



Program Evaluation Activities at Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs

Program evaluation activities have been a critical part of the development of the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP). These studies have employed a range of research methods to examine the project's effectiveness in enhancing victim safety and holding offenders accountable for their behavior. A summary of evaluation efforts can also be found in the book *Education Groups for Men Who Batter* (Pence & Paymar, 1993).

The first study conducted by Novak and Galaway (1983) compared cases where police used their usual departmental procedures with cases where police followed a new policy of mandating arrest when probable cause existed. A twelve-month follow-up interview with victims indicated that 58% (21) of those that been subject to the probable cause policy experienced violence again compared to 59% (10) of those who had experienced usual police intervention. However, the lowest percentage of further assaults (47%) were committed by assailants who had been court mandated to participate in the DAIP group program.

In 1984, the DAIP initiated a participatory research project by asking 11 formerly battered women to design a victim survey to determine the need for changes in policies or procedures in the various agencies involved in the project (Pence & Shepard, 1988). A majority of the 60 victims who responded to the questionnaire reported that they had favorable experiences with the police, shelter, and civil court process. They reported less favorable experiences with probation officers and prosecutors. All of the victims felt that the assailant should have been ordered to attend counseling and education groups and a majority (60%) felt safer when the assailant was participating in the groups. Eighty percent of the victims reported that the combined responses of the police, courts, DAIP, and shelter had been helpful or very helpful.

Shepard (1987) examined abusive behavior at different program phases in a 1985 study. During a three month period, data were collected from 92 assailants and 77 victims at the following program phases: intake (beginning), completion of 12 week of counseling (middle), completion of 12 weeks of education groups (end), and three months after program completion (follow-up). Lower rates of abuse were reported at later program phases with significant reductions in physical and psychological abuse occurring during the first three months of the program. Victims reported experiencing significantly higher rates of abuse than assailants reported having used.

While rates of abuse were examined to evaluate the overall impact of the program, the percentage of victims and assailants in each group that reported no abuse was also determined. Approximately, 18% of the assailants and 7% of the victims in the beginning group reported that no physical abuse had occurred during the three months prior to the assailants participation in the program. Seventy-six percent of the assailants in the middle group reported that no physical abuse had occurred during the three months of counseling, compared to 61% of the victims in the middle group. Approximately, 81% of the assailants and 69% of the victims reported no physical abuse during the education phase of the program. Fifty-

seven percent of assailants and 61% of victims in the three month follow-up group reported no physical abuse during the three months after program completion.

Psychological abuse occurred more frequently. No psychological abuse was reported during the past three months by 10% of the assailants and 3% of the victims in the beginning group, 8% of assailants and 11% of victims in the middle group, 24% of assailants and 13% of victims in the end group and 29% of assailants and 23% of victims in the three months follow-up group. An instrument, the Abusive Behavior Inventory, was developed for program evaluation activities at DAIP (Shepard & Campbell, 1992).

A one-year follow-up study of victims from the previous study was also conducted. Data were collected from 39 victims whose partners had completed the program an average of twelve months earlier. Victims reported significantly lower rates of physical and psychological abuse when compared to rates of abuse during time periods prior to or during their participation in the program. Sixty-nine percent of the these women reported that they had experienced no physical abuse during the past three months, while 41% reported experiencing no psychological abuse.

During 1988, the educational curriculum developed by the DAIP was evaluated in a survey of programs across the country who had attended training sessions (Shepard, 1988). Twenty programs responded to the survey and rated the concepts addressed by the curriculum as being very important and considered the curriculum as effective in addressing them. A majority of the respondents (75%) thought the curriculum promoted attitude change in regard to a man's right to control his partner. Shepard (1992) conducted another study that examined batterer recidivism over a five year period. Data collected on men in the 1985 study were used, as well as records from a variety of sources. Of the 100 men included in the sample, 40% were identified as recidivists because they were either convicted of domestic assault, the subject of an order for protection or a police suspect for domestic assault. A discriminate analysis was conducted using a variety of background and intervention variables. Five variables were selected which significantly discriminated between recidivists and non-recidivists and correctly classified 60.6% of the cases. Men who had been abusive for a shorter duration prior to the program, court ordered to have a chemical dependency evaluation, received chemical dependency treatment, abused as children, and previously convicted for non-assault crimes were more likely to be recidivists. The extent to which men participated in the DAIP program did not determine whether or not they would recidivate.

An evaluation of the child visitation center took place in 1991. The results of the study indicated that there were significant reductions in psychological abuse experienced by mothers after they began utilizing the center and substantial reductions in the physical abuse they experienced, as well. Children evidenced significant emotional and social difficulties, which continued at follow-up. There were significant reductions in their level of anxiety at follow-up, which may have been the result of less stress associated with their visitation arrangements.

In 1995, the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project received a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to enhance the coordinated response that had been developed in the community. These enhancements included training professionals in the community to assess and refer women for domestic violence services, developing methods of risk assessment, implementing new sentencing recommendation procedures, developing a computerized information system to track and monitor domestic violence cases, and implementing an alternative men's non-violence program. An evaluation examined many different aspects of the project.

The evaluation found that recidivism rates were significantly lower after the project was fully operational. Further statistical analysis found that men were less likely to recidivate if they had

volunteered to participate in the program, completed the program, and were rated as being a lower level offender by probation officers at the time of sentencing. Another part of the project involved randomly assigning offenders to either the men's non-violence program or an alternative program that used the Duluth curriculum and required attendance at community meetings. The results indicated that the alternative program did not result in improved outcomes.

Eighteen months after the offender had entered the men's non-violence program, the women they had victimized were contacted for an interview. Women who were able to be located for an interview reported experiencing significant decreases in abuse and greater safety and well-being than prior to intervention. However, greater improvement was not reported by women whose partners entered the men's non-violence program during the project when compared to reports from women whose partners were involved prior to the project. Statistical analysis indicated that greater reductions in abuse occurred when the offender was court mandated and had completed the men's program. Factors related to improved well-being were that the offender had been court mandated to attend the program and had attended more group sessions. A majority of women found community intervention more helpful than harmful. Police intervention, orders for protection and shelter services were rated as the most helpful interventions provided.

Summary of Findings

- 60% of battered women felt safer when the abuser was attending classes
- 80% of battered women thought the combined responses of police, courts, DAIP, and shelter was helpful in ending the abuse
- Battered women reported decreases in physical and psychological abusive behavior as abusers progressed through the program
- 69% of battered women had not experience recent physical abuse and 41% had not experienced recent psychological abuse at a one year follow-up
- Recidivism rate was 40% for a five year follow-up using criminal justice records
- Use of the visitation center reduced psychological and physical abuse experienced by battered women and, children experienced lessened anxiety
- Recidivism rates were lower after coordination efforts were enhanced.
- Women reported experiencing less abuse and improved safety and well-being after coordinated intervention, but did report greater improvement after the project was enhanced.
- Men who completed the men's non-violence program had better outcomes than those who did not.
- Men who volunteered for the men's program had lower recidivism rates, but women reported that they experienced greater reductions in abuse and improved well-being when the offender had been court mandated to attend.
- Men who were rated as lower level offenders by probation officers at the time of sentencing were less likely to recidivate.

Ongoing program evaluation is an important part of being accountable to battered women and the community. Overall, these studies suggest favorable outcomes for the DAIP program in terms of reductions in abusive behavior and victim satisfaction. However, the results also suggest the need for continued innovation, intervention, and evaluation to increase the effectiveness of DAIP.

References

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