**Battering Intervention Programs (BIPs)**
A battering intervention program is the most effective resource for the person who has been abusive to their partner. Relationship violence is not caused by anger, substance abuse, or mental illness. Instead, people who are abusive use their anger to get what they want, and may rely on excuses such as substance abuse or mental illness to avoid accountability.

Relationship violence is about power and control. Violence is a choice, although people may need help in making better choices. Group intervention has the most potential to hold people accountable. The group dynamic allows participants to confront each other on their use of denial, blaming others, and other controlling dynamics. Groups should meet state standards and be at least 26 weeks, with 52 weeks being ideal. For more information on battering intervention programs, go to www.biscmi.org

**Individual Counseling**
Individual counseling is not recommended in place of a BIP, because abusive people will typically present information to the counselor that blames the survivor and does not accurately portray their own violence and/or controlling behavior. Collusion, where the counselor aligns with the abusive person and sees the survivor as the problem, is more likely to occur. If the counselor does not collude with the abusive person, and instead confronts them on their behavior, the abusive person will most likely terminate counseling. Individual counseling can be done in conjunction with a BIP, or after the abusive person has completed a BIP.

**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 abusive person to further abuse their partner. Collusion between the counselor and abusive person 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 BIP. After that, couple counseling may be considered if both parties want that, and the abusive person is truly accepting responsibility for his or her past behavior.

**Real Change**
Until the abusive party takes responsibility for their behavior, demonstrates attempts to change and completes a group, it is unlikely that their behavior will change for the long term. There is a cost for BIPs, which is part of taking responsibility for one’s actions. It is not appropriate for a BIP to accept insurance payments, as abusive behavior is not a mental illness.

**Survivor Support**
Support is available for people who have experienced violent and/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   noabuse@msu.edu   safeplace.msu.edu
- **EVE**- (517) 372-5572   www.eveinc.org