

PROMOTING ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY: ESSENTIAL PRACTICES IN ABUSE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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What is the role of Abuser Education Programs?

Narrow: Help abusers to change

- Provide group education for those who abuse partners
- Report to courts and other referral sources on their attendance and participation
- Provide minimal level of outreach and information to partners
- Provide minimal level of risk assessment

What is the role of Abuser Education Programs?

Broad: Provide a structure for abuser and community accountability and change

- ❑ **Provide opportunities for abusers to change beyond cessation of violence**
E.g. changes in awareness and attitudes, increase awareness about children
- ❑ **Provide meaningful reports on problems/noncompliance to courts/other referral sources**
- ❑ **Educate referral sources about accountability**
- ❑ **Provide meaningful communication with partners/victims about problems/noncompliance**
- ❑ **Collaborate with victim advocacy programs to create community buy-in about domestic violence**

Punishment vs Rehabilitation

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- **Punishment is the imposition of a penalty for wrongdoing,**
 - fine**
 - probation**
 - imprisonment**

Punishment vs Rehabilitation

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- **Punishment usually does not require rehabilitation or opportunities for wrong-doer to change or make amends**
- **Punishment often leads perpetrators to believe they have “paid their debt”.**
- **Punishment often does not teach need for internal limits**

Punishment vs Rehabilitation

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- **Incarceration in MA costs \$51,000 per prison per year**
- **Recidivism rates**
- **43% for all inmates**
- **75+% for those sentenced for violence**
- **75+% for those sentenced for drug use, and those with mental illness**

Punishment vs Accountability

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□ **Accountability means:**

- 1) admitting abusive actions**
- 2) recognizing one's responsibility for it**
- 3) facing consequences**
- 4) recognizing impact on victim(s)**
- 5) changing behavior**
- 6) when possible, making amends**

Treatment Essentials

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Stage One: Admit Abusive Behavior

- **Education that identifies and broadens the abuser's understanding of abusive behavior**

Examples:

What is violence?

What are other types of abuse?

- **Provide opportunities for abuser's to identify their own abusive behavior**
- **Provide documentation of self-reports and documentation of minimization**

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Stage Two: Admit One's Responsibility for Abusive Behavior

- **Message that violence is always a choice**
- **Distinguish the differences between intentions and consequences**
- **Confront excuses**
 - Both in general, and particular to each program participant**
- **Create group climate that sets limits on victim-blaming, and promotes holding people to a higher standard**
- **Provide documentation (to referral source and partner) about problems with responsibility-taking**
- **Examples: “Mr. X continues to blame his partner”**

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Stage Three: Taking responsibility for consequences

- **Distinguish accountability from punishment**
- **Distinguish role of court/child welfare from partner abuse program**
 - E.g. **“We are not your punishment but an opportunity”**
- **Point out the concept of “ironic justice”**
 - E.g. **“Were you unlucky to have been arrested or lucky to have gotten away with prior acts of abuse?”**
- **Provide feedback about “quick fixes” and ways of blaming partners**
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Stage Three: Taking responsibility for consequences (continued)

- **Acknowledge racial profiling and disparate treatment of people of color**
- **Provide education and feedback about the process of rebuilding trust with partners, ex-partners and children**
- **Provide information about long-term solutions**
 - E.g. Re-building trust with ex-partner may take a long time. Identify steps that help to build trust with partners and children**

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Stage Four: Recognizing Impact on Victims

- ❑ Education that helps the abuser to recognize impact of abusive behavior on partner
- ❑ Education that helps the abuser to recognize impact of abusive behavior on children
- ❑ Education about Empathy and Respect
- ❑ Establish individualized goals that relate to empathy and respect
- ❑ Provide feedback about progress/or lack of progress toward goals
- ❑ Provide specific documentation about problems in recognizing impact, achieving goals
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Stage Five: Changing Behavior

- **Establish individualized goals**
- **Require regular self-reporting on achievement toward goals**
- **Education and feedback that helps the abuser to identify and practice respectful/emphathetic behavior and attitudes**
- **Provide regular outreach to victims to gain her/his perspective about group participant's progress and to give program's perspective**

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Stage Five: Changing Behavior (continued)

- ❑ **Abuser intervention provide monthly specific reports to courts, including on:**
 - **Attendance**
 - **Level of participation and cooperation**
 - **Ongoing problems and concerns**

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- **Ongoing problems, e.g.**
 - **Is he still minimizing abuse?**
 - **Is he still blaming partner or ex-partner?**
 - **Is he respecting victim's wishes and limits on relationship?**
 - **Is he making no/few attempts to find employment?**
 - **Is he 'mooching' off partner?**
 - **Is he maintaining consistent contact/relationship/appropriate behavior with children?**
 - **Is he using substances in a problematic manner?**
 - **Are there indicators of high risk for recidivism?**

Treatment Essentials

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Risk Assessment and Management

- **Does the program rely upon established, evidence-based protocols for assessing risk?**
- **Is risk assessment not just a one-time endeavor but a continuous process?**
- **Are there protocols for documenting risk and managing risk?**

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Community Collaborations

- **Does the program have strong partnerships with victim advocacy programs and other community programs?**
- **Is the program transparent about its practices, and provide opportunities for partner programs to observe group sessions?**

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Parenting Awareness

- **Does the program provide education about parenting awareness, such as Caring Dads, Fathering After Violence?**
- **Does the program flag problems about the abuser's parenting?**