

CT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OFFENDER PROGRAM STANDARDS

Historical Overview and Current Status

Introduction of DV Standards

- Original Subcommittee formed as part of the Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Commission (CJPAC)
- A group of professionals started work in 2013 to craft DV Standards for CT
- The Subcommittee produced a robust set of best practices and guidelines for practice during 2014
- The DV Standards were presented to CJPAC in September of 2014 for approval
- Led to Public Act 15-211

Purpose and Overarching Goal of DV Standards

- Global Standards to be used by any State of CT or Community-Based Agency that offer Batterer Intervention Programs (BIP) or equivalent intervention
- Ensure that all interventions adhere to current best practices found in the Judicial Branch programs and others across the country
- Promote consistency and quality to better hold the offender accountable, reduce recidivism, and increase victim safety
- CT Standards apply only to heterosexual males arrested for or who have engaged in intimate partner violence against a female victim(s)
- CT Standards also apply to either group interventions (preferred) or individual counseling

Public Act 15-211

- Section 19 of this act established a Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards Advisory Council.
- The Advisory Council was charged with promulgating, reviewing, updating and amending (as necessary) these standards
- The Advisory Council also developed standard application/approval process for providers and established a webpage for individuals to access forms and the list of approved providers
- Section 22 of Public Act 15-211 prohibits the prosecuting authority from entering a nolle prosequi as to any family violence charge unless the prosecuting authority states in open court the reason for that disposition and, if the reasons include consideration of the defendant's participation in a counseling or treatment program, a representation that such counseling or treatment complies with the Domestic Violence Program Standards

DV Standards Challenges/Barriers

- In terms of our overarching goal– CT Standards continue to meet and/or exceed the Standards found in other states
- One major concern is that despite comprehensive outreach efforts, the number of agencies/individuals applying to be on the approved list is currently lacking statewide
- Another barrier was the application and utilization of the DV Standards in the criminal courts post implementation. Similarly, the standards have not been globally applied to all State agencies that use BIP or other robust domestic violence intervention/treatment
- Since COVID– only one (1) agency has reached out to apply to be on the list
- There is no quality assurance being done at any level as it relates to the agencies on the approved list
- Section 22 of PA 15-211 creates fundamental challenges that the Subcommittee did not have the ability to overcome
- OVW Grant Funded Evaluation – Central CT State University– completed October of 2018

Moving Forward With DV Standards

- The 2021-2022 Subcommittee review of how CT Standards compare with CURRENT standards found in other states was very favorable- CT continues to meet or exceed standards. This meets our statutory responsibility.
- Where CT could improve further falls within 2 major areas:
 - A) Strengthen Cultural Responsiveness
 - 1) Some states have much more developed and specific plans
 - 2) Internal assessments should be conducted regarding responsiveness to cultural differences among staff and participants
 - B) Expand the Standards to other populations
 - 1) CT standards are only for men (heterosexual) committing acts of violence against female intimate partners
 - 2) Other state standards include strategies to address diverse populations including:
 - Women
 - Marginalized Communities (individuals outside of mainstream US culture)
 - LGBTQIAA+ Community

NEXT STEPS

- The proposed modifications cannot be put into Standards at this point– as there are real barriers for criminal justice stakeholders
- A return to the overarching goal of setting standards globally for all state entities and community-based agencies who offer or utilize BIP is necessary
- A re-frame is proposed – go back to the original intent – the standards as a best practice guide – and then ask state agencies that use BIP to tell us how they have or have not built the standards into programming and why some elements could not be added to the BIP. We could also then inquire about community-based programs that are contracting with an agency.
- The number of community- based agencies offering BIP or significant Domestic Violence treatment is at a minimum UNKNOWN but probably not robust across the state

NEXT STEPS-- Continued

The Subcommittee makes the following recommendations:

1. Craft and distribute a survey to all key State agencies and the Judicial Branch

Some suggested survey questions:

- A. Does your agency offer BIP or BIP-like programming?
 - B. Does the current offerings comport with DV standards?
 - C. Does your agency contract or otherwise send referrals to community-based providers?
2. Based on the outcomes, additional surveys will be sent with follow-up to gain an understanding of available programming across the state
 3. Legislative modifications could be recommended based on the findings/outcomes
 4. Modifications to the approval/application process may be necessary