



## Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs)

Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs) were created to provide intervention and treatment to men arrested for domestic violence offenses. The goal of these programs is to lower recidivism rates in domestic violence cases and protect victims from future abuse.

Existing research on the effectiveness of BIPs is limited and is hindered by key implementation and methodological issues (e.g., low completion rates, lack of random assignment). At this point, there is little research evidence that BIPs have an effect on lowering recidivism rates – but this may be due to poor implementation and/or research. BIPs are likely to be more effective for some offenders than for others.

### Treatment Models

- The Duluth model helps men confront their attitudes about control and teaches them other strategies for dealing with their partners. This is the most common BIP model in the country.
- Cognitive-behavioral interventions deal with thinking errors and focus on skills training and anger management.
- Group practices combine a psychoeducational curriculum with cognitive-behavioral techniques and an assessment of individual needs.

### Key Research Findings

- Prior research finds no statistically significant difference between treatment and control groups in either recidivism rates or attitudes toward domestic violence. One meta-analysis did find a 5% reduction in recidivism rates, which translates to 42,000 fewer incidents of abuse nationally.
- The success or failure of BIPs is in part attributable to the participant's stake in conformity (education, employment, relationship commitment, community bonding), the participant's mental status (personality disorder, mental disorder, substance abuse disorder), and the program's cultural congruity (shared cultures and languages between facilitators and participants).
- There is some evidence that longer treatment programs (26 weeks vs. 8 weeks) result in fewer incidents of repeat violence for those who completed. However, longer treatments result in more dropouts.

### The Alaska Perspective

- In 1998, a 15-month pilot project in Palmer, AK, was funded by the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). The goals of the study were to increase the number of offenders successfully completing batterer intervention programs and to increase victim safety. Of the 170 participants, 47 offenders were in the treatment group while the remaining 123 were in the control group. About one-third of the offenders in both groups successfully completed their court-ordered BIP. There was no statistically significant difference between the control and treatment groups on compliance with court-ordered substance abuse assessment/treatment or on the rates at which they were charged with new domestic violence arrests. Offenders in the treatment group were more

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likely to be charged with new non-domestic violence offenses and were more likely to have their probation revoked.

### Methodological and Implementation Issues

- Low response and high dropout rates make it difficult to properly evaluate the effectiveness of BIPs. Data are often incomplete because they rely on official records for repeat offenses rather than self-reports, from both victims and offenders. Focusing on physical abuse and ignoring other forms of abuse over-estimates BIP effectiveness.
- Non-random samples cause systematic differences between treatment and control groups that are difficult to control for. It is then difficult to conclude that differences in outcomes are not due to differences in participants across groups.
- Co-occurring disorders such as substance abuse and personality disorders are not addressed in BIPs. Cultural congruity is not always achieved. These factors limit the effectiveness of BIPs.

### Selected References

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*Research compiled by Khristy Parker, Research Assistant*