
Principles of the Conflict Accountability Program

Curriculum Task Group

Final Report

Introduction

In 2006 the domestic violence provider community in seeking best practices for participants ordered to attend psycho-educational programs to stop disrespectful, abusive, intimidating and/or violent behaviors in intimate partner or former intimate partner relationships, to increase their level of accountability for their behavioral choices, and to develop skills to exercise different behavioral choices, proposed that an alternative non-certified 16 week course be offered. The Criminal Courts acknowledged the need for such a class for those defendants who had been convicted of a crime based on conduct related to domestic abuse but who did not meet the standards to be required to be placed on formal probation. Family Court and Juvenile Dependency Court also acknowledged a need in the community to offer a group for clients whose needs did not meet the criteria of participation in the Certified Batterer's Intervention Program. There was a common understanding that these groups would address the needs of clients who may find themselves in a relationship where there is sufficient conflict that has been identified by a referral source as problematic.

In an effort to create standards for this 16 week group, and given concerns regarding the lack of a standardized curriculum for "Parenting Without Violence" groups, the Court System's Committee formed a Curriculum Review Subcommittee in June 2007. A Task Force was created to establish basic principles for this alternative 16 week program, herein referred to as the Conflict Accountability Program (CAP).

Providers and referring agencies were invited to attend Task Force meetings. Participants were identified through Probation's list of Certified Programs, attendees at the Court System's Committee meetings, and via e-mail meeting notification. The group met a total of 10 times, and was facilitated by Barbara Krzyckowska, MFT who had worked with Rolanda Pierre-Dixon in establishing the standards for Batterer's Intervention Groups in 1991. Participants included Lisa Banks, Calvin Bechum, Victoria Colligan, Sallie Danenberg, Zohreh Gharaati, Lily Grenz, Mica Fuller, Nancy Marla Johannim, Marshall, Daniel Nishigaya, Julie Saffron, and Debbie Sayre. The recommended guidelines have been adapted from the Standards for Certified Batterer Intervention Programs and Parenting Without Violence Groups.

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Program Philosophy

The emphasis of CAP is upon personal accountability for one's own behaviors, while at the same time holding the safety of victims as a primary concern. There is also a recognition that the choice to exercise self-control is independent of external factors, and that the underlying etiology is deeper than loss of control or anger.

Referrals

CAP was developed to accommodate the wide range of needs of participants referred by Criminal, Family, Unified, Juvenile and Probate Court. These groups should be flexible so as to address the individual expectations of the referral source and the needs of the client.

Program Content

CAP shall focus on developing personal accountability for one's own behaviors which contribute to conflict. The group will address the following:

- Identifying behaviors that are disrespectful, intimidating, coercive, and/or physically violent
- Assisting participants to acknowledge their behaviors
- Developing an understanding of their motivation and the impact of their actions on others
- Exploring alternative behaviors

CAP shall address these issues with an understanding of cultural differences, while also acknowledging that culture is not an excuse for abuse.

The Task Force acknowledged that specific curricula will vary among providers, and that the varied curricula provide an opportunity to meet the wide variety of client needs.

Program Structure

The program structure of CAP is based on the program structure of the Certified Batterer's Intervention Groups. The purpose of the structure is to maximize the effectiveness of the program, and to provide safeguards for participants. CAP must be in compliance with professional and ethical standards, including any applicable laws.

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CAP consists of 16 consecutive weekly groups, two hours in length not including breaks, which follow the model of a facilitated psycho-educational group. The length of CAP was modeled after the Parenting Without Violence program, with the belief that in 16 weeks participants can learn basic information, and begin the process of behavioral change, but that the depth of learning may be significantly shorter than in the Certified 52 Week Domestic Violence Batterer's Intervention Groups.

Each program shall complete a thorough intake prior to a participant beginning group to assess their needs and the nature of violence that precipitated the referral. Programs should use their clinical judgement to place participants in groups that would best meet their needs. However, if the primary issue is battery, participants shall be placed in a same sex group. If the primary issue does not involve battery, participants may be placed in a mixed group as long as the partners are not in the same group, and the participant understands that they will be participating in a mixed sex group.

Groups shall have a minimum of 3 participants and a maximum of 7 participants with one facilitator, and a maximum of 15 participants with two facilitators. The groups must be psycho-educational, with a focus on the core concepts.

To successfully complete CAP, participants may not incur more than 2 missed groups during the program duration. Any absence must be made up for a successful completion of the program. Participants who incur more than two absences must be terminated from the program. Programs must have clear written criteria for considering the reinstatement of participants who exceed two absences.

Programs offering CAP shall have the ultimate authority in the selection of program participants and, therefore, shall develop and utilize criteria for acceptance and rejection. The program shall follow a non-discrimination policy.

Provider-Participant Contracts

The use of written contracts provides participants with a clear understanding of program expectations, grounds for termination, and informed consent. Prior to beginning CAP, participants shall be provided a written contract that specifies the requirements of the particular program, including fees, policy regarding missed classes and tardiness, grounds for termination, reinstatement procedures, and expectations.

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Given that participants are primarily court ordered, release of information is required to report compliance to the referring or monitory agents. Participants must be informed of their rights to confidentiality, and their choice to release information for purposes for reporting progress. Participants must be provided a Confidentiality Statement, including the Limits of Confidentiality. Participants must also be informed in writing under what conditions the provider will report participant behavior to the referring agents or others.

Staff Qualifications

CAP shall be overseen by a licensed mental health professional, or someone with commensurate experience in the field of family violence with an understanding of the dynamics of conflict.

The primary facilitator must have at least one year experience in the field of domestic violence, and be knowledgeable in, but not limited to, partner abuse, child abuse, sexual abuse; dynamics of conflict, violence and abuse; substance abuse; cultural issues, racism, and ethnocentrism; and the justice system. Facilitators must also demonstrate an understanding of victimology.

All facilitators must complete 16 hours of continuing education per year in domestic violence or related issues.

Reporting Requirements

Upon receipt of signed consent and completion of CAP by the participant, the provider must within 7 business days provide the referring party or monitoring agent a written narrative report that specifies the participant's level of accountability, respect for boundaries, and understanding of the role of anger and other life circumstances which contribute to maltreatment. The report will also describe the participant's understanding of the impact of their behavioral choices on their partner, children and others; and his/her ability to identify alternative strategies. The report will provide recommendations for any additional interventions.

If the participant has provided a signed consent, the facilitator may report during the course of the participant's program any concerns to the referring party or monitoring agent. The facilitator must comply with Tarasoff and other reporting requirements.

Every effort should be made to provide any identified victims with information regarding CAP and community resources. Any information obtained from the victim by a program must be held in confidence except as required by law.

