



WEBINAR RESOURCES AND QUESTIONS

A practice discussion on working with men who use violence in the justice system: An integrated response model

ANROWS received a large number of questions during its webinar titled [“A practice discussion on working with men who use violence in the justice system: An integrated response model”](#). Responses to some of the questions are provided below. Questions and responses have been edited for clarity.

How do you support workers in the courts who operate day in, day out in regard to burnout, vicarious trauma and secondary trauma?

Abuse Prevention Program case managers have many years of experience working with perpetrators. The team regularly debrief with each other as needed and are supported by the Manager of Intervention Programs who provides ongoing support and supervision for more complex issues relating to defendants. All case managers and the team leader have access to an employee assistance program (EAP) if further support is required. (Tavia Sterk, Team Leader, Abuse Prevention Program and Sue King, Manager Intervention Programs Branch, Courts Administration Authority)

Judicial officers who regularly sit in the FVC [Family Violence Court] meet monthly to have an open exchange about issues that arise and to offer support to each other. In addition, professional services are available to judicial officers and court staff to assist them in their self-care. (Magistrate Jay McGrath, Manager of the Family Violence Court)

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There was a mention during the webinar of 2400 men undertaking the program. In terms of completion rates and links to reducing recidivism, does the panel see a direct link to completion of the program and reduced reoffending?

Completion rates are approximately 48 percent (with an average of 46% over the last 5 years), taking into account men who stop attending the program due to their court matters being dismissed (and therefore they are no longer required to participate in the program). There has been no formal evaluation of the program since 2014. (Tavia Sterk, Team Leader, Abuse Prevention Program and Sue King, Manager Intervention Programs Branch, Courts Administration Authority)

While there has been no formal evaluation of the program, my experience has been that the program has an impact on reoffending, particularly where the allegation of abuse was isolated and/or lower level abuse. (Magistrate Jay McGrath, Manager of the Family Violence Court)

Can men self-refer into these programs or do they have to be mandated by the Court?

The program is mandated by the Court. No self-referral. (Tavia Sterk, Team Leader, Abuse Prevention Program and Sue King, Manager Intervention Programs Branch, Courts Administration Authority)

How do you explain the need for only 12-week programs for men with literacy problems, and 24-week programs for men with no literacy issues? It seems back-to-front to me?

The decision about programs the Courts have requested OARS [Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Services] to provide is based on a range of factors, but at the most fundamental level is how to get the budget to stretch to cover all the different needs of the men who are referred. Most resources are dedicated to the 24-week group and most men complete this program. I agree that shorter programs may have less impact but there is no definitive program length that is based on outcomes research as far as I am aware. (Tavia Sterk, Team Leader, Abuse Prevention Program and Sue King, Manager Intervention Programs Branch, Courts Administration Authority)

Are the virtual groups that are being used since the COVID-19 pandemic exactly the same as the men's behaviour change program (MBCP) groups in terms of content? If so, how do you manage the increased risk with delivering this program to men not in person? For example, they might be residing with the victim and there is the potential for the group to escalate violence.

Yes. We require men to participate in a room on their own. It was either use this approach or cancel and we decided the potential for escalation due to the program is not high enough to warrant cancelling all sessions with men who live with their partner. (Tavia Sterk, Team Leader, Abuse Prevention Program and Sue King, Manager Intervention Programs Branch, Courts Administration Authority)

Do they do the module basically from home then, and connect with the group to be accountable? How does the repeat of modules work in the group?

Each module has reading and homework. The homework is presented to the group: the facilitator decides if it is adequate and group members can comment. So, repeating a module means they redo the homework and present it to the group again. (Tavia Sterk, Team Leader, Abuse Prevention Program and Sue King, Manager Intervention Programs Branch, Courts Administration Authority)

Does Magistrate McGrath's review of participation in MBCPs also include a review of any alcohol and other drugs or mental health treatment outcomes?

The Family Violence Court is very much focused on domestic violence issues and while, ordinarily, these issues are not isolated—and drug and alcohol addiction, mental health, accommodation and financial matters are present—the Court is limited in its ability to explore and address these additional problems. The review is focused on their progress in the MBCP. Future planning would be wise to include the ability to address a combination of issues in the one court. (Magistrate Jay McGrath, Manager of the Family Violence Court)

No To Violence (NTV) establishes minimum requirements for government-funded MBCPs in Victoria, including in relation to duration of program, contact hours and group numbers. What informed the development of programs such as Safe Relationships and 1:1 counselling which offer a shorter program? Given the greater complexity associated with some cohorts, are there any differences with these programs in relation to impact, or in relation to compliance/breach processes with a court order?

The courts determined the programs that we currently offer. Most participants engage in the 24-week program; however, we found there were barriers for some men to engage in this program, and the Safe Relationships program and 1:1 counselling were developed to ensure these men were offered a program and an opportunity to address their behaviours. There are no differences in terms of compliance/breach processes; in terms of impact, it is difficult to comment on this without conducting a thorough evaluation. However, we find that most men will have learnt the different types of abuse and start to look at focusing on finding strategies to avoid their anger/behaviour escalating. (Di Lawrie, Team Manager, OARS Community Transitions)

What does the women's safety service share with the women?

Women's Safety Services South Australia's Women's Safety Contact Program only receives information about the defendant's attendance, that is, whether he attended the group or not (and at times a reason for non-attendance is provided) and what module he is on. Sometimes men are requested to redo modules—for example, about honesty—and we attempt to get the reason why he needs to repeat this from OARS. If we do, we'll pass that on. Many women are disappointed with the limited information we are able to provide around the man's participation. (Mergho Ray, Manager, Integrated Programs, Women's Safety Services South Australia)



"Growing to be a better person": Exploring the client-worker relationship in men's behaviour change group work programs



Prioritising women's safety in Australian perpetrator interventions: The purpose and practices of partner contact



Engaging men who use violence: Invitational narrative approaches



Developing a practical evaluation guide for behaviour change programs involving perpetrators of domestic and family violence