Domestic Violence Counseling Referrals
For those who choose to use violence, and for those who have experienced violence

Batterer Intervention
Domestic violence is not caused by anger, or poor anger management skills. It is about power and control. **Violence is a choice.** A batterer intervention group is the most effective resource for the person who has been physically, emotionally, and/or sexually abusive to his or her partner. Group intervention has the most potential to hold those who use violence and anger accountable. The group dynamic creates a mechanism for batterers to confront each other on their use of denial, blaming others, as well as other controlling dynamics. Groups should be at least 26 weeks and some studies show that batterer groups do not even begin to break through the layers of denial for many participants until 36 weeks. The focus of these groups should be on power and control and accountability (to help participants take responsibility for their behavior).

Individual Counseling
Individual counseling is not recommended in place of batterer intervention. It can be done simultaneously or after the abuser has completed batterer intervention services. Batterers will typically present information to the counselor that blames the survivor and does not accurately portray their own violence. Collusion, where the counselor aligns with the abusive person and sees the survivor as the problem, is more likely to occur than accountability and change for the batterer. If the counselor does not collude with the batterer, and instead confronts him or her on the use of violence, the batterer will most likely terminate counseling.

Couple, or Marital, Counseling
Couple counseling implies equal responsibility for the problem. Once one person has made the choice to use emotional, physical, and/or sexual violence, equality is not in place. **The responsibility to change must be on the one who is abusive.** Additionally, couple counseling can be dangerous to the one who has been victimized. The counseling session often becomes one more arena for the batterer to further abuse his or her partner. Collusion between the counselor and batterer is likely. The person being victimized is often forced to lie about or minimize the abuse in order to stay safe. Before marital counseling is considered, the abusive partner should complete a full cycle of a batterer group. After that, couple counseling may be considered if both parties want that and the batterer is accepting responsibility for his or her violence.

Real Change
Until the abusive party takes responsibility for his or her behavior, demonstrates attempts to change and completes a group, it is unlikely that the person’s behavior will change for the long term. There is a cost for batterer groups, which is part of taking responsibility for one’s actions. It is not appropriate for a batterer group to accept insurance payments, as battering is not a mental illness. There are two programs in the Lansing area that meet the standards set forth by the Batterer Intervention Services Coalition of Michigan:

- **Prevention and Training Services (PATS)** - (517) 323-8149
- **Cognitive Consultants** - (517) 322-3050

Survivor Support
Support is available for people who have experienced violent or controlling relationships. MSU Safe Place and EVE provide free, confidential and non-judgmental support to help survivors explore options, assess safety, and make the decisions that are best for their individual situations.

- **MSU Safe Place** - (517) 355-1100
- **EVE** - (517) 372-5572.

Compiled by Michigan State University Safe Place
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