

Proposed Domestic Violence Services

A change in legislation and sentencing in the state of California (Assembly Bill 109), releases offenders from state prisons, called Post Release Community Supervision Offenders, (PRCS) to the supervision of county probation departments effective October 1, 2011. It also provides for sentencing pursuant to 1170 (h) of the California Penal Code that mandates commitments to the county jail for offenders previously sent to the state prison system under long term sentencing strategies. As such, many more offenders including those with issues of domestic violence and requirements for Batterers Intervention Programs (BIP) are now receiving services in Fresno County.

Domestic violence continues to heavily impact individuals, families, and the justice system in Fresno County. At the present time there are over thirty-three hundred individuals on probation or under supervision for PRCS and 1170 (h) status in the county. For these individuals, there are 14 probation supervision caseloads with 4 dedicated to the AB 109 realigned populations under PRCS. Domestic violence recidivism and program failure continue to be highly problematic.

Domestic violence offenders under the supervision of the Fresno County Probation Department are required to attend Batterers' Intervention Programs (BIP) based on compliance with the requirements of Sections 1203.097 and 1203.098 of the Penal Code and the Standards for Batterers' Programs and Certification, conducted in a 52 week format in the community. Departmental and statewide standards recognize that BIP services are only a part of the total community strategy to end domestic violence

Research by Babcock, et al. (2004) from the article, *It's Time for Domestic Violence Treatment to Grow-up*, suggests that "Battering intervention agencies are more likely to improve their services by adding components or tailoring their treatment to specific clientele, than by rigidly adhering to any one curriculum in the absence of empirical evidence of its superior efficacy." While Batterers' Intervention programs as mandated in the State of California have specific core curriculum in a psycho-educational classroom setting, individualized components (time and programming appropriate) could be added to increase success in the programs and reduce recidivism.

Data retrieved from Owen Research and Evaluation, 2014 shows that family and other forms of intimate violence are continuing problems for domestic violence offenders in the Fresno County realigned population resulting in recidivist behaviors and family disruption.

To this end, in addition to BIP the county is seeking to enhance programming for offenders participating in certified BIP through an expanded holistic approach with additional services that focus not only on the offender but family members as well. Seeking a holistic approach for offenders and their families can build healthy intimate relationships and promote a reduction in abuse while supporting healthy change ~~and~~ that addresses the complete and continuing issues within family violence.

Although BIP is not considered Evidence Based Practices, many other treatment modalities are, that could become part of a total approach to facilitate success in the lives of offenders and their families.

The county is seeking proposals for services to domestic violence offenders that address the following areas:

- Individual counseling-in a process that includes one-on-one therapy with a trained counselor;
- Anger management-building skills and resolving issues that address conflict in an offenders life;
- Parenting-to gain insight into parenting styles and understand the impact of family conflict on the family unit as well as child development; and
- Other treatment and evidence based strategies that would enhance programming for domestic violence offenses.