

# COORDINATING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PERPETRATOR TREATMENT PROGRAMS

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The purpose of perpetrator treatment is to increase victim and community safety by reducing the perpetrator's risk of future abuse. Treatment provides perpetrators an opportunity for personal change by challenging their destructive core beliefs and teaching positive nonviolent cognitive-behavioral skills. Although the degree of personal change ultimately rests with the perpetrator, the treatment provider monitors progress and holds clients accountable for lack of progress. Treatment providers will conduct contacts with victims in order to provide safety planning and other information. Most perpetrators are referred to treatment providers through the criminal justice system; however other sources of referral include child welfare or community-based programs.

In Colorado, the Domestic Violence Offender Management Board (DVOMB) certifies all perpetrator treatment providers and sets the standards for treatment. It is essential that caseworkers refer perpetrators only to those providers who are approved by the DVOMB and those that maintain a high standard of quality in working with perpetrators. See <http://dcj.state.co.us/odvsom> for more information.

**Programming not be confused with or substituted for offender treatment includes:**

## ANGER MANAGEMENT

- Teaches techniques for monitoring and stopping angry outbursts caused by a lack of control.
- Does not address the underlying reasons for perpetrating violence and maintaining coercive control over intimate partners.
- Not effective in holding perpetrators accountable. Abuse is not the result of a lack of control, but a clear choice that perpetrators make to exert their control.

## COUPLES OR FAMILY COUNSELING

- Based on the assumption that partners with equal amounts of power can work together to negotiate a solution or resolution to problems, which is not the case when one person is using coercive control.
- The unequal balance of power between adult victims and perpetrators, as well as fear of physical violence or other retaliation on the part of the victim when the perpetrator feels challenged, will create an unsafe situation for the adult victim.
- The DVOMB standards require, as a condition of the treatment contract, that perpetrators are prohibited from participating in couples counseling while they are in treatment.

## INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOTHERAPY OR SUBSTANCE ABUSE COUNSELING

- Can supplement, but not substitute for, domestic violence perpetrator treatment.
- May be inappropriate if the provider does not concentrate on stopping violent or abusive behavior and on maximizing safety for victims and children.
- In rare instances, individual counseling or programming may be offered by a perpetrator treatment provider to a domestic violence perpetrator who is too disruptive to function in a group setting.

Perpetrators ordered to domestic violence offender treatment cannot participate in any couples or family counseling with the adult victim until they have successfully completed their offender treatment. Further, the DVOMB Child Welfare Committee identified that all department of human/social services core/treatment services can and must be done with the adult and perpetrator separately in order to be compliant with DVOMB standards with the perpetrator is in domestic violence offender treatment. When the perpetrator has successfully completed domestic violence offender treatment, he/she is no longer prohibited from participating in core/treatment services with the adult victim.

## Here are some steps to build a meaningful working relationship with the local perpetrator treatment provider(s):

### **1: Contact offender treatment provider for input in working safely with highly dangerous domestic violence perpetrators and their families.**

- Establish rapport in advance and discuss the provider's willingness to be contacted for consultation on seemingly high-risk domestic violence perpetrators
- To find information about and a complete list of approved DV perpetrator treatment providers refer to the Domestic Violence Offender Management Board (DVOMB) on their website at [http://dcj.state.co.us/odvsom/domestic\\_violence/providers.html](http://dcj.state.co.us/odvsom/domestic_violence/providers.html).

### **2: Make referrals as part of Case Planning with perpetrators of domestic violence**

- Through a review of the DVOMB website ([dcj.state.co.us/odvsom](http://dcj.state.co.us/odvsom)) and relationships with these community agencies, workers can learn about the policies and procedures of their local DV perpetrator programs and requirements for program participants.
- When possible, offering more than one provider will allow the participant to choose a treatment group that will best work with his schedule.
- CPS Case Plans will complement the Treatment Plans and Offender Contracts from the Offender Treatment provider. (See appendix to see what Treatment Plans and Offender Contracts include)

### **3: Obtain needed release of information in order to get reports from the treatment provider and to discuss participant progress**

According to the DVOMB Standards, "Offenders who have committed domestic violence related offenses shall waive confidentiality for purposes of evaluation, treatment, supervision, and case management." This occurs when the treatment participant signs Release of Information forms. A worker should contact an offender treatment provider to ensure that the participant has signed a release, and the release should specifically state that the worker will receive written Reports from the Offender Treatment Provider.

### **4: Participate on the local Multidisciplinary Treatment Team (MTT)**

When a perpetrator is in treatment with a treatment provider who is approved by the DVOMB, the treatment provider must consult with other team members in order to best monitor and intervene with the Offender Treatment clients. These meetings are known as Multidisciplinary Treatment Team (MTT) meetings. These meetings may be in person, or by phone or sharing information by email. The MTT makes decisions regarding the initial level of treatment, changes to the level of treatment and the type and time for discharge.

You can - and hopefully will - participate in team case consultation with the DVOMB treatment provider and any other professionals involved in your case or involved with offender treatment. This MTT shares information and collaborates about the case. The MTT can communicate in person, via other scheduled meetings such as TDMS, email or voice mail, etc.

Working collaboratively and sharing pertinent information related to progress, changes in risk and other issues are all important for all professionals to share among one another in these types of cases. Since neither attendance at nor completion of domestic violence offender treatment necessarily signifies that the abuser has improved their behavior, it is valuable to obtain additional evidence of change. Your ability to monitor and respond to any continued abusive behavior contributes to promoting real change by the perpetrator, as well as to monitor the level of risk a perpetrator may pose to his children.