship not only with biological children, but with other (non-biological) children of former partners and future partners, as well as various young kin. Men may be biological fathers, adoptive fathers, step-fathers, uncles, or mothers' boyfriends. For a child, they may be temporary, new, or life-long male figures.

Given the history of violence men in BIPs share, their ability to parent is shaped not only by cultural and personal factors, but also by interpersonal and legal ones. The safety of the children and the children's mother is always the primary concern. Some men will be prohibited legally from contact with either mothers or children; others will be allowed supervised contact with children and no contact with their mothers; still others may have unsupervised access; and many men will continue to live in the same homes with children and the children's mother.

"Parenting" necessarily will take different forms and can be envisioned on a continuum. Co-parenting connotes full access and equal participation in child-rearing with varying divisions of labor. Collaborative or cooperative parenting suggests a helpful participatory role, not necessarily with full access, under the direction of the primary parent. Some men will be parenting at a distance, without any direct contact. Others will be absent from their children's lives and have no contact at all, at least for the time being. In this curriculum, we emphasize the connection between responsible fathering and respect for and support of the children's mother. Demonstrating respect and support for the children and their mother may require that fathers have no contact. For some men, contact with children should not resume until the children reach adulthood and decide to initiate communication. For other men, contact with their children can resume after the men have completed reparative work. Decisions regarding contact are conditioned by multiple variables and realities that are unique to individual children, their mothers and their fathers.



Drawn by an 11-year-old-girl

Rationale For Parenting Work With Men Who Abused Partners

The parenting exercises were created fundamentally for their value for children: children in the homes and families of men who have been violent and the future children of those children. Many men who have been violent continue to have daily contact with their children, as part of the same household with the children and their mother. Some women stay with or return to men who have been abusive. In other situations, where a couple has separated, children have varying degrees of contact. Sometimes this contact is only through supervised visitation; often there is ongoing unsupervised contact. In general, relationships with children tend to be enduring, even if the intimate relationships that produced the children have ended. Men who cease contact with their children still live on in the children's minds.

Research in the last two decades has made unarguably clear the damaging effects of exposure to domestic violence on children. Partner abuse harms children even if the children are not abused, and men who are abusive to their partners are at high risk of being abusive to their children. Abusive men have difficulty supporting their partner's parenting. In addition, limited research suggests that men who are abusive to their partners are also often controlling and egocentric in relation to their children. Many have a sense of entitlement, almost ownership, with regard to their children that affects how they respond to their children's behavior (Francis, Scott, Crooks & Kelly, 2002, cited in Salcido Carter, p. 3).

A growing body of literature suggests the importance to children's development of positive involvement by a father figure. We also know that high conflict between divorcing parents is a consistent and reliable correlate of poor outcomes for children (Kelly, 2000, cited in Salcido Carter, p. 4). Children will benefit if abusive men, as they renounce their violence, can learn to better support the children's mother psychologically, practically, and financially.

Many men appear to be more capable of developing empathy, acknowledging damage, and accepting responsibility for violence in relation to their children than in relation to

“In general, relationships with children tend to be enduring, even if the intimate relationships that produced the children have ended.”

their partners. If the men in BIPs come to understand the damaging effects of their violence on children, even if the children are not abused, this can be a powerful motivator for renouncing violent behavior. Content on parenting may be an effective path toward attitudinal and behavioral change for the men, reducing the chances of their children's continued or subsequent exposure to violence, as well as their partner's experience of violence.

Men who are violent in their intimate relationships are more likely than other men to have grown up in homes in which there was domestic violence (Heise, 1998). Domestic violence in their parental home is, therefore, a risk factor for boys becoming violent. This pattern of intergenerational transmission is not inevitable. A father's acknowledgment of responsibility, modeling of non-violent behavior, and attempt to repair damaged relationships are likely protective factors, reducing the risk of another generation of domestic violence.

Although the prevention of domestic violence would suggest the importance of helping men toward safe and healthy relationships with their children, it is a viable strategy only if the women, who are partners of the men and mothers of the children, support it. First of all, the women are in the strongest position to assess the safety of children's contact with their

fathers. Secondly, the children will be better served if the messages about contact with their father are consistent.

The process of developing exercises on *Fathering After Violence* included conducting a series of focus groups with mothers of color who had survived domestic violence. The women's opinions and desires about their formerly abusive partners' involvement with their children informed this project. Most women said that although they were not in a relationship with their children's fathers, they would like the fathers to "be there" for their children (Atchison, et al., p.9). Among the recommendations from the four focus groups were the following:

- ▶ Formerly abusive fathers who have taken responsibility for their violence could, for the sake of their children, seek to establish emotionally supportive relationships with them.
- ▶ Formerly abusive men who have renounced violence against women and children could serve as powerful anti-violence spokespersons that effectively discourage boys and young men from adopting abusive behaviors.
- ▶ Service providers and activists should help parents who have been victims or perpetrators of abuse talk to their children in order to reduce the effects of violence on them (Family Violence Prevention Fund, p.5).

The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African-American Community also convened focus groups, in this case with 20 women who had experienced domestic violence and were involved with the child welfare system. Their findings revealed that women wanted fathers to be safely involved with their children.

- ▶ Focus group participants explained their primary co-parenting goal was to facilitate a healthy relationship between their children and the father while decreasing

the probability that abuse would be directed toward the child.

- ▶ These women's concerns suggest that certain measures be enacted to ensure that children would not be kidnapped or physically and/or emotionally endangered.
- ▶ Some women did not share these concerns. They were convinced that their former abuser would not abuse their children. For them, a violent partner did not equate to an abusive father (Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, p. 2).

Additional steps were taken to ensure the *Fathering After Violence* Project was grounded in the needs and desires of mothers who survived domestic violence. Project principals attempted to reach by telephone the partners of all men participating in the six Batterer Intervention Groups piloting the new exercises. Half of the partners were reached prior to the new curriculum sessions in the Boston pilot study. Of those partners who were contacted, almost all were very positive about including material on relationships with children in BIP curricula. About two thirds were positive about their partner's involvement with the children; the other third expressed some concerns about their partner's parenting, but still supported his involvement. This kind of contact with survivors can inform whether it is appropriate to use this curriculum with particular men. It also opens up new avenues for dialogue with survivors about their worries for their children.

The focus groups and partner contacts include too small a number of women to support confident generalizations. Nonetheless, it appears from these data that many women who have survived domestic abuse want their partners or ex-partners to "be there" for their children. They hope for their partners to understand the effects of violence on their children, and they also want their partners to work to improve relationships with their children.

Benefits and Challenges of Working Through Batterer Intervention Programs

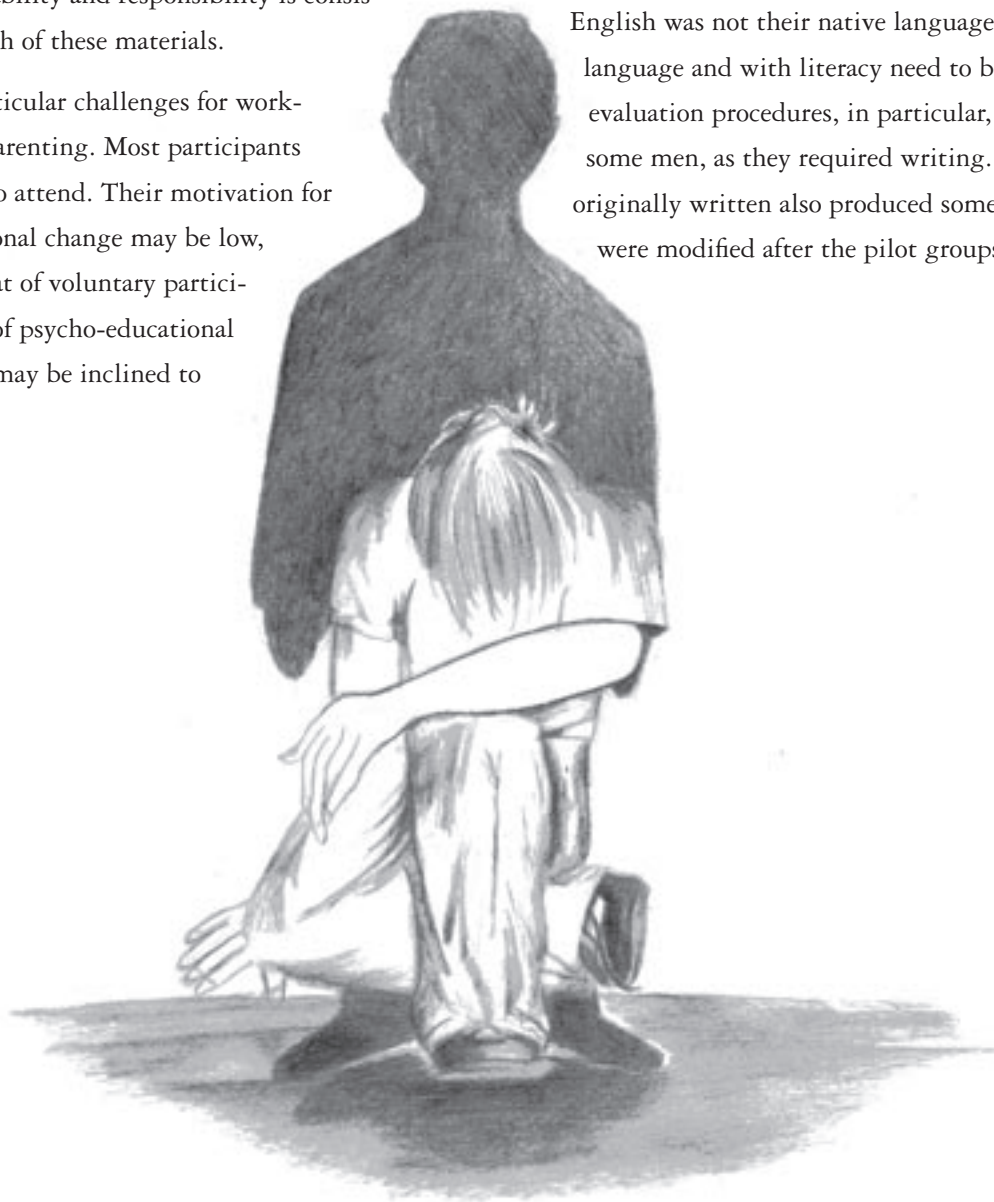
Batterer Intervention Programs constitute already existing psycho-educational programs for men who have been violent to their partners. Therefore, the target population for this work is particularly accessible through these programs. There are other benefits to reaching violent fathers through BIPs. These programs typically work with men within the context of a commitment to the safety of their partners. Many have policies and procedures for partner contact in place, and the emphasis on accountability and responsibility is consistent with the approach of these materials.

BIPs also present particular challenges for working with fathers on parenting. Most participants are court-mandated to attend. Their motivation for learning and for personal change may be low, certainly less than that of voluntary participants in other kinds of psycho-educational groups. Participants may be inclined to

“serve their time” or actively resist new learning. The challenge is to engage their interest, curiosity and emotional investment in the material.

Men in BIPs are only a small subgroup of men who have been abusive in their intimate relationships. The subgroup over-represents men of low socio-economic status and men of color. This skewed proportion reflects biases and discrimination in both our police and court practices. Many men, and especially those of higher socio-economic status, will not be reached through these programs.

The pilot programs included a Spanish speaking group, but the English speaking groups also included men for whom English was not their native language. Difficulties with language and with literacy need to be respected. Our evaluation procedures, in particular, were difficult for some men, as they required writing. The exercises as originally written also produced some difficulties and were modified after the pilot groups.



Drawn by a 13-year-old-boy

Organizational Readiness

Batterer Intervention Programs vary greatly in the following ways, all of which are important for implementing parenting materials, and all of which must be considered in preparation.

- ▶ **State oversight and certification.** Many states certify BIPs, applying standards and oversight. Some states do not. In Massachusetts, BIPs are overseen by the Department of Public Health, the approval of which was needed to pilot the materials. It is important to know the certification requirements (if any) of your state. Where there is an oversight agency, that agency needs to be part of the planning process both to inform the development of new standards and to ensure that the parenting curriculum does not compromise current standards.
- ▶ **Length of program.** BIPs vary in length, with an average minimum of 24 to 26 sessions (Adams, 2003). Massachusetts mandates 40-week programs, which is the context in which these materials were piloted. As currently developed, the three exercises require four to six group sessions. Adding this material to a program necessarily involves subtracting other material. These are difficult decisions, and more difficult in a shorter program. The pilot program indicates that these materials are only a beginning toward helping men who have been violent understand the full impact of their violence on their relationship with their children. Programs may also use this material in aftercare groups or in voluntary fatherhood groups, subsequent to the basic Batterer Intervention Groups.
- ▶ **Organizational infrastructure: policies and forms.** Forms should be reviewed for their attention to children's and fatherhood issues. Inquiries on fatherhood convey to participants that the program values their roles as fathers and father figures, and takes seriously the impact of violence in the lives of children. Intake interviews should include questions about men's relationships with children, biological and non-biological. At present, many programs collect data on children only in relation to CPS involvement.

- ▶ **Relationships with agencies, organizations and others who are child- and family- focused.** BIPs should not do this work without collaboration and consultation with local agencies. New relationships and referrals with child-focused organizations will help BIPs be informed about community resources for children and their families.

As we begin to raise the bar for BIPs to think more deliberately about children and fathering, programs need to be organizationally ready to respond to new issues regarding the care and safety of children. A list of possible resources for women, children and men should be developed for staff to use when appropriate. These lists should include community-based programs, such as the Boys and Girls Club, YMCA, children's mental health programs, and youth development organizations, as well as the child protection agency.

- ▶ **Knowledge and procedures concerning child protection.** When relationships with children become a focus of attention, the chances of learning about child maltreatment may increase. Staff need specific training on the legal and clinical issues of child abuse and neglect, including mandated reporter laws. Staff from BIPs should explore the current practices and policies regarding the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse. Domestic violence and sexual assault state coalitions and local domestic violence programs can be particularly helpful in uncovering this information since most have been working to improve the child protection response to domestic violence. Partners, when contacted, must receive information about exceptions to confidentiality, such as mandated reporting and duty to warn.
 - ▶ **Pre-implementation curriculum review.** Before implementation, BIP directors should become familiar with the materials and their theoretical justification in order to consider the fit with their own programs and possible modifications. Successful implementation includes sensitivity and responsiveness to local practices and cultures. Thus, program directors should go beyond training to shape the curriculum to their specific situations.
-

- ▶ **Training and supervision requirements for BIPs.** Attention to fathering should be integrated into supervision and in-service training. Training, addressed more fully in a subsequent section of this document, should involve not only group facilitators, but also program directors and staff who contact partners. Pre-implementation training of group facilitators is critical. Effectiveness depends on the facilitators' understanding of and enthusiasm for the parenting exercises. At all three pilot sites facilitators were pleased to be given well-developed curriculum materials and were positive about the intent. In the pilot program, the trainer was also a primary developer of the curriculum materials. Training of group facilitators and partner contact staff was done at each site in one three-hour session. In addition, supervision and debriefing during and after implementation of the exercises are fundamental to good programming.
- ▶ **Policy about and consistency of partner contacts.** To maximize safety for women and children, it is important that the partners of men in the groups using the new parenting exercises be aware of this project. The intent in the pilot groups was to contact each woman by telephone, invite her to keep in touch with the program, and inform her about resources. In the pilot project, we also wanted women's opinions about introducing materials on parenting and their thoughts about their partners as parents. BIPs in Massachusetts are required to make contact with the partners of men in their groups. Therefore, the programs piloting the exercises already had procedures in place to inform partners about the new parenting content. New procedures may be necessary for programs that do not routinely contact partners. Some localities prohibit contact with partners and in those cases, the issue of informing partners must be considered within local constraints.
- ▶ **Cultural identities of participants and of facilitators.** Material on parenting, including issues of discipline and self-care, may carry different meanings in different cultural groups. Also, the cultural congruence of participants and facilitators may affect group process. As

“To maximize safety for women and children, it is important that the partners of men in the groups using the new parenting exercises be aware of this project.”

programs review and adapt the exercises, these cultural variations are critical to consider. Some of the Massachusetts groups were culturally specific – one for African American men and one for Latino men – with facilitators from the same communities. Others were culturally and racially mixed. Most participants were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as is typical for BIPs. In Massachusetts, Batterer Intervention Groups are co-facilitated by a man and a woman. Each program has to consider the implications of participants' cultural/racial identities as well as the effects of the gender and cultural/racial identities of facilitators.

- ▶ **Supportive follow-up for men in the groups.** Group facilitators need to be alert to the possibility that participating men may raise issues which need special attention in or outside the group meeting. These may be issues about their children, such as overzealousness about repairing relationships, or issues about their own emotional stability or mental health, which may be triggered by the materials on parenting.

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- ▶ **Continued support and follow-up for men who complete the program.** Programs should consider what might constitute next steps for those men *who renounce violence*, and who are invested in improving their relationships with their children and supporting their partner's parenting.
 - ▶ **A cautionary note about community perceptions.** It is important that community agencies and courts under-

stand that these exercises do not constitute a parenting program. If successful, they help men get to the point where a parenting program may be useful. Completing a program that includes these materials does not imply that a man is a more competent parent, nor does it even imply motivation to be a more competent parent, as most men are not voluntary participants.