**Domestic Violence Counseling Referral Sources**

For those who choose to use violence, and for those who have experienced violence

**Batterer’s Intervention**

Lack of anger management does not cause relationship violence. *Violence is a choice.* A batterer’s 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 potential to hold those who use violence and anger the most accountable for many reasons. The group dynamic creates a mechanism for batterers to confront each other on their *use of denial* and *blaming others*, as well as other controlling dynamics utilized by batterers. Groups should be at least 26 weeks and some studies show that batterer’s 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* (not anger management, since out-of-control anger is not the issue with domestic violence) and on accountability (taking responsibility for one’s behavior).

**Individual Counseling**

Individual counseling is not recommended in lieu of batterer’s intervention. It can be done simultaneously or after the abuser has gone through at least 36 to 52 weeks of batterer’s intervention services. The focus of issues discussed in individual counseling is based on what the client presents. Batterers will typically present information to the counselor that blames the victim and does not accurately portray their violence. If individual counseling is used alone it is difficult for the counselor to confront violent clients; if done too forcefully the client will most likely terminate counseling and find someone else who will meet their court mandated requirement but not hold them accountable for their violence. In a batterer’s group this would not be as big of a factor.

**Couples, or Marital, Counseling**

Couples, or marital, counseling is not advisable because it is dangerous to the one who has been victimized. Even when counselors who are educated about domestic violence facilitate sessions, couples counseling implies equal responsibility for the problem. Once a person has made the choice to use emotional, physical, and/or sexual violence, equality is not in place. In actuality the responsibility falls on only one person: the one who is abusive. The counseling session often becomes one more arena for the perpetrator to further abuse his or her partner. The choice of the one victimized is to either lie or minimize the abuse experienced, or to tell the truth and pay later. Before marital counseling is considered, we advise that the abusive member complete a full cycle of a batterer’s group. After that, couples counseling may be considered if both parties want that.

**Real Change**

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

- **Groundwork Counseling** - (517) 763-6969
- **Prevention and Training Services (PATS)** – (517) 323-8149
- **Highfields Alternative Program** - (517) 346-6807

**Victim Support**

Court-mandated counseling for those victimized by abuse is not encouraged because survivors are not at fault for the abuse. However, because healing needs and safety issues are a concern, individual or group support is available for free in the greater Lansing area:

- **End Violent Encounters** in Lansing - call the 24-hour crisis line to get support or set up an appointment at (517) 372-5572.
- **Michigan State University Safe Place** on campus - call (517) 355-1100 ext. 2 during business hours to find out more about our support group, or to schedule an appointment with a counselor or an advocate.
- **Women’s Center of Greater Lansing** – call (517) 372-9163 for information on individual counseling and/or support groups.

Compiled by Michigan State University Safe Place

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