



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Office of Family Assistance

National  
Responsible  
Fatherhood Clearinghouse



## NRFC Webinar Series: Response to Questions

### Addressing Domestic Violence: The Role of Fatherhood Programs

April 16, 2014

#### Moderator:

- Nigel Vann, National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC)

#### Opening Remarks:

- Lisa Washington-Thomas, NRFC COTR, Office of Family Assistance

#### Presenters:

- Jacquelyn Boggess, Center for Family Policy and Practice, Madison, WI
- Michael Jones, Kanawha Institute for Social Research and Action (KISRA), Dunbar, WV
- ramesh kathanadhi, Men Stopping Violence, Atlanta, GA

This document addresses questions presented, but not addressed, during this NRFC Webinar. For questions addressed during the webinar, please refer to the Webinar Transcript. For more information contact the NRFC via email at [info@fatherhood.gov](mailto:info@fatherhood.gov).

#### Question

We are encountering major "pushback" from existing Domestic Violence providers who object to our position that interpersonal violence is a complex issue and is often bilateral. What do you recommend that we, as father inclusion and services people, do to overcome the traditional, simplified approach of "only men as perpetrators" or "men as the bad gender?"

#### Response Provided by ramesh kathanadhi

It's important to realize that we can be "male positive" and also stand against male violence towards women. There is indeed a male violence against women problem (globally and locally). The statistics and stories shared in this webinar, and so many other places, tell us that when it comes to domestic violence the advocates in your community have valid points.

Your approach that "DV is bilateral" may be seen as off putting by some. It suggests that DV is a problem of individuals acting badly and that "just as many women" act "just as badly." The statistics don't back that up. It's also important to note that many male survivors of violence (as children and as adult men) are surviving violence from men.

What you heard during the webinar is that DV is a problem of social and relational environments in which men and boys are taught to treat women and girls as "less than" and then act on that socialization in their relationships with women. Connecting interpersonal violence to the larger context of gender violence is helpful in understanding the problem, and can lead to better allying with women and girls. It also helps to contextualize the wall of silence about domestic violence in our families, communities, and among groups of men.

However, I agree that it is a legitimate challenge if your DV partners see men only as perpetrators. This would be a tough

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sell with your staff and constituents. One way to reinterpret that perspective is to see it as a request that men cultivate better practices of accountability and self-reflection concerning their behaviors toward and beliefs about women and girls. The story I shared about driving recklessly as a controlling behavior is one such example.

Taking another tack in the conversation with local advocates might also be helpful. Here are a few examples:

- Consider slowing down; building trust by listening and validating; and acknowledging areas where you may see things differently right now.
- Take the time to build common understandings of what role you think men can play to make communities safer for women and girls.
  - How can we learn to call out disrespectful behavior with other men?
  - How might we create safety for a survivor through lovingly holding a friend, a fellow program constituent, or staff member to account for safely and respectfully interacting with a partner, former partner, or children?

The men on your staff and in your programs have a lot to offer in positively impacting messages about fatherhood, manhood, women and sex. If you work to leverage that potential in healthy ways, I'm certain your local advocates have experiences and insights to support that work. Also if these partnerships are very frayed, perhaps revisiting the research Jackie shared would be a helpful next step for collaborations in your community?

The world has many problems - and women's advocates are working on a huge one - creating safety for women, girls, boys and ultimately for men. Rather than telling them they're going at it wrong, ask how you can help - ask yourselves what you may gain and learn through the process.

### **Response Provided by Michael Jones**

Interpersonal violence is a complex issue. It is oftentimes bilateral, but the effect is rarely equal. By definition Domestic violence (DV) is "willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior perpetrated by an intimate partner against another." By definition, DV only happens from the position of coercion or force.

DV is often accompanied by emotionally abusive and controlling behavior, and thus is part of a systematic pattern of dominance and control. Let's be honest about it, in most cases a woman cannot create systematic patterns of controlling behavior or dominance over their male counterparts. This may sound like a statement of machismo but it is a valid one regardless.

Even though we do see a lot of physical assaults occurring between partners the factor that stands out in this complex dynamic is what I call "The Fear Factor." Even though violence from a female towards a male can result in physical injury, it rarely results in a fearful, timid, hiding for your life, psychologically traumatic, terrorizing experience for men.

The consequences of domestic violence can cross generations and truly last a lifetime. The statistics of reported cases lean towards men being the perpetrators of DV in much greater proportion than that of females towards men. The impact of male violence against women has more traumatic and lasting results as revealed through many statistics. Here are some of the sobering statistics:

- One in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.
- An estimated 1.3 million women are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year.
- 85% of domestic violence victims are women.
- Historically, females have been most often victimized by someone they knew.
- Females who are 20-24 years of age are at the greatest risk of nonfatal intimate partner violence.
- Most cases of domestic violence are never reported to the police.
- One in 6 women and 1 in 33 men has experienced an attempted or completed rape. Nearly 7.8 million women have been raped by an intimate partner at some point in their lives.

- Sexual assault or forced sex occurs in approximately 40-45% of battering relationships.
- 1 in 12 women and 1 in 45 men have been stalked in their lifetime.
- 81% of women stalked by a current or former intimate partner are also physically assaulted by that partner; 31% are also sexually assaulted by that partner.
- Almost one-third of female homicide victims that are reported in police records are killed by an intimate partner.
- In 70-80% of intimate partner homicides, no matter which partner was killed, the man physically abused the woman before the murder.
- Less than one-fifth of victims reporting an injury from intimate partner violence sought medical treatment following the injury.
- Intimate partner violence results in more than 18.5 million mental health care visits each year.
- The cost of intimate partner violence exceeds \$5.8 billion each year, \$4.1 billion of which is for direct medical and mental health services.
- Victims of intimate partner violence lost almost 8 million days of paid work because of the violence perpetrated against them by current or former husbands, boyfriends and dates. This loss is the equivalent of more than 32,000 full-time jobs and almost 5.6 million days of household productivity as a result of violence.
- There are 16,800 homicides and \$2.2 million (medically treated) injuries due to intimate partner violence annually, which costs \$37 billion.
- Domestic violence is one of the most chronically underreported crimes.
- Only approximately one-quarter of all physical assaults, one-fifth of all rapes, and one-half of all stalkings perpetuated against females by intimate partners are reported to the police.
- Approximately 20% of the 1.5 million people who experience intimate partner violence annually obtain civil protection orders.
- Approximately one-half of the orders obtained by women against intimate partners who physically assaulted them were violated. More than two-thirds of the restraining orders against intimate partners who raped or stalked the victim were violated.

I think the complexity of interpersonal violence is a valid issue, but the argument narrows the complexity of the whole dynamic of DV. A nice approach to understanding this vast and spreading issue is to become educated on the Duluth models of the “Power and Control” and “Equality” wheels. I would suggest not to get too caught up in the issue of “physical violence being bilateral.” That is a very sensitive issue and it can create arguments and prohibit dialogue. It is like presenting the idea of using salt as a treatment for injury to someone who has a gaping wound.

I suggest that the focus should be on the positive aspect of programming that leads to “equal and healthy” relationships. For instance:

- Highlight how programming can help eradicate the universal terror expressed by DV victims.
- Emphasize how the program addresses the systematic use of threats, intimidation, and coercion through which perpetrators instill fear into their partners.
- Talk about what are the next steps in place for perpetrators and victims who have disclosed their situation.

If we bring arguments to the table then we can only expect a fight, but if we come with solutions and openness to processes we can expect progress. The truth is that men are not the only perpetrators nor are we a bad gender. The issue of Domestic Violence is a serious and complex one that needs a sensitive and understanding approach for the victims as well as the perpetrators. The main issue is how can we help them get to a place of safe and healthy processing so that they can create a safe and healthy process for their partners and children?

**Question**

Our DV advocate says that Anger Management classes teach better ways to express more controlled abuse. Do you agree?

**Response Provided by ramesh kathanadhi**

The Georgia Commission on Family Violence website includes information that I find helpful for understanding the difference between anger management and domestic violence: <http://bit.ly/1s6fah>

*As pointed out there, "Anger management may be appropriate for the person who gets into a bar fight or has road rage, but is rarely appropriate for someone who commits violence against an intimate partner or family member."*

Remember abuse isn't about being "out of control." Abusive partners often behave very differently in private than in public with the same person. This is one reason our communities have such a hard time believing that "good guys" are using harmful behavior.

In reality managing anger is something an abusive partner is usually quite good at. Learning how to "manage it" in ways that don't draw public attention may make the abuse more sophisticated and further obscure or justify abusive behaviors to others in the community. Creating safety for a survivor requires far more than addressing the few moments when an abusive partner is actually angry.

**Response Provided by Michael Jones**

I am not going to say that anger management classes teach better ways to expressed controlled abuse. These classes can teach people how to manage their outburst of anger and the lack of behavior control. Whether this has the unintentional consequence of controlled abuse, I cannot say. The question is does anger management address the issues of coercive behaviors toward other people or the culture that produces or support these behaviors? Some of the common therapeutic goals of anger management are to:

- Identify anger triggers.
- Identify usual choices of personal responses to anger triggers.
- Identify vicious cycles related to anger.
- Develop successful tools for redirection away from vicious cycles related to anger.
- Identify alternative responses to anger that would be considered healthy and safe.
- Help participants learn to choose healthy responses to anger triggers in the heat of the action.
- Develop awareness of emotions.
- Develop coping skills for dealing with negative emotions.

Anger management is a good tool for identifying and managing negative emotions, but it is not designed to create equal and respectful relationship. It usually helps the person express themselves in a respectful and none threatening way. Anger management and domestic violence is not one and the same. Many victims of domestic violence do not suffer at the hands of individuals who lack controlled expressions; rather they are the victims of very calculating and controlled individuals who manage their anger in very controlling ways.

I do not know if anger management teaches controlled abuse but I am pretty certain that it is not the proper prescription for DV resolution.

### Question

Have you conducted research to determine the effectiveness of your father/daughter program?

### Answer Provided by ramesh kathanadhi

We've definitely conducted satisfaction and post surveys, spoken with participants, and recorded anecdotal stories of family members calling us to share the impact of the program. However, our approach to effectiveness doesn't focus on individual outcomes. In places where the program has been picked up and implemented by the community, we look for shifts in areas such as:

- The way men talk about and listen to stories of violence against women.
- The way men rely on each other for helpful empathetic information about parenting.
- How men discuss their own socialization about manhood and women with each other. These shifts happen as men participate, volunteer to host the event, learn to facilitate activities, and practice the skills from the program in their relating with women and girls in their communities.

We use a [community accountability model](#) to assess where we are making impacts, but unfortunately haven't gathered the kind of resources necessary to do the longitudinal research in a community that would make our observations and experiences turn into research. We're happy to discuss the program and would love for you to connect with us directly. (<http://www.menstoppingviolence.org/docs/DeconstructingMaleViolenceAgainstWomen.pdf>)

### Question

How does your organization solicit participation and/or build interest in the programs you offer?

### Answer Provided by ramesh kathanadhi

Over the years, we've worked with community institutions like places of worship, practitioners in mental health communities, and even local universities and colleges to get men into our education program. Over the decades we've also built strong relationships with our local advocacy programs, and we work closely with our courts to be an effective referral resource. We identify community organizations that can have an impact on socializing men - for instance fatherhood programs (woot woot), reentry, military, and business communities and try to shape our programing and training to be useful to all those spaces as well. If you have more detailed questions - feel free to send an email or call.

### Question

Is KISRA's DV101 curriculum available to other programs?

### Answer Provided by Michael Jones

It is not currently available for distribution but I have met with my CEO and COO and they are processing the possibility.

### Question

How many sessions in the DV 101?

### Answer Provided by Michael Jones

4

### Question

Spiritual abuse? How so? *[Question about one of the webinar slides, which includes "spiritual abuse" as an example of a type of domestic violence.]*

### Answer Provided by Michael Jones

One of the classic scriptures inappropriately used by some as spiritual abuse is Colossians 3:18: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord." Many perpetrators use this passage, and others similar to it, as

instruments to build male privilege and subservience of women. Religion has been used in many ways to improperly force women into their place as being inferior to male counterparts. This is an oversimplified but good example of misappropriated interpretations of a scripture that have been used to create a systematic pattern of dominance.

### Question

Triggers? [Michael made a reference to “triggers” when discussing one of his slides. Below he explains his use of this term]

### Answer Provided by Michael Jones

The word “triggers” is often used in systems of psychological care, such as when addicts recognize what prompts them to relapse into traumatic and negative behaviors. A *trigger* is something that sets off a memory or flashback transporting the person back to the event of her/his original trauma. Triggers are varied and very personal; different things trigger different people. People can react to their personal triggers with an emotional intensity similar to that at the time of the trauma. A person’s triggers are activated through one or more of the five senses: sight, sound, touch, smell and taste. Although triggers are varied and diverse, there are often common themes. For example:

#### Sight

- Someone who resembles, or has similar traits (e.g. hair color, distinctive walk, clothing) to, the person who caused them trauma.
- Any situation where someone else is being terrorized (this could range from a raised eyebrow or verbal comment to actual physical abuse).
- The object that was used.
- Objects that are associated with or were common in the household where the abuse took place (e.g. alcohol, piece of furniture, time of year).
- Places or situations similar to, or the same as, where the abuse took place (specific locations in a house, holidays, family events, social settings, etc.).

#### Sound

- Anything that sounds like anger (e.g. raised voices, arguments, bangs and thumps, something breaking).
- Anything that sounds like pain or fear (e.g. crying, whispering, screaming).
- Anything that might have been in the place or situation prior to, during, or after the abuse or reminds her/him of the abuse (e.g. sirens, foghorns, music, cricket, chirping, car door closing).
- Anything that resembles sounds that the abuser made (e.g. whistling, footsteps, pop of can opening, tone of voice).
- Words of abuse (e.g. cursing, labels, put-downs, specific words used).

#### Smell

- Anything that resembles the smell of the abuser (e.g. tobacco, alcohol, drugs, after shave, perfume).
- Any smells that resemble the place or situation where the abuse occurred (e.g. food cooking, wood, odors, alcohol).

#### Touch

- Anything that resembles the abuse, or things that occurred prior to or after the abuse (e.g. certain physical touch, someone standing too close, petting an animal, the way someone approaches you).

#### Taste

- Anything that is related to the abuse, prior to the abuse or after the abuse (e.g. certain foods, alcohol, tobacco).