

Appendix M

Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs) in Marginalized Communities

*This information is taken directly from ODVN's
"Ohio Standards for Batterers Intervention" (2010) cited in Appendix U.*

The framework for batterer intervention programs (BIPs) in the United States was developed with dominant groups in mind – Caucasian, middle-class, heterosexual, Christian, and able-bodied citizens in urban and suburban environments. Consequently, programs not designed with non-dominant groups in mind do not provide minorities with the full access to BIPs and their benefits. Therefore, BIPs should cultivate and maintain collaborative relationships with marginalized communities through local and regional task forces, outreach, prevention and intervention initiatives, cross-training, and monitoring. BIPs are highly encouraged to provide training for staff to improve their ability to work with diverse populations and employ members of marginalized communities as BIP staff and group facilitators.

BIPs should be aware that some participants may use their membership in a marginalized community as an excuse for their abusive behaviors or program non-compliance. BIPs should consult with appropriate experts to determine any validity to these claims.

The following communities are vital to consider in Ohio.

Appalachian Communities

The following Ohio counties are considered to be in Appalachia: Adams, Ashtabula, Athens, Belmont, Brown, Carroll, Clermont, Columbiana, Coshocton, Gallia, Guernsey, Harrison, Highland, Hocking, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mahoning, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Pike, Ross, Scioto, Trumbull, Tuscarawas, Vinton, and Washington (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2008). Appalachian people who reside in urban and suburban Ohio may face the same challenges as those in the designated Appalachian regions.

Appalachian regions face socio-political and economic challenges, such as "geographic isolation, high unemployment, lack of public transportation, and high levels of poverty" (Contos Shoaf, 2004). BIPs should be aware of how these factors may affect victim safety. Though these challenges may affect BIP participants, BIPs should not allow these factors to be used as excuses for abusive behaviors.

Communities of Color

Communities of color include people who belong to an oppressed group based on race and/or ethnicity and experience the oppression on a daily basis. They include but are not limited to people of African, Asian, Hispanic/Latino(a), Native, and Pacific Islander descent and may be of multiple heritages. BIP staff should be aware of the racial oppression that members of these groups face in their daily experience at institutional and individual levels, though not using the experience of oppression as an excuse for battering behaviors.

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BIPs should reflect the experience of communities of color in program materials by adjusting language, including applicable scenarios in group work, and creating policies that are inclusive of communities of color.

Communities of People with Disabilities

A disability is defined as any physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of an individual; record of such impairment; or being regarded as having such impairment (Americans with Disabilities Act or ADA, 1990). The range of disabilities can be developmental in nature (before age 21), cognitive, physical, sensory, acquired, age-related, and psychological/emotional (King Akers, 2006). People with disabilities are diverse and include individuals who may or may not self-identify as members of a community of people with a disability. It is important not to label, diagnose, or document that an individual has a disability without asking directly and securing supporting documentation with their permission.

BIPs should comply with federal laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. Compliance may require accommodations like accessing sign language interpreters for participants who are deaf or hard of hearing, providing extra assistance with homework for participants with a learning disability, or providing physical accommodations for participants in wheelchairs, as examples. Culturally, linguistically, and visually accessible curricula and materials are important to maximizing participation and learning.

Consideration should also be given to participants' partners' disabilities. Batterers may attempt to use their partner's disability status as an excuse for abusive behaviors or program non-compliance.

Immigrant and Refugee Communities

Immigrants and refugees are people of varying races or ethnicities born outside the United States. They may have limited knowledge of English, a limited personal support network, and lack of familiarity with U.S. customs and norms.

Agencies receiving federal funding must ensure that programs normally provided in English are accessible to individuals with limited English proficiency and, thus, do not discriminate on the basis of national origin (Civil Rights Act of 1963 Title VI). Participants' partners, children, family members, or friends should *not* be used to interpret, as this could jeopardize safety and confidentiality. Ideally, written materials would be available in other languages, too, or at least translated by an interpreter.

A participant's status as an immigrant or refugee may *not* be used as an excuse for abusive behaviors or program non-compliance.

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Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) Communities

“Gay” and “lesbian” are terms referring to men and women (respectively) who are attracted to members of the same sex. “Bisexual” is used to describe people who are attracted to both males and females. “Transgender” is a term describing people who transcend the traditional binary concept of gender. “Queer,” formerly an exclusively derogatory term for all LGBTQ people, is now proudly used by some as an umbrella term for the entire LGBTQ community.

When LGBTQ community members are referred for services, BIPs should provide a thorough assessment in order to hold the batterers accountable and avoid re-victimization of partners. BIPs must be particularly careful in keeping participants’ and partners’ sexual orientation confidential.

BIP program materials, case scenarios used in group work, and policies should be inclusive of LGBTQ peoples’ variety of experiences. BIPs should consider the safety of LGBTQ participants when placing them in heterosexual or mixed groups. BIPs may, in collaboration with organizations serving LGBTQ communities and domestic violence programs, develop groups specific to LGBTQ participants with facilitators who are themselves LGBTQ (though confidentiality should be considered).

Religious Communities

The majority of people in the United States practice Christianity, particularly Protestantism (CIA, 2007). Marginalized religious communities include individuals who experience oppression based on non-Christian religious affiliation or practices, such as people who are Jewish, Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, indigenous, or atheist, among others. BIPs should treat all religious practices with respect, while not allowing any religious practice or belief to be used as an excuse for abusive behavior.

BIPs should reflect the experience of non-Christians in program materials by adjusting language, including applicable scenarios in group work, and creating policies that are not religion-specific.

Rural Communities

A rural community is characterized by small population size and/or population density as well as a higher density of acquaintanceship (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2009). BIPs should be particularly careful in keeping participants’ and their partners’ information confidential as personal information may spread easily in rural communities where people tend to be acquainted with each other.

Batterers may use isolation in rural areas as a method of controlling their partners. The prevalence of firearms in rural communities is also a safety consideration. As curricula and

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materials for BIPs are often created for urban or suburban populations, BIPs serving rural communities should reflect the experience of the community in program materials.

Women Who Use Force (WWUF)

Women who are arrested for domestic violence are mostly victims who used violence against their abusive partners, often in self-defense (Stuart et al, 2006). BIPs should collaborate with local domestic violence programs, courts, and other community partners to establish policies on working with WWUF.

As a majority of WWUF are primary victims, women arrested for DV in general may be best served by DV programs rather than BIPs that traditionally work with male perpetrators of DV. Women should be placed in women-only groups or individually. In case of LGBTQ individuals, refer to E above. Women, even if assessed as predominant aggressors, shall not be placed in groups for male perpetrators.

Additional information can be found in ODVN's *Guidelines for Programs Working with Women Who Use Force*.