

## Highlights of the Virginia Standards for Batterer Intervention Programs

- ◆ Offenders who complete a Certified Batterer Intervention Program receive a minimum of 36 hours of group services over 18 weeks.
- ◆ All perpetrators referred to a Certified Batterer Intervention Program are assessed for drug/alcohol dependency and severe mental health issues; if needed, referrals are made to treatment.
- ◆ Certified Programs have mechanisms to ensure that victims are offered services, informed about the Batterer Intervention services, and are notified if the perpetrator leaves or completes the Program.
- ◆ Offenders who do not comply with a Certified Program experience consequences such as additional group sessions, community service, referral back to the justice system for legal sanctions and/or termination from the group depending on the severity of the non-compliance.
- ◆ A fee for services, no matter how minimal, is charged to offenders. All Certified Programs must also have provisions for providing services to indigent clients.
- ◆ Each Certified Program has a case record management system for tracking clients.
- ◆ Certified Programs provide monthly reports to the referral source, and notification if an offender is terminated from or completes the program.
- ◆ Staff of Certified Programs must have 32 hours of initial domestic violence training, in addition to 12 hours of annual continuing education.

For a complete copy of the Standards, visit the VSDVAA website at [www.vsdvalliance.org](http://www.vsdvalliance.org) or call 804/377-0335.

What you can expect when you  
refer an individual to a

## Certified Batterer Intervention Program

In 1998, the Commission on Family Violence Prevention of the Supreme Court of Virginia charged Virginians Against Domestic Violence and the Coalition for the Treatment of Abusive Behaviors to develop and implement Standards for services designed to intervene in domestic violence through treatment and education for the perpetrators of the violence.

In April 2000 the Virginia Standards for Batterer Intervention Programs were completed. The Standards represent the majority of Virginia victim service providers' and Batterer Intervention service providers' consensus on practice that is most likely to promote victim safety and perpetrator accountability.

The purpose of these Standards is to establish monitoring and certification criteria for Batterer Intervention Programs that provide services for perpetrators of domestic violence in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The basic expectations set forth in the Standards for Certified Batterer Intervention Programs are: trained staff; comprehensive assessment, intake and reporting practices; collaborative working relationships with community organizations and the court system; promotion of victim safety and accountability of perpetrators.

A multi-disciplinary board has been appointed to oversee the Certification of Batterer Intervention Programs. The Certification Board is comprised of fifteen professionals from all regions of the state representing Domestic Violence Programs, mental health agencies, community corrections, faith-based service providers, and local units of government. The Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court contracts with Virginians Against Domestic Violence to provide staff support to this statewide Board through a federal Grant to Encourage Arrest Policies.



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# Certified Batterer Intervention Programs are part of a Coordinated Community Response

**C**ertified Batterer Intervention Programs are an integral part of a coordinated community response to domestic violence. The Standards require certified Batterer Intervention Programs to have collaborative working relationships with law enforcement, the Courts, Domestic Violence Programs, Commonwealth's Attorneys, community corrections, social services, substance abuse and mental health services and community task forces.

A coordinated community response may include a certified Batterer Intervention Program in a number of ways. The criminal justice system, including the Courts, prosecutors and corrections, can recommend the use of certified programs. The Batterer Intervention Program can be part of a community team.

Certified Batterer Intervention Programs may be helpful to the criminal justice system. Certified Programs are required to provide the referral source with monthly reports, notice of non-compliance with program requirements, and a final report. This information may assist in determining whether additional legal consequences are necessary, particularly in cases where a perpetrator reoffends.

Certified Batterer Intervention Programs are also required to have collaborative relationships with Domestic Violence Programs and other service providers. These relationships are useful in promoting cross-training, increasing safety planning for the victims of group members, and encouraging feedback to Batterer Intervention service providers.

Overall, a community coordinated response that includes a certified Batterer Intervention Program promotes greater accountability for perpetrators of domestic violence.

## Accountability for Perpetrators, Safety for Victims

◆ **Training:** Facilitating Batterer Intervention groups requires a unique set of skills. Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behaviors. Identifying and confronting the complete pattern is essential to effective intervention. The pattern may include physical violence, sexual violence, threats, stalking and other behaviors intended to place a victim in fear. Effective Batterer Intervention requires the ability to use a variety of methods so that perpetrators acknowledge those behaviors, understand the legal and interpersonal consequences for those behaviors, and understand the range of options available for changing these behaviors.

◆ **Victim Contact:** When a perpetrator is ordered into Batterer Intervention, victims often feel one of two ways. Either they hope that their partner will be "changed" and no longer violent, or they are very afraid of their partner and no longer want to have any contact at all. Certified Batterer Intervention Programs are required to arrange contact with the victims of perpetrators ordered to their group to address the safety needs of all victims.

Victims are informed of the purpose of Batterer Intervention and the fact that real change will require much more extensive work on the part of the perpetrator. Victims are also informed of the services available for victims in the community so that they can seek shelter, counseling, or help with safety planning. When perpetrators are terminated from a group or when they complete the full session, victims are notified so that they can use the information when assessing personal risk.

◆ **Length of the Program:** Research to date gives no clear indication of the "optimal" number of group sessions that should be required for an effective intervention with perpetrators of domestic violence. However, there are indicators that perpetrator accountability and, therefore, victim safety, are enhanced during the time the perpetrator is in a program. Certified Batterer Intervention Programs require attendance for a minimum of 18 weekly sessions, providing up to 5 months of supervision and sufficient time to address the required curriculum components.