

Guidelines for perpetrator programs

aT THE time of compiling this kit, perpetrator programs remain an unresolved and controversial area. As yet, there are no formally ratified principles which determine the direction and running of programs, nor is there any central administering body.

However, some overarching principles have been developed which aim to guide any intervention programs with perpetrators of domestic violence. Although these are still in draft form, they are useful for assessing, reviewing or evaluating the operation of any perpetrator program in your area.

The following combines the draft perpetrator guidelines prepared by Wesnet (1997) and by the Domestic Violence Advisory Council (DVAC). These principles are strongly supported by members of the Women's Refuge Movement.

(Please note: while there is strong support from some members of the movement, no final guidelines have been approved by Conference – so these cannot be said to reflect the position of the Refuge Movement.)

Overarching principles for perpetrator programs

These principles have been developed to guide any intervention programs with perpetrators of domestic violence. They include:

1. that the safety and ongoing protection of the victims is the overriding concern of any intervention;
2. domestic violence is a crime and no intervention should ever substitute for a criminal response;

3. resources for perpetrator programs must never be at the expense of, or diminish the resources available for victims;
4. programs must be based on a gender analysis;

The Domestic Violence Advisory Council draft guidelines expand the operation and running of the programs further. This includes:

Programs must be based on a gender analysis and understanding of violence against women. They must also be based on the notion that they provide an opportunity for perpetrators to change but do not in themselves take on the personal responsibility for changing behaviour.

Accordingly, they must be structured to operate on the following principles:

- *programs are based on the notion that they are educational rather than therapeutic;*
- *participants will recognise the range of abusive behaviours that can be abusive, controlling and dominating;*
- *violence will be regarded as being the personal responsibility of the perpetrator, and deliberately inflicted, not part of 'uncontrollable anger', substance abuse or other external causes;*
- *challenges to stereotypical attitudes towards women and spouse roles held by participants will be incorporated;*
- *mechanisms must be established so that participants can be asked to leave a program at the request of the course leader;*
- *course leaders must receive appropriate training, be accredited by a suitable agency and have significant experience in working with victims of domestic violence;*
- *course leaders will be closely supervised by the sponsoring agency.*

It's not love – it's violence

***Confidentiality** of program participants is understood so it does not compromise the safety of partners, former partners or children.*

5. nationally based training and accreditation, monitoring and evaluation must be in place;
6. outcomes must be based on the elimination of violence as reported by the victims.

Parallel women's groups

There is real danger with stand-alone men's groups losing a perspective on what is happening for the women. Running parallel women's groups also ensures that a community does not have a men's groups and

nothing for the women. Users pay resourcing can be used to fund parallel women's groups. Women's participation, however, must be voluntary. There should be no pressure on women to participate.

Children be given equal status as victims

The effects on children in domestic violence must be taken into account, and outcomes for children must also be considered.

Participation

The Women's Refuge Movement strongly supports voluntary participation in any perpetrator education program.