



# **Men's Behaviour Change Group Work**

## **Minimum Standards and Quality Practice**

**No To Violence**



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Alice Bailey	Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre (DVIRC)
Danny Blay	No To Violence
Janine Bush	Domestic Violence Victoria (to February 2004)
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# About No To Violence

No To Violence (NTV), the Male Family Violence Prevention Association, is the Victorian state-wide peak body of organisations and individuals working with men to end their violence and abuse against family members. NTV members come from a wide range of professional and community backgrounds and work in a range of settings including government, community-based settings and private practice.

NTV aims to:

- Work towards the reduction and prevention of male family violence and foster non-violent relationships through working with individuals, families and groups.
- Be aware of, and work towards ensuring the safety of partners and children, workers and participants at all times.
- Challenge and work towards changing the patriarchal systems which condone violence or provide a context in which violence can occur.
- Focus on programs for men taking responsibility for stopping their own violence, as part of a broad-based, co-ordinated and integrated response to male family violence, which includes women's, family and adolescent services, and community and school education.
- Develop and regularly review NTV policies and practices to enable effective work in the area of male family violence.
- Facilitate networking, support and information-sharing between workers running programs for men who are violent in the family.
- Encourage and develop practices which are grounded in an awareness of power and control in gender relations.
- Provide a model of equality between female and male members of NTV.
- Develop and recommend standards of practice for work with men who are violent in the family.
- Liaise about standards of practice and skill development with other relevant bodies on behalf of NTV members.
- Facilitate skill development for individuals and program providers likely to be working with men who are violent in the family.
- Encourage participation by NTV members in public discussion and community education to raise awareness about male family violence.
- Promote the provision of adequate levels of services for women and men to address male family violence.
- Promote the development of men who have participated in programs to stop men's violence to be advocates for the elimination of violence, and the promotion of justice for women and gender equality in the community at large.
- Facilitate the development of resources for use by the field.

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# About Men's Referral Service

The Men's Referral Service (MRS) is the Victorian gateway provider for men who are making moves towards taking responsibility for their violent or abusive behaviour toward their family. MRS has been operating since 1993 and is a valued and highly regarded Victorian family violence service funded by the Victorian Department of Human Services. MRS is a service of NTV and a key part of the men's behaviour change program framework in Victoria.

As the central point of contact, MRS provides anonymous and confidential telephone counselling, information and referrals to men to assist them to take further action to stop their violent and abusive behaviour. The safety of the caller, their partner and family, is always checked by the service.

MRS also acts as an important interim and after-hours counselling option for men's behaviour change programs. Participants in programs or those on waiting lists are encouraged to contact MRS in between group sessions, and in times of recess, holiday or in the period after a program finishes or closes. The telephone counselling provided by MRS can provide important crisis counselling, intervention, anger management education and safety assessment for participants during these times.

MRS also helps professionals and workers in many fields find the most appropriate services for male clients who have been using violence toward their partner or family members.

MRS has an extensive and detailed referral database and is a primary information source for male family violence related services in Victoria. The database provides the most accurate, up-to-date and appropriate referral information to callers.

MRS only refers to men's behaviour change programs that are provided by NTV members.

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# Introduction to the Manual

## Background

Behaviour change work with men is similar in some ways to other types of counselling work, but very different in other ways. It carries extra risks to all involved and requires specific skills and knowledge related to family violence and working with men who use violence.

In 1994, NTV (then V-NET) published *'Stopping Men's Violence In The Family: A Manual for Running Men's Groups, Volume 1, Context and Standards'*. The Manual, containing Minimum Standards, best practice goals and discussion of some of the central issues surrounding men's behaviour change work, was one of the first of its kind in the world. It arose from concern about the potential dangers to women and children in working inappropriately with men who use violence. Given the specialised and difficult nature of the work, the intent of the Manual was to promote and enable responsible men's behaviour change work.

Since its publication, the Manual has been used widely by men's behaviour change program providers, facilitators, researchers, students and activists against family violence. It has been a source of information and ideas, a guide to establishing new programs and a basis for ethical decision-making.

It was always NTV's intention to review the Manual. In the ten years since the Manual was published, much has changed. Collectively, men's behaviour change program providers have more experience. Understandings have deepened and praxis has changed.

This Manual is the product of a comprehensive review process over nine months. Whilst it is based on the sentiments of the original Manual, it has a new structure, considerable new content and some deletions. The Minimum Standards have been refined and added to, and a set of Good Practice Guidelines has been developed.

This continues to be a work-in-progress. No doubt, as the field of men's behaviour change continues to develop, there will be new thinking, new approaches and new ways of doing things. NTV looks forward to nurturing these developments, and supporting debate and discussion with all those who share an interest in preventing men's violence and promoting the safety of women and children.

Finally, no one resource can address all the subtleties and complexities of male family violence and men's behaviour change work. NTV recommends that this Manual be read alongside the many books and journals dedicated to strengthening the safety, integrity and relevance of men's behaviour change work.



## How to use this Manual

This Manual is intended to provide guidance and support for new and existing providers of men's behaviour change programs. It also provides the Minimum Standards and Good Practice Guidelines for practising men's behaviour change work. It is not intended as a guide to curriculum, or a complete toolkit for conducting groups.

Introduction to the Manual provides readers with the background to NTV and MRS. It also defines some of the terminology used in the Manual.

Introduction to the Minimum Standards outlines the case for Minimum Standards, who is responsible for implementing them, and a brief overview of the process involved in developing them.

Understanding male family violence defines what is meant by the term male family violence. It summarises NTV's understandings of male family violence and looks at some common beliefs about it.

Effects of male family violence looks at how men's use of violent and controlling behaviours impacts on women, children and parenting.

Responding to male family violence places men's behaviour change in the context of broader community responses to male family violence and talks about working with men for change. It provides a basic rationale for men's behaviour change group work and talks about some common experiences that women and men have of men's behaviour change programs.

Provider requirements looks at the capacities and resources that providers need if they are to provide men's behaviour change programs that do not have the effect of further jeopardising the safety of women and children.

Staffing men's behaviour change programs provides an overview of the staffing considerations of men's behaviour change programs, including staff roles and qualifications, the number and gender of staff required, and the involvement of men as peers or mentors.

Program planning considers some of planning components of program delivery, including how providers position themselves theoretically, the importance of partnerships and networking, ways that men's behaviour change programs may be structured, and the core messages and skills that providers must communicate in group work.

Access and participation talks about ways to market men's behaviour change, eligibility requirements, intake and assessment processes, contracts for men, and group rights and responsibilities. It also discusses ways that men's behaviour change programs should be inclusive, with information, ideas and Minimum Standards about accountability to Indigenous people, working in a context of cultural and linguistic diversity and challenging homophobia.

Administration provides guidelines and suggestions about a range of matters including record keeping, confidentiality and reporting. It also discusses processes for when a man leaves a program.

Accountability to family members looks at some of the practices for accountability to women and children, individually and collectively. It includes ideas for bringing women's and children's voices into the men's behaviour change process.

Safety provides information and suggestions on practices that help to keep people safe, assessing and responding to threats to safety, responding to illegal acts of violent and controlling behaviours, responding to breaches of court orders, and on staff wellbeing and safety.

Practice and program delivery discusses the need to prevent the collusion and condoning of violence and misogyny. It offers suggestions and Minimum Standards on reflective practice, observation, debriefing and supervision.

Monitoring and evaluation looks at some of the dilemmas of measuring and evaluating men's behaviour change work, and includes Minimum Standards regarding evaluation of program delivery and assessment of individual men.

## Terminology

### **Family**

The nature of the relationship between the parties is an important difference between male family violence and other forms of violence. Generally male family violence involves behaviour towards other members of one's family. Family includes marriage or blood ties, de facto relationships or relationships of a similar nature to these, such as stepparent to stepchildren. The setting is also relevant. Generally, the parties are or have been living together, but this is not always the case. The relevant relationships are characterised by emotional and other intimacy, a high degree of trust and the voluntary dropping of some of the boundaries normally kept with other people. This results in increased vulnerability to the behaviour of the other family members.

### **Violence**

Men's behaviour change programs frequently address behaviours that do not involve physical violence, but that affect others' health, wellbeing, freedom, sense of safety and autonomy. Some people might not think of these when they see the word 'violent', or might hesitate to call them violent. For this reason, NTV generally uses the term 'violent and controlling behaviours' to cover the wide range of behaviours that violate the right of another person to safety, autonomy and wellbeing.

### **Male family violence**

As an organisation, NTV's focus is on the violent and controlling behaviours that some men choose to use towards women and children with whom they have intimate and/or family-like relationships. NTV recognises that gendered power relations, along with many other factors, are implicated in these behaviours. For this reason, NTV has chosen to use the term 'male family violence' in this Manual.

### **Gender-specific language**

At present, the vast majority of men who participate in men's behaviour change programs do so in the context of their heterosexual relationships. NTV believes that gender is an important – though not single – factor in male family violence. In consultation with providers of gay men's behaviour change groups, NTV has decided to give primacy to the intent to talk about people in their own right, not in relationship to another. For this same reason, in this Manual NTV chose to use language that is gendered female and to avoid the term 'partner', which for some, places men at the centre by defining women primarily through their relationship to a man.

NTV recognises that men who use violence are not always heterosexual and believes that much of the content of the Manual is highly relevant to men's behaviour change programs for men in same-sex relationships. NTV strongly encourages the uptake of the Minimum Standards and Good Practice Guidelines in these settings.

### **Women who have experienced violence**

The question of how to refer to people who have had violence used against them has been hotly contested for decades. Some believe that the term 'victim' reinforces people's sense of powerlessness. Yet we must recognise that not all women feel themselves to be survivors, and that not all women do survive male family violence. Furthermore, the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' are sometimes seen to construct a type of person rather than a type of experience. They might not allow for all the other aspects of a person's life, identity and experience; instead, they define her by reference to someone else's actions towards her.

For these reasons, in this Manual, NTV chose to refer to 'women who have experienced violence'. Sometimes this is abridged to 'women'.

### **Children**

Male family violence affects babies, preschoolers, pre-adolescent school-aged children and adolescents. Historically, this has been ignored, and often babies, children and young people are rendered invisible in discussions of male family violence. In this Manual, NTV chose to draw attention to the importance of thinking about and responding to the needs of babies, children and young people. In the interests of readability, NTV chose to use the word 'children' to refer to all people under the age of eighteen years.

### **Men who use violence**

People often use the word 'perpetrator' to refer to men who use violence. This term is not used in this Manual because it suggests a type of person rather than a type of behaviour. Men who use violence choose to do so, and can choose not to. In this Manual, the term 'men who use violence' is used instead. In some cases, the term is abridged to 'men'.

# Introduction to the Minimum Standards

## The case for Minimum Standards

Men's behaviour change programs are provided by many different providers and in many different settings. They are facilitated by people of diverse backgrounds, disciplines and theoretical positionings. There are great disparities in the resources available for men's behaviour change work. These differences mean that each men's behaviour change program will be unique.

Whilst respecting and valuing uniqueness, NTV believes there are some Minimum Standards for men's behaviour change work. These are necessary for:

**Safety.** The aim of behaviour change work with men is to promote women's and children's safety. Where this work is conducted inappropriately or without adequate safeguards, interventions with men have the potential to endanger women and children, staff and others. Minimum standards of practice establish a basic framework for working with men in a manner most conducive to the safety of all involved.

**Accountability.** Men's behaviour change work is undertaken in the interests of safety for women and children. Without opening men's behaviour change work to their scrutiny and feedback, NTV and program providers risk further reinforcing patriarchal social relations in which women's and children's voices and experiences are disregarded. Structures and processes for accountability to women and children include:

- Contact with individual women and children.
- Links and partnerships with women's and children's services.
- Relationships with government.

**Quality assurance.** Men's behaviour change programs are a service, and as such need benchmarks for quality and processes for complaints or grievances.

**Public information.** People seeking to join or refer men to behaviour change programs are often not in a position to assess the suitability or safety of programs. Minimum standards of practice enable referrers to be confident about the appropriateness, quality and integrity of a service.

**Facilitating the safe expansion of programs.** Men in many parts of Victoria have no access to men's behaviour change programs. NTV is committed to assisting the development of new programs by making clear the minimum requirements for their establishment, conduct and evaluation.

NTV chose to continue to use the phrase 'Minimum Standards' as this phrase most accurately reflects the fact that there are policies, procedures and practices that are *imperative* for safe, ethical men's behaviour change work. These are the minimum necessary to ensure that men's participation in men's behaviour change programs does not increase the danger to women and children.



## The case for Good Practice Guidelines

Of course, this Manual also advocates policies, procedures and practices that exceed minimum requirements. Some are identified as Good Practice Guidelines (designated in the text as GPG #).

These guidelines do not meet NTV's criteria for Minimum Standards, however most, if not all, are essential for quality practice. It is hoped that all members will aspire to reach and then surpass the Good Practice Guidelines as they expand and enrich their programs over the years.

## How the Manual and Minimum Standards were developed

This document was prepared by the Project Officer and Advisory Group on behalf of NTV. It draws on many different sources, including:

- The original NTV Manual and Standards.
- The stories, questions, practice dilemmas and reflections of men's behaviour change program providers and women's services.
- Literature summarising qualitative and quantitative research.
- The Continuum Matrix of Practice, published by Partnerships Against Domestic Violence.
- Taking Responsibility, the Victorian Government's framework for developing best practice in programs for men who use violence toward family members.
- National competencies outlined by Partnerships Against Domestic Violence.

Milestones in the development of the Manual were:

- Literature review
- Consultations with providers and other stakeholders
- Survey of existing men's behaviour change groups
- Proposal for structure, content and Minimum Standards disseminated to providers and other stakeholders
- Consultative forum
- Dissemination of a full draft of the Manual for feedback
- Second draft of the Manual
- Consideration of recommendations by the NTV Management Committee
- Adoption of the Manual by the NTV Management Committee.



## Responsibility for implementing the Minimum Standards

The Minimum Standards and Good Practice Guidelines in this Manual are intended for all entities that provide men's behaviour change programs or groups, regardless of whether they are agencies, organisations, businesses or sole traders.

NTV regards this issue of responsibility as critical. Firstly, fulfilling NTV's Minimum Standards and providing quality men's behaviour change programs requires a comprehensive approach. Secondly, men's behaviour change programs are usually conducted in the name of an entity, and thus, the reputation and good standing of that entity is at stake in its delivery of quality men's behaviour change programs. Thirdly, many aspects of men's behaviour change work are policy or procedural in nature, and are beyond the influence of individual members of staff.

Entities that provide men's behaviour change programs must have organisational membership of NTV to be recognised as men's behaviour change program providers. Their governance bodies bear ultimate responsibility for upholding the Minimum Standards and for the conduct and quality of all program activities. All relevant senior managers should be aware of the Minimum Standards and their organisation's responsibility for upholding them.

### **MS 1**

Responsibility for implementation of NTV's Minimum Standards rests with the governance body of the lead provider.



## Complying with the Minimum Standards

Providers wishing to establish and maintain men's behaviour change programs that comply with the Minimum Standards should ensure that they:

- Have a thorough understanding of the dimensions, effects and nature of male family violence.
- Have agreed theoretical approaches and responses to male family violence.
- Have adequate resources to meet all of the Minimum Standards.
- Have positive relationships with local family violence and women's and children's services, services for populations with particular needs (including Indigenous and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse services), police and court staff.
- Can provide information, support and accountability to women and children affected by participants' use of violence (this might be through inter-provider agreements).

NTV does not believe that all services within a men's behaviour change program must be provided within the one provider, however, it is clear that providers wishing to provide such programs have a responsibility to ensure that services can be provided in a holistic, appropriate and timely fashion. Involving various providers increases the complexity of case management and increases the likelihood that clients will cease using services. Furthermore, there is some evidence that drop-out rates are lower and case management is improved when the woman and the man can remain under the one provider's auspice.<sup>1</sup> Inter-provider service provision necessitates careful planning to ensure a seamless delivery of services.

# Understanding Male Family Violence

## Male family violence: a definition

Male family violence occurs in the context of intimate relationships.

It is 'a pattern of coercive control that one person exercises over another in order to dominate and get his way. It is behaviour that physically harms, arouses fear, prevents a person from doing what she wants, or compels her to behave in ways she does not freely choose.'<sup>2</sup>

Family violence can occur in many different kinds of intimate relationships. For example, from one partner towards another, between partners, from a parent to a child, from an adult to an elderly relative, from an adolescent towards a parent. Most frequently however, family violence is perpetrated by men against women and children. Male family violence is an expression of gendered power; that is, the power that men – individually and collectively – have over women and children.



## Key elements of male family violence

### **Male family violence is violation.**

Male family violence is any form of behaviour by men, in the context of intimate relationships, which violates the right of another person to autonomy, dignity, equality and respect.

### **Male family violence is power over.**

Male family violence is behaviour that expresses men's power over another.

### **Male family violence perpetuates and reinforces male power over women and children.**

Men's needs and wants are given primacy over others – at individual, social and systemic levels. Male family violence perpetuates and reinforces this primacy.

### **Unintended violence is still violence.**

Intention is not necessarily a defining feature of male family violence. Any behaviour that causes violation is violent or controlling, regardless of whether the man is conscious of any intention to exert power or control. Behaviour is still violent or controlling even if a man says he feels powerless himself, or is not aware that the behaviour is violent or controlling.

### **Male family violence causes fear.**

Those who experience male family violence become fearful of potentially violent situations and/or of the person who uses violence. They frequently modify their own behaviour to try to prevent or cope with the violence. Experiencing male family violence makes it increasingly difficult for women and children to be themselves, and to speak and act freely in their own interests.

### **Male family violence is a barrier to equal and respectful relationships.**

Every act of violent and controlling behaviour is an act of disrespect. Men's use of violence against family members breaks trust and communication, and harms relationships.

### **Male family violence stops other issues being dealt with.**

Issues or problems in relationships can only be addressed when there is trust and positive communication. As such, men who use violence need to change their behaviour before they can address any problems in their relationship.

## NTV's understanding of male family violence

### **Male family violence is an expression of male power and control in the context of a male dominated society.**

NTV believes that all behaviour change work with men must be located within an awareness of the social context of male family violence. Male family violence is primarily used by men to control women and children. It is an attempt to exert power and control: the man using violence does so to impose his will regardless of the wishes of the other person.

Although many people have been working for change for some time now, most Australians' social histories have been of male dominance in all spheres of public life. This has both facilitated, and been reinforced by, male dominance in the family. Gender socialisation of girls and boys to accept and continue gender roles has further reinforced male dominance. In most cultural contexts in Australia, men have relatively *more power* than women or children and this frequently means they also wield *power over* women and children.

In these social contexts, family violence has been largely hidden and private and surrounded by shame and secrecy. This is still often the case. Male family violence is often condoned and colluded with, and there is widespread denial of its nature, extent, and effects. Those who experience it often feel powerless to stop it. Often, people who witness it or know about it are reluctant to intervene in others' relationships. The response of the police and the legal system often further disempowers women by failing to offer them the equal protection of the law.

Whilst men must be held responsible and accountable for their own violence, we must acknowledge that male violence is embedded in the structures and collective unconscious of Australia's patriarchal society. In practice, this means that men must be encouraged to reflect upon how they can '*... participate in this system differently so that we can help to change not only ourselves but the world that shapes us ... to take our share of responsibility for the patriarchal legacy that we've all inherited*'.<sup>3</sup>

It is imperative to acknowledge that there are factors other than gender involved in the use of violence. Violence is used by women, particularly against children; it also occurs in some same-sex relationships. Furthermore, violence is not used equally by men of all backgrounds and social position. NTV believes that male family violence and constructions of gender and gendered power must be understood in the contexts of class, race, culture, sexuality and lived experience.

These are complex issues and NTV encourages anyone intending to work in the area of men's behaviour change to read widely and thoroughly in order to develop their own understanding and perspectives on male family violence.

**All forms of violence are unacceptable and must be challenged at all times.**

There are many behaviours that men choose to use to control and disempower women and children. Although only physical, sexual and some forms of racist violence are illegal and attract criminal sanctions, other forms of violence can also have equally serious and lasting effects on a person's sense of self, wellbeing and autonomy. Furthermore, they breach people's rights to health, safety, freedom of expression and autonomy. As such, NTV believes that all forms of violence are unacceptable and must be challenged at all times.

**Men are responsible for their use of violence.**

The use of violence is a choice for which each man is responsible. Although a man might have been socialised to believe he has a right to control women and children, he can still choose to take responsibility to learn and use non-violent ways of relating. In common with most feminist theorists, NTV does not see a natural link between masculinity and violence<sup>4</sup> and rejects any attempts to explain violent behaviour by men as a product of their biology or physiology.

Some men who seek assistance with stopping their use of violence have also experienced violence themselves. This is never an excuse for violating others. The issues relating to a man's own experience of being violated are separate from his responsibility for his own use of violence against others. Any excusing, condoning or minimising a man's behaviour on the basis of his own experiences reinforces, rather than challenges, his use of violence.



## Common misconceptions about male family violence<sup>5</sup>

Many commonly held misconceptions about male family violence reflect attitudes about men and women in general. They influence the way those who experience male family violence see themselves, and the responses of social institutions and services, including police, doctors, counsellors, the law and the media.

Generally, these misconceptions have the effect of silencing and marginalising people who experience it, and reinforcing male power and privilege. Furthermore, they:

- Fail to name the violence as a crime, treating it instead as a problem.
- Provide the man who uses violence with an invitation to excuse himself and to pursue a search for causes, triggers, precipitating events and circumstances.
- Individualise the 'problem' by ignoring the social, cultural and historical contexts in which violence towards women and children has been both openly and secretly excused.
- Fail to focus on the man stopping his violence.
- Tend to involve the women and children in responsibility for the violence and often require them to change in order to avoid violence.

Below are some common misconceptions about men who are violent towards their partners, about women who experience male family violence and about patterns of male family violence in different cultures and contexts.

### **It's because he drinks.**

Alcohol does not cause male family violence. Often men are violent whether they are drunk or sober, and many men (and women) drink but do not become violent. In some cases, alcohol may accentuate male family violence, and some men may use alcohol as an excuse for their actions, but it is not the primary reason why some men choose to use violent and controlling behaviour towards their partners or children.

### **She drives him to it. She asked for it.**

Violence is inexcusable regardless of the circumstances. Men can choose other ways of dealing with conflict, rather than using violence.

### **He had a difficult and/or violent upbringing.**

Often people seek to explain male family violence by suggesting that men who use violence had traumatic childhoods, or that they repeat the violence they witnessed in their own family backgrounds. However, this belief cannot account for the thousands of men and women who came from violent backgrounds who do not grow up to be violent. Nor does it explain how men who report happy and non-violent childhoods became violent in adulthood.

### **He has a stressful job.**

Many men and women work and live in stressful environments, without resorting to violence. Men who are violent toward their family members usually do not also use violent and controlling behaviour towards their co-workers, bosses or friends. This demonstrates that they are able to control their feelings in other environments.



He can't control his anger. The pressure just builds up.

Many men who use violent and controlling behaviour do so when they are not feeling angry or stressed. Many men who are angry or stressed do not use violence. Male family violence is always unacceptable, regardless of men's feelings before, during or after they have used violent and controlling behaviours.

**Men who use violence are mentally ill.**

There is no evidence that men who are violent have higher rates of psychiatric disorders than other men. Given that male family violence affects a significant proportion of the population, it cannot be explained solely in terms of 'abnormal' personality characteristics of perpetrators. Men who use violence usually look and act like 'ordinary' men.

**It's a relationship issue.**

Male family violence is often understood or presented as a relationship issue or a dynamic between two people. For example, 'We had a fight' or 'It was a violent relationship'. Men are responsible for their own use of violence. Casting male family violence in a relationship context has the effect of ascribing some measure of blame to those who experience it.

**Women who are victims of male family violence are predisposed to it.**

Some people believe that some women allow themselves to be abused, or have psychological problems that lead them to choose as partners men who use violence. However, there is no evidence that it is a particular 'type' of woman who is likely to experience male family violence.

**It mainly happens in working class families.**

Research suggests that male family violence occurs in all socio-economic groups and cultures. It might be more visible in working class families, because they are more likely to come to the attention of public authorities. Middle class women are just as likely to have violent partners, but compared to working class women, they generally have more resources to allow them to leave the situation.

**Male family violence is more common in non-English speaking and Indigenous cultures.**

This belief may reflect the negative stereotypes held by some people about 'other' cultures. It is difficult to know the prevalence of male family violence in any community. It may be more difficult for women of non-English speaking backgrounds and Aboriginal women to leave violent partners, as they often face additional obstacles. These can include a lack of social and economic resources, language barriers, racism and inappropriate responses from police and other services.

**Male family violence is a private matter.**

Violence that occurs in the home is often seen as a private matter to be sorted out by the parties involved. Male family violence is often referred to as 'a domestic incident' or 'a bit of a domestic', as if it is less serious than violence which occurs in public places. Violence in the home is equally as serious and damaging as all other forms of violence. Many acts of violent and controlling behaviours are crimes.

## Forms of male family violence

There are many different ways that men can be violent and/or controlling, and those who experience violent and controlling behaviours might talk about them as interchangeable, inseparable, or indistinguishable, depending on their individual experiences and frameworks. As Barbara Hart has argued, '[b]attering is the sum of all past acts of violence, and the promise of future violence, that achieves enhanced power and control for the batterer'.<sup>6</sup>

The following categories are generally used amongst male family violence professionals. However, they should not be regarded as definitive.

### **Emotional violence and controlling behaviour**

Emotional violence and controlling behaviour is behaviour that does not accord equal importance and respect to another person's feelings, opinions and experiences. It is often the most difficult to pinpoint or identify.

It includes refusing to listen to or denying another's person's feelings, telling them what they do or do not feel, and ridiculing or shaming them. It also includes making another person responsible for one's own feelings, blaming or punishing them for how one feels, and manipulating them by appealing to their feelings of guilt, shame and worthlessness. It also includes emotional control, such as telling someone directly or indirectly that if she expresses a different point of view then she will cause trouble, and implying or telling her that avoiding trouble is more important than how she feels.

Emotional violence can be verbal, for example, verbal putdowns and ridiculing any aspect of a woman or child's being, such as her body, beliefs, occupation, cultural background, skills, friends or family. It can also be non-verbal, for example, withdrawal, refusal to communicate, and rude or dismissive gestures.

Emotional violence and controlling behaviour is embedded in all other forms of violent and controlling behaviours.

### **Physical violence and controlling behaviour**

This involves actual or threatened attacks on another's physical safety and integrity. Physical violence ranges from hitting, kicking, choking/strangling, punching and assault with weapons, through to murder. It can involve harming or threatening to harm children, relatives, pets or possessions. It includes smashing property, throwing things and physical intimidation such as threatening gestures. It also includes the criminal act of stalking.

### **Sexual violence and controlling behaviour**

Sexual violence and controlling behaviour is any actual or threatened sexual contact without consent. It includes unwanted touching, rape, exposure of genitals and making someone view pornography against their will. It also includes a man expecting a woman to have sex as a form of reconciliation after he has just beaten her, because in these circumstances she is unable to withhold consent for fear of further violence. Whilst some forms of sexual violence are criminal acts, for example, sexual assault and rape, many other forms – for example, using degrading language – are not.

Refusal to have sex as punishment is also a form of controlling behaviour.

**Social violence or controlling behaviour**

This includes all behaviour that limits, controls or interferes with a woman's social activities or relationships with others, such as controlling her movements and denying her access to her family and friends. It also includes excessive questioning, aggression towards men who are viewed as 'competition' and acts of jealousy.

**Financial violence and controlling behaviour**

This includes not giving a woman access to her share of the family's resources. It includes expecting her to manage the household on an impossibly low amount of money and/or criticising and blaming her when she is unable to and/or incurring debts in her name.

**Spiritual violence or controlling behaviour**

This includes all behaviour that denigrates a woman's religious or spiritual beliefs, or prevents her from attending religious gatherings or practising her faith. It also includes harming or threatening to harm women or children in religious or occult rituals, or forcing them to participate in religious activities against their will.

**Other controlling behaviour**

Some men use other behaviour to control women that does not fit the above descriptions or that may not in itself appear to be violent, but that still denies a woman's right to autonomy and equality, especially when it is used frequently or in combination with violence. This includes telling her what to do and not allowing her to carry out her own wishes (for example, always 'losing' the car keys or being late to look after the children when she wants to do something he disapproves of).

# Effects of male family violence

## The effects of male family violence on women

Family violence has a range of short and long-term physical, emotional, psychological, financial and other effects on women. Every woman is different and the impact of each act of violent or controlling behaviour depends on many complex factors.

Whilst each woman will experience male family violence uniquely, there are many common effects of living with violence and living in fear.

The obvious physical effects of male family violence on women are physical injury and death. Yet there are also other effects on women's physical health – such as insomnia, chronic pain, a range of reproductive health problems and physical symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder – that are not necessarily the result of physical injuries. Women who are experiencing male family violence have higher rates of miscarriage, most probably because pregnancy is often a time when violence begins or is exacerbated.

Abused women are more likely to experience depression, panic phobia, anxiety, sleeping disorders, emotional problems. They have higher stress levels and are at greater risk of suicide attempts. They are at increased risk of misusing alcohol and other drugs, and of using minor tranquillisers and pain killers.

Psychological effects of male family violence on women must never be underestimated. Even when there is no physical violence, women who experience violent and controlling behaviours often have feelings of:

- low sense of self-worth
- failure
- powerlessness
- helplessness
- worthlessness.

Cognitive effects of violence include impaired concentration, confusion and intrusive thoughts about traumatic experiences (flashbacks).

**< See Resource Manual for handouts on the effects of male family violence >**

Women who experience male family violence are often unable to act on their own choices because of physical restraint, fear and intimidation. They are frequently silenced and unable to express their point of view or experience. They often make their partner's needs and feelings the constant focus of their attention as a survival strategy and avoid self-assertion at all costs. Women who experience male family violence live in constant fear of further violation.

One of the most insidious effects of male family violence is the damage it can do to a woman's perceptions over time. Women often lose confidence in their own perception of reality. Some become habituated to their partner's behaviour, seeing it as normal or as something that they deserve. This can lead women to collude with or minimise behaviour that is violent and controlling. It is important to note that the behaviour in question is still violent or controlling, even if the woman experiencing it does not recognise this. It is also violent or controlling even if the woman manages to defend herself and avoid some of the intended effects.

Women who experience male family violence often have fewer coping and problem-solving skills and experience far greater social isolation, including isolation from their own extended family. Isolation can be either a form of controlling behaviour or a consequence of women's stress, anxiety, shame, physical exhaustion, substance abuse, physical injuries and fear.

Watching the effects of violence on their children can also be very damaging for women. They may feel, or be, unable to protect their children, which can have serious effects on their identity and confidence as mothers. Women's capacities to parent their children effectively are often severely affected by the physical, emotional and cognitive effects of their experiences.

**< See page 31 for more information on the effects of male family violence on women's parenting >**

## The effects of male family violence on children

Research has found that all violence has some effect on children and that the impact on children of witnessing violence cannot be differentiated from the impact on them of experiencing violence directly<sup>7</sup>.

The effects of male family violence vary from child to child. What's more, they are mediated or filtered by other factors, such as poverty or experiences of marginalisation on the basis of culture or race. Male family violence impacts on many aspects of children's lives, for example, stability of housing, access to education or their mother's access to ante- and post-natal care. These are especially important in children's early years.

Male family violence does not determine outcomes for children, but it does influence them.

Common experiences of children who are subjected to male family violence include:

- Anxiety and fear for self, siblings and mother
- Disrupted routines, schooling and relationships
- Believing that their experiences are not shared by anyone else, anywhere
- Being disbelieved or dismissed
- Withdrawing and not drawing attention to themselves (becoming invisible)
- Isolation and loneliness
- Looking after younger siblings
- Being the confidante of their mother
- Being a peacekeeper
- Keeping secrets – from peers, teachers and other 'authority figures'
- Being aggressive towards others such as family (mother, siblings) and peers.

In addition to physical injury and death at the hands of male family members, children also manifest physical symptoms of stress or distress, for example, bedwetting, stomach upsets and chronic illnesses.

The immediate emotional effects of experiencing male family violence tend to differ with age.

Babies and toddlers who experience male family violence often cry excessively and show signs of anxiety and irritability. They frequently have feeding and sleep difficulties. They are often underweight for their age and have delayed mobility. They often react to loud noises and are wary of new people. They might be very demanding or very passive.

Preschool children lack the cognitive maturity to understand the meaning of what they observe and the verbal skills to articulate their feelings. They exhibit their emotional distress by 'clinginess', eating and sleeping difficulties, concentration problems, inability to play constructively and physical complaints. They sometimes have symptoms similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in adults, including re-experiencing events, fearfulness, numbing and increased arousal. Immature behaviour, insecurities and reduced ability to empathise with other people are common for this age group. Frequently, children have adjustment problems, for example, difficulty moving from kindergarten to school.

As they get older, children start to observe patterns or intentions behind violent behaviour. They often wonder what they could do to prevent it, and might attempt to defend themselves or their mother. Pre-adolescent school-aged children have the capacity to externalise and internalise their emotions. The former might manifest in rebelliousness, defiant behaviour, temper tantrums, irritability, cruelty to pets, physical abuse of others, limited tolerance and poor impulse control. The latter might result in repressed anger and confusion, conflict avoidance, overly compliant behaviour, loss of interest in social activities, reduced social competence and withdrawal, or avoidance of peer relations. Overall functioning, attitudes, social competence and school performance are often negatively affected, and children often have deficits in basic coping and social skills. The low self esteem engendered by experiences of men's violent and controlling behaviour is exacerbated by these other effects of male family violence.

Adolescents who have experienced male family violence are at increased risk of academic failure, dropping out of school, delinquency, eating disorders and substance abuse. They frequently have difficulty trusting adults and often use controlling or manipulative behaviour. Depression and suicidal ideation or behaviours are common. Adolescents are also at greater risk of homelessness and of engaging in delinquent and/or violent behaviour as adults.

Anger at mothers tends to increase with age. Seeing their mothers as complicit in the violence, blaming her for 'failing to protect' her children, or blaming her for not leaving are all common responses from older children and adolescents.

Children from violent relationships experience behavioural and emotional adjustment difficulties, and it has been noted that:

*'... children who grow up in violent homes show its effect in their overall socialisation process as well as in mental health symptoms. The areas most likely to be affected are [personal] relationships, anger, sexuality, stress coping techniques, and communication problems. They often develop with certain skill deficits including the inability to deal effectively with confrontation and aggression and have greater confusion about interpersonal relationships.'*<sup>8</sup>

The impact of men's violence is severe: these are serious, long lasting and frequently irreversible effects on children and young people<sup>9</sup>. There is some evidence that suggests that children who have experienced male family violence are more likely to experience violence in their adult relationships<sup>10</sup>. Children exposed to male family violence are more likely to use it to resolve relationship conflicts more readily than those who are not, and older children who experience more extreme violence tend to hold themselves responsible for this behaviour<sup>11</sup>.

## The effects of male family violence on women's parenting

The effects of male family violence might mean that mothers:

- Are preoccupied by their own experiences and cannot give adequate attention to their children's needs.
- Have no energy or no confidence to parent effectively, and particularly to give positive and nurturing responses that promote the healthy development of their children.
- Have little resilience to cope with their own problems, so deal with the problems of their children as best they can, which may mean sending them away, being dismissive or offering limited comfort.
- Are inconsistent in maintaining routines or setting limits (including over-compensating).
- Try to prevent violence by controlling their children's behaviour (and in doing so, may be abusive themselves).

Regardless of women's capacities, for many children, their relationship with their mothers is a lifeline to survival.



## Parenting by men who use family violence

Bancroft notes that 'whether or not it is the abusive man's intention, exposing children to domestic violence has multiple negative effects on them, including inherently damaging their relationships with their mother'.<sup>12</sup> Bancroft has identified a number of characteristics that are often found in the parenting styles of men who use violence:

### **Authoritarianism**

For example, expecting to be obeyed; being intolerant of children's behaviour or needs; or, being unwilling to accept feedback or criticism from family members. These factors appear to contribute to increased risk of child abuse.

### **Under-involvement, neglect and irresponsibility**

For example, being less physically affectionate; leaving childcare and knowledge of the child to its mother; having unrealistic expectations about the child's behaviour; and inconsistent involvement and/or interest. Lack of attention to the child is also seen as a risk factor for child abuse.

### **Undermining of the mother**

For example, being contemptuous when arguing with the child's mother; insulting, degrading and ridiculing her; or, overruling her parenting decisions.

### **Self-centeredness**

For example, being unwilling to modify own lifestyle to accommodate the child's needs; being insensitive to feelings and experiences of the child; not establishing emotional boundaries with the child; making theatrical displays of own distress; or, taking personal credit for successes of child and blaming failures on its mother.

### **Manipulation**

For example, creating confusion in children about who is responsible for the violence.

### **Ability to perform under observation**

For example, behaving in a gentle, caring and attentive manner in public and during supervised access.

# Responding to Male Family Violence

## Putting men's behaviour change work in context

NTV believes that male family violence must be addressed in the context of gender inequality between men and women. NTV places work with individual men to change their violent behaviour in the context of other political, legal and social responses aimed at ending gender-based inequalities and stopping violence against women and children. The long-term prevention of male family violence requires a clear and consistent message from all individuals and social providers that:

- All forms of violence are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- Ending gender-based inequalities is integral to preventing male family violence.

Men need to know that their use of violence will not be condoned by any person or institution. They need to see that everyone – including individuals, community providers, police and the legal system – will protect the rights of others to safety and autonomy.

Women and children need to know that they will be believed and that their rights will be upheld. They need to have options other than living in violent and unsafe situations, to know about them, and to be supported in making changes in their lives if they decide to do so. The legal remedies available to protect women and children must be applied consistently.

If the practices of people and providers at all levels are not consistent, men, women and children will continue to believe that men may use violent and controlling behaviours with impunity.

NTV supports the ongoing work of the many people working for change at all levels. This includes work to challenge and change gender socialisation, to redistribute economic power, to challenge institutionalised violence, to provide services to support and empower women and children, to improve community awareness about family violence, and to improve the response to family violence on the part of health and community support providers, and the police and legal system.

It is imperative that providers who work with individual men do so in an integrated and co-ordinated way, in collaboration with other providers. Men's behaviour change program providers have a responsibility to share with others their knowledge about how to work with men to facilitate change. The current policy of working towards regional and state-wide networking and co-ordination between services for people experiencing family violence is a positive trend that needs to be supported by men's behaviour change program providers.

Work with individual men needs to be grounded in the principle of accountability to women and children. Providers of men's behaviour change programs are accountable for:

- Expecting men to take responsibility for their own behaviour at all times.
- Never openly or covertly locating responsibility for violence with those who have experienced it.
- Taking all reasonable steps to avoid men's participation in programs placing their families at greater risk.
- Ensuring that their places and practices are as safe as possible.
- Attending to the support, referral and information needs of women and children.
- Maintaining an awareness of issues of the use of power and control at all times, including the differences in power, based on gender, class, culture and race.

Feminist understandings about the role of gender are crucial in all elements of men's behaviour change work. There is also a need to understand other factors that affect men's lives and choices. NTV is open to integrating feminist theories with other complementary theories and perspectives on power and control that might assist in developing more effective ways to stop male family violence.

## Working with men for change

NTV sees working with men who use violent and controlling behaviours as one of many valid ways that people can challenge male family violence. There is a significant body of evidence to support the proposition that some men can change their attitudes and behaviour and use non-violent ways of relating.<sup>13</sup>

Although men who use violence do so to gain power and control with damaging effects on others, they also report a range of negative effects for themselves. These include shame, guilt, hating themselves for what they do and frustration at not having the kinds of relationships with their partners and families they would like to have. Often they feel powerless themselves and use violence to try to increase their sense of power. Although it involves giving up the use of power and control and the privileges of domination, men also have a lot to gain from learning to have equal, open and non-violent relationships.

In order for men to become and remain non-violent, they need to change on a number of levels: in their thinking, feeling, attitudes and behaviour. They also need to learn new skills, and to practise and integrate these in their lives. Men in this process need support to consolidate and maintain change. NTV recognises that the change process is gradual and takes time.

In the men's behaviour change process, men must be invited to explore how they use violent and controlling behaviour, and what affect their behaviour has on others.<sup>14</sup> Men's behaviour change programs need to educate men about the different types of violence, the use of power and control, and the ramifications of these. They also need to establish clear boundaries about what attitudes and behaviour are acceptable.

In the process, men need support and encouragement to explore their behaviour and learn unfamiliar – and sometimes confronting – new ways of knowing themselves and others. At the same time, they must also take responsibility for their behaviour and be reminded when they fail to do so.

Some providers believe that men will have more difficulty making lasting changes if they do not also have an awareness of the feeling states before, during, and after their use of violent and controlling behaviour. If men become aware of both their feeling states and attitudes, then they have more chance of changing both their attitudes and behaviour, and so increasing the chances of establishing and maintaining safety.

Men must be able to recognise that feelings are different from behaviours and that there are achievable and viable alternatives to using violent and controlling behaviours. That is, they need to learn safe, respectful ways to respond to their feelings.

It is important to state here that men's behaviour change is not the same as anger management. There are many feelings that men experience in addition to anger: anxiety, distress, impatience, agitation, frustration, fear, to name just a few.

NTV believes that proposing anger management programs as a response to male family violence promotes the idea that men's violent and controlling behaviours are a consequence of their inability to manage anger. This fails to recognise that men can be violent and controlling when they are not angry, or non-violent even when angry. Furthermore, by focusing on mastery of emotions, anger management approaches fail to address broader issues of power and control. NTV will neither refer to nor recommend anger management programs, although it does recognise that anger management has a place in behaviour change programs, especially in terms of helping men to develop ways to intervene in their own violent and controlling behaviour.

Because male family violence is not simply a product of individual men's mistaken thinking, it is important that providers, and ultimately male participants, continually advocate for non-violence and an end to gendered and other forms of inequality. Men's behaviour change programs should occur alongside a range of other activities aimed at male family violence prevention. Positive examples are public events, public advocacy and solidarity with women around issues such as childcare, gendered distribution of wealth, women's health or changes to sentencing laws.



## A rationale for men's behaviour change group work

It is important to state at the outset that men's behaviour change groups are not self-help groups. They require trained facilitators with professional supervision and accountability, and should only occur in the context of a broader men's behaviour change program that meets NTV's Minimum Standards.

Men's behaviour change programs are integral to a full community response to male family violence. They offer men wishing to learn non-violent ways of relating:

- Immediate access to information, intervention and support.
- Access to intensive and structured education, and opportunities to be challenged.
- Long-term access to support that will assist them to consolidate their attitude and behaviour change.
- Encouragement, language, frameworks and opportunities to advocate for non-violence, and changed attitudes and behaviour towards women and children within the wider community.

### **Why group work?**

Group work is a powerful tool for men's behaviour change and has been shown to be effective in a range of settings. It has many advantages. Some of these can be obtained only from group work, and others happen faster in group work.

In men's behaviour change groups, men:

- Are able to meet other men in a similar situation.
- Are helped to identify their own violence by hearing other men doing so. It is also more difficult for them to resist acknowledging their own violence when they hear other men acknowledging theirs.
- Learn through hearing the stories of other men. This encourages reflection upon and greater understanding of their own stories.
- Have opportunities to address socialisation and challenge the stereotyped ways that men frequently behave in groups.
- Have opportunities to experience ways of relating that are rare in other male gatherings. Men's behaviour change groups are about focussing on personal change rather than on practical tasks or giving advice to others. They involve less competition and more nurturing behaviour with other men, which are new types of intimacy for most participants.
- Experience modelling of non-violent ways of relating between male and female facilitators.
- See other men go through the change process and learn from their experiences.
- Receive support and reinforcement from other men for changes they are making.

- Can be challenged by meeting a variety of different men. Their intellectual understanding and ways of thinking can expand from hearing a range of perspectives, which increases the possibility of choosing different perspectives and patterns of response.
- Can develop new support networks that can reduce isolation.

In the context of male family violence, NTV also believes that sharing in group settings can break secrecy. Men's disclosures to other men in the group about their violent behaviour can lead to their wider disclosure and subsequent change. There is also more scrutiny – and therefore accountability – of the facilitators, and less chance of collusion between counsellor and client.

Some group-work practitioners feel that there is less likelihood of a stand-off between counsellor and client in group settings than in one-to-one work with men.

Group work might sometimes be more cost-effective than one-on-one interventions. However, this alone is not a justification for adopting group work over other interventions.

### **Group work in relation to other interventions**

#### **A combination of group and individual work**

Levels of personal disclosure in groups vary according to many factors, including the group structure, facilitation and personalities of individuals within the group.

Group work can raise many personal issues for men and it is not usually appropriate to spend group time attending to them. It is important that men's behaviour change groups maintain their focus on the participants' own use of violence. This means that individual counselling needs to be available for men, and that they should be encouraged to use it when they need to.

When men are engaged in individual work in combination with group work, it is important that there is communication and co-ordination between the group facilitator and the individual counsellor so that they do not work at odds with each other. This is particularly important if the individual counsellor does not have skills and experience in men's behaviour change work in the context of male family violence.

Some providers also find it helpful to complement group work for men's behaviour change with individual sessions, when it appears that the man is finding a particular issue or idea especially difficult to understand or accept.

It is important that men and their counsellor/s recognise that individual work should not be used to avoid disclosure and participation in the group process.

### **Individual work instead of, or before, group participation**

Individual rather than group work for men's behaviour change is always at the discretion of the counsellor and the man. NTV accepts that there are situations in which individual work towards men's behaviour change might be preferable to group work. Sometimes, individual work with a man might enable his subsequent participation in a group. At other times, group work might be considered inappropriate by the facilitator or undesirable to the man.

NTV notes that there are occasions where individual work is substituted for group work because the group is inaccessible to a man. NTV believes that all providers of men's behaviour change programs have a responsibility to make their groups accessible to as many men as possible and that wherever possible, language or cultural differences (for example) should not preclude men from participating in group work.

### **Work with couples and families**

A man's individual behaviour change work will have an effect on his family members. After a time it may be appropriate to work with the couple or the family (or both) if the partner and family members are interested. It is generally considered safe to do this when the woman is willing to participate, does not feel threatened in the counselling situation, and feels safe at home after the counselling session. It is accepted practice and NTV policy that counsellors should not provide couple therapy or relationship counselling when there is still physical violence happening.

NTV believes that any work with couples must be informed by recognition of gender issues, awareness of all types of violence, and the use of power and control. NTV stresses the importance of avoiding a relational view of violence, in which women are seen to be implicated (either by their actions or their mannerisms) in a man's use of violent and controlling behaviours.

#### **MS 2**

Program providers only provide couple therapy or relationship counselling if the woman is willing to participate, does not feel threatened in the counselling situation and feels safe at home. They never provide couple therapy or relationship counselling when the man is still using physical violence or significant levels of controlling behaviour.





## Experiences of men's behaviour change programs

### Women's experiences

Women often make the initial enquiries about men's behaviour change programs, usually on behalf of a man with whom they are still in a relationship. Occasionally, women's enquiries are made on behalf of a partner from whom they have recently separated, in the hope of reconciliation, or motivated by concern for their children.

Women frequently hope that a program will help the man in their life to change his behaviour. Sometimes they have a higher belief in the man's capacity for change than he has, especially in the initial stages of the process. Most also believe that the man is unlikely to stop using violent behaviour without help.

Where they are still in a relationship, or hoping for reconciliation, women usually say that they love the man when he is not being violent or controlling. Anecdotally, many would prefer the relationship to continue, provided the man can change his behaviour.

When a man has entered a men's behaviour change program, some women report feeling encouraged by his commitment to attend and his willingness to share his feelings in a group of men. However, this feeling is often complicated by many other emotions, and women frequently have a great deal of ambivalence about the process.

Many women report lack of trust in their partners and/or the men's behaviour change process. Whilst many women might hope for and, at some level, believe in, change on the man's part, their lack of trust is generally very well-founded. Usually they have heard many avowals of change in the past, with little or nothing to show for them.

Women often feel guilty and confused about their lack of trust in their (ex)partner, especially if they have been instrumental in his decision to participate in a group. It is important for the women's contact workers to emphasise that trust must be earned, and that hesitancy to trust can be a healthy response.

The knowledge that a man is participating in a group, and therefore under the scrutiny of others, can often open a space for women to begin to come to terms with the enormity of their experience. For many women, their greater sense of safety is often accompanied by feelings of (for example) anger, rage, indignation, pain, liberation, fear of the future and hopefulness. Other women find that they still feel too vulnerable to remove the barriers that they have put up to keep themselves emotionally safe.

Men almost always underestimate the emotional damage that women and children have experienced as a consequence of their behaviour. Sometimes they want immediate gratification and appreciation for their participation in a men's behaviour change program. Understandably, this can exacerbate women's feelings of rage.

An irony of a men's participation in a men's behaviour change program is that they tap into a supportive group of men in which they may talk about themselves. Experiencing male family violence often makes women socially isolated, and women can feel left out of this new part of their partner's life. This is another reason for contact with women and for the provision of women's support groups.

Women sometimes invest greater power in men's behaviour change programs to prevent violence than groups realistically have. Change is a slow process, and women who have high expectations subsequently might feel let down and disappointed. In addition to the obvious emotional harm this might cause, unrealistic expectations could result in women choosing to stay in dangerous situations. Staff of men's behaviour change programs need to take considerable care to discourage women from making a decision to stay in or leave a relationship based on their partner's participation in a group.

Women experience men's behaviour change groups through their partner's accounts and via contact with program staff. Through these dual accounts, women often learn that their partners have misrepresented what has been said in the group in order to continue to deny or minimise their violence and control.

It is important to emphasise that a change in behaviour arising from men's participation in a group is not always positive. Sometimes women report a reduction in the physical violence but no change or a worsening of the non-physical violence and controlling behaviour. Women have also experienced men using information from the group about what other men have done to their partners to terrorise them further.

Sometimes there is no change at all in men's behaviour, but women become safer because they decide to leave the relationship.

It is imperative that women are not isolated or unsupported during this process. Program staff need to inform women that there can be no guarantee that men will change through their attendance in a men's behaviour change program. Women should be encouraged to develop their own journeys and pathways.

**< See pp 103-124 about supporting women and children and assisting them to be safer >**

### **Men's experiences**

Some men who participate in men's behaviour change programs describe their experience as one of the most significant learning times in their lives. Some also acknowledge that the group is only a first stepping stone on a journey to remain violence free.

A very few men say they are enthusiastic about attending right from the beginning of their participation in a group. They are probably more likely to say they are scared of speaking in a group, of what the men in the group will be like, and of what will be required of them in the group.

Most men report feeling at home in a men's group quite soon because the groups are about change rather than blame, and because there are other men present who can talk about the changes they are trying to make or maintain. Men often say they are impressed by other men's honesty and genuine desire to lead different lives.

Men attending behaviour change programs should expect that their ideas and beliefs will be challenged, especially if they are trying to minimise their violent behaviour or blame others. However, when challenges occur within a framework of believing that the man can act and think differently, and when benefits for change are taught and discussed, many men report that they begin to see challenges in a different context.

Men often go through a time of great confusion and unsettlement as they are encouraged to let go of certainties and rigid thought patterns and expectations. This experience of vulnerability and uncertainty can be quite stressful and threatening for some men.

Some men speak very positively about the experience of being in a group of men because they can talk about issues they rarely discuss with other men, and relate more intimately and less competitively. They often struggle with the difference between the demands of openness in the men's group and the closed competitive nature of many of their other social relationships.

Often men talk about becoming increasingly aware of how violent the world is and how difficult it is to maintain non-violent attitudes and behaviour in everyday life. For this reason, providers have a responsibility to open up opportunities for men to identify and contribute to opportunities for broader social change, for example, family violence prevention activities.

Of course, not all men have positive experiences of men's behaviour change programs. There are many who find the group experience difficult. Some struggle with verbalising their thoughts, or being public about their feelings or experiences. Some don't gel with the others in the group. Frequently, men compare their violent and controlling behaviours to others' in the group, and question their own need to be in the group if they feel that their behaviour is 'not as bad' as others'.

Men who have been in a group for some time might struggle to keep attending – sometimes because they feel they can never change, other times because they feel it's just too hard or that they've 'changed enough'. Men who are still blaming their behaviour on their partner might say there's no point in trying to change if their partner isn't also working on her behaviour.

Often, whilst men see positive reasons to participate in a group, they also build up reasons and energies for not participating. Maintaining momentum is a struggle for most men at some point in their participation. It is important to name and discuss men's reasons for not coming, and to assist them to have in place strategies for getting to group sessions at times when they are struggling. This is most usefully discussed in the context of how men can take responsibility for their actions.

# Staffing men's behaviour change programs

## Tasks associated with men's behaviour change programs

The tasks associated with providing a men's behaviour change program include:

- Ongoing contact with women and children affected by participants' violence.
- Safety and risk minimisation for women and children, participants, staff and others.
- Networking and collaboration with other providers and stakeholders, including funding bodies.
- Administration.
- Intake and assessment.
- Ongoing assessment of participants in regard to safety of family members and appropriate reporting where necessary.
- Management, including development or reviews of policy and procedures.
- Conduct of men's behaviour change groups.
- Integration of the group work within a holistic casework context.
- Supervision, support and debriefing of facilitators, guest speakers and observers.
- Evaluation and quality assurance for the management and conduct of the program and its activities.

## Work roles in men's behaviour change programs

There is no research evidence in support of any one model of delivering voluntary men's behaviour change programs. Role allocation, job descriptions and ways of managing programs differ between providers. In many providers, responsibility for the various facets of program administration and delivery is shared amongst several professionals. Others employ a program co-ordinator. Some providers also work in partnership with (for example) women's services.

In some providers, all work is undertaken by staff who facilitate the group. In others, some roles are fulfilled by staff who do not facilitate groups. For example, some providers operate in partnership, with staff from one undertaking facilitation, and staff from another having contact with women and children.

Some providers contract staff to deliver men's behaviour change programs in their entirety. Where this occurs, the provider is still ultimately responsible for ensuring its program meets NTV's Minimum Standards.

In some circumstances, decisions about staffing are based on philosophical or theoretical positions. For example, some providers feel it is inappropriate and potentially conflicting for group facilitators to have contact with women and children affected by participants' violence. Others believe that such contact provides a counterweight to collusion with men.

Frequently however, decisions about staffing and roles within men's behaviour change programs are made on the basis of available resources.

One of the greatest difficulties for most users of human services is lack of co-ordination and communication between professionals. Gaps in the provision of services and/or information can compromise safety and lessen the chances that women and children can rebuild their lives after experiencing male family violence.

NTV believes that men, women, children and program staff will be best served when:

- Providers of men's behaviour change programs ensure that the inputs of all staff are co-ordinated and effective.
- Roles and responsibilities of all staff are clearly documented and communicated to all stakeholders.
- There are ample opportunities for staff to share their knowledge, ideas, concerns and experiences.
- Ways of doing things are reviewed regularly.

It is also important to recognise and challenge the potentially gendered dynamics that can occur in task allocation, especially with gendered-female tasks such as organising refreshments, administration and clean-up after meetings.

Because of the complexity and multiple areas of activity for men's behaviour change programs, NTV believes that providers must have a staff member delegated to oversee implementation of the NTV Minimum Standards.

Professional facilitators are trained in their own professional area, and NTV believes that they must follow the ethical standards of their own professions and prioritise safety according to their duty of care, in addition to complying with the NTV Minimum Standards. Where there is a conflict of standards, facilitators should bring this to the attention of both NTV and the professional body.

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**GPG 1** Position descriptions and performance appraisals for all staff involved in the provision or management of a men's behaviour change program are informed by the NTV Minimum Standards.

**GPG 2** Providers delegate a staff member to oversee implementation of the NTV Minimum Standards.

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## Staff skills, experience and qualifications

Working in men's behaviour change programs can be difficult and complex. Most staff have a background in some form of counselling and/or group work, and NTV believes that the skills gained from this are vital for men's behaviour change work.

Some skills are specific to work roles, others are generic for all staff working in men's behaviour change programs.

Facilitators require highly developed skills in group work. They must be skilled and confident to manage conflict, difficult group dynamics or difficult behaviour. They must be able to identify and work against collusion and minimisation of male family violence – in their own practice, as well as in others'. They need to be able to plan and conduct group sessions that are engaging and constructive for men, and to respond in appropriately to unforeseen occurrences in group settings.

Contact workers must have advanced counselling skills to engage and support women and children. They must be aware of the range of services and options open to women and children, and skilled at assisting them to use these. They must be effective at communicating women's and children's voices and needs to other program staff.

Assessment of men is a specialised area of men's behaviour change work. In addition to their counselling, engagement and motivational skills, staff undertaking assessments frequently draw on their therapeutic or diagnostic skills, especially when assessing cognitive functioning, levels of drug and alcohol abuse and mental health status.

Supervisors are in a position of considerable trust and responsibility in men's behaviour change programs. As such, they need to have significant levels of skill and experience in male family violence prevention and men's behaviour change programs. They need to have the capacity to assist program staff to respond to difficult or challenging situations in their men's behaviour change practice. It is incumbent upon supervisors to maintain current knowledge of issues in male family violence and the men's behaviour change field

In addition to highly developed generalist counselling skills, all staff of men's behaviour change programs need to:

- Be committed to advocating for non-violence, and to living non-violently.
- Be committed to enhancing the safety of women and children who have experienced male family violence.
- Understand and endorse their employer's theoretical model and approach to male family violence and men's behaviour change work.
- Have experience observing men's behaviour change programs.
- Demonstrate their willingness to challenge continually their own gendered and power-over ways of relating.

On the basis of these skills, NTV has developed a set of criteria for different roles in men's behaviour change programs. These are intended to ensure that all behaviour change programs will be staffed by people with appropriate skills and experience.

## MS 3

For every men's behaviour change group session:

- At least one facilitator is a Level Three Facilitator.
- A second facilitator is at least a Level Two Facilitator.
- Third and subsequent facilitators are at least Level One Facilitators.

Level One Facilitators meet all the following Level One criteria:

- Has a demonstrated understanding of the men's behaviour change process and the gendered nature of male family violence
- Has observed a minimum of 10 men's behaviour change group sessions.

Level Two Facilitators meet all the following Level Two criteria:

- Has a demonstrated understanding of the men's behaviour change process and the gendered nature of male family violence
- Has at least 80 hours of experience facilitating relevant group work
- Has observed a minimum of 10 men's behaviour change group sessions
- Has at least 2 years experience in direct service provision with women in the context of family violence OR in a program that adheres to NTV Minimum Standards (or an equivalent for men's behaviour change). This includes the MRS.

Level Three Facilitators meet all the following Level Three A criteria:

- Has a demonstrated understanding of the men's behaviour change process and the gendered nature of male family violence
- Has at least 3 years professional experience in counselling
- Has at least 2 years experience facilitating relevant group work
- Has a 4 year degree from a recognised tertiary institution in a relevant discipline (for example, Social Work, Psychology, Psychiatry, Community Welfare, Behavioural Science or Medicine)
- Has at least 100 hours of experience facilitating men's behaviour change groups

(continued over page)



OR Level Three B criteria:

- Has a demonstrated understanding of the men's behaviour change process and the gendered nature of male family violence
- Has a Graduate Certificate of Social Science (Male Family Violence - Group Facilitation)\*
- Has at least 100 hours of experience facilitating men's behaviour change groups.

\* Or an equivalent men's behaviour change group facilitator qualification from a recognised tertiary or training institution

Note that that the NTV Management Committee may deem a person's experience and qualifications to be equivalent to these criteria.

## **MS 4**

Contact workers meet all the following Contact Worker criteria:

- Has a demonstrated understanding of the men's behaviour change process and the gendered nature of male family violence
- Has knowledge of the processes and content of the provider's group sessions
- Has observed a minimum of 6 men's behaviour change group sessions
- Has experience in direct service provision with women in the context of family violence OR a Graduate Certificate of Social Science (Male Family Violence - Group Facilitation)\*.

\* Or an equivalent men's behaviour change group facilitator qualification from a recognised tertiary or training institution

Note that that the NTV Management Committee may deem a person's experience and qualifications to be equivalent to these criteria.

## MS 5

Staff undertaking assessments of men:

- Are a Level 3 (A) Facilitator OR
- Have a Graduate Certificate of Social Science (Male Family Violence - Group Facilitation)\* AND at least 200 hours of experience facilitating men's behaviour change groups.

\* Or an equivalent men's behaviour change group facilitator qualification from a recognised tertiary or training institution

Note that that the NTV Management Committee may deem a person's experience and qualifications to be equivalent to these criteria.

## MS 6

Supervisors of men's behaviour change program staff meet all the following

Supervisor Criteria:

- Has a Graduate Certificate of Social Science (Male Family Violence - Group Facilitation)\* OR a 4 year degree from a recognised tertiary institution in a relevant discipline (for example, Social Work, Psychology, Psychiatry, Community Welfare, Behavioural Science or Medicine)
- Has relevant and diverse skills in counselling and group work
- Has at least 3 years professional experience in the family violence field
- Has at least 100 hours of experience facilitating men's behaviour change groups
- Has current knowledge of issues in male family violence and the men's behaviour change field.

\* Or an equivalent men's behaviour change group facilitator qualification from a recognised tertiary or training institution

Note that that the NTV Management Committee may deem a person's experience and qualifications to be equivalent to these criteria.

## Gender of contact workers

Women and children who have experienced male family violence often need intensive support. Providers of men's behaviour change programs that do not have dedicated women's and children's services often find that they have neither the resources nor the staff with specific skills to provide adequate levels of support. In these circumstances, providers need to make arrangements for referral of women and children to a partner provider *before* they offer a men's behaviour change program.

There is ongoing debate as to who should have direct contact with women and children. This debate is firstly about the gender of the contact worker, and secondly about the role of facilitators and other program staff.

In terms of gender of the contact worker, it is generally believed that women will find it easier and safer to speak with a female, especially at first. For this reason, initial contact should always be made by a female worker.

For subsequent contact, some providers offer women a choice between female and male contact workers. Providers who have male contact workers offer women the choice of female or male contact workers, because they believe that:

- It can be empowering for women to experience respectful male behaviour and to see that not all men condone violence.
- It is important that male staff share all aspects of work associated with program delivery, to ensure that certain tasks do not become gendered.
- It can be useful for male staff to hear women's experiences and point of view.
- Male contact workers can help to break down dichotomies between women and men.

Some providers feel strongly that group facilitators should not also have contact with women and children. They argue that facilitators might feel conflicted loyalties if they have contact with all parties, and that this might mean that they condone or collude with a man's behaviour when speaking with women and children.

Other providers believe that group facilitators' direct contact with women and children offers facilitators a more rounded perspective on the behaviour of individual men and acts as a counterweight to men's voices, thus preventing collusion. Furthermore, they argue that direct contact with women and children by facilitators is vital to keep the voices of women and children alive and present in group sessions.

NTV does not have a position on this issue. A provider's decision on how best to have contact should be informed by thorough discussion and the views of its staff and Reference Group.

Clearly, contact workers need to be mindful at all times of power and gender issues in working with people who have experienced male family violence.

### **MS 7**

**Initial contact is made by a female worker and women are able to have contact solely with female staff if they wish.**

## Professional development requirements

Men's behaviour change work is an ever-evolving area with significant ethical, legal, political and personal dimensions. It is important for all staff involved in the provision of men's behaviour change programs to participate in regular professional development across the full spectrum of family violence issues. In particular, it is important that they regularly participate in professional development pertaining to women's issues, rather than only attending professional development on men's behaviour change work. Ongoing professional development in group processes and facilitation can also help facilitators to continue to hone their group-work skills.

Accredited facilitators and contact workers must participate in at least four relevant professional development activities each year, of which two must be activities conducted by NTV or Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre (or an equivalent interstate). They should keep a log book of all professional development activities.

Useful forms of professional development include:

- Seminars and conferences.
- Information or training sessions.
- Reading groups.
- Discussion groups.
- Observing other groups.
- Being observed as a facilitator (either directly or via video or audio tape).

Professional supervision is different in its intent and function to professional development and is not to be counted as a professional development activity.

### **MS 8**

Facilitators and contact workers participate in at least four relevant professional development activities each year (of which two are activities conducted by NTV) and keep a log of their professional development activities.

## Number and gender of facilitators

All men's behaviour change groups need to be facilitated by at least two professionals, except in certain specified circumstances. The advantages of co-facilitation include:

- Group members can observe non-violent ways of relating in the interactions between facilitators.
- Facilitators can give each other support and feedback.
- There is potentially less bias in the analysis of group process.
- There is greater accountability.
- There is greater safety for the facilitators.
- If necessary, one facilitator can attend to facilitation, whilst the other attends to a 'crisis' situation (for example, a participant arriving drunk or expressing suicidal feelings).
- There is a mechanism for inducting or training new or less experienced facilitators

The gender of facilitators is important because gender issues are central to the work of men's behaviour change groups. Men participate in men's behaviour change programs because they use gendered power.

NTV's strong preference is that every group session is facilitated by a man and a woman. Male facilitators can demonstrate non-violent ways of being and relating as a man, and show that men can and do stand up against male family violence. Female facilitators offer participants experience in listening to and engaging with women in respectful ways. Men and women running groups together provide role models of non-violent, co-operative and more equal ways of relating between women and men. Furthermore, the presence and active participation of a female facilitator can provide another level of accountability.

In certain circumstances, a provider may choose to conduct a program with two male facilitators. This is acceptable on a temporary basis if a provider has limited access to appropriately skilled female staff (for example, in some rural areas). However, in general, NTV discourages this practice and believes it to be unsatisfactory in most instances. In circumstances where providers do not have female facilitators, male facilitators must have contact with at least one experienced woman worker in peer supervision, individual supervision, telephone supervision (in cases of geographical isolation) or the program's Reference Group; and at least monthly, have sessions observed (directly or via audio or video tape) by an appropriately experienced female.

NTV believes that due to safety risks, lack of accountability and the importance of modelling respectful ways of relating, men's behaviour change groups should never be facilitated by a single facilitator.

## **MS 9**

All group programs are facilitated by at least two co-facilitators, one male and one female co-facilitator, unless there are demonstrably exceptional circumstances, in which case, they are facilitated by two male facilitators, both of whom:

- Have at least fortnightly contact with at least one experienced woman worker in peer supervision, individual supervision, telephone supervision (in cases of geographical isolation) or the program's Reference Group AND
- Have their sessions observed (directly or via audio or video tape) by an appropriately experienced female at least monthly.

## Formal roles for previous participants

Some family violence professionals believe that involving previous participants in formal, ongoing roles within men's behaviour change groups is a critical component of an integrated community response to male family violence. They posit that former participants in men's behaviour change groups who acknowledge their ongoing commitment to long-term change and are demonstrably non-violent, can act as mentors and role models for other men. Furthermore, they claim that if men cannot change enough to take on such roles, then this begs the question about the efficacy of men's behaviour change groups in the first place.

Others believe that there is no guarantee that men will continue to refrain from using violent and controlling behaviours, and that the safety of women and children might be jeopardised by placing a man who has used violence in a role such as peer educator or mentor. Furthermore, some program providers and women's advocates feel that it is inappropriate for men who have used violence and participated in men's behaviour change processes to earn income and/or professional standing from work in male family violence prevention.

There is no research evidence for or against the involvement of former participants – as mentors, facilitators or guest speakers – in men's behaviour change programs. As such, NTV neither endorses nor opposes such involvement. Rather, NTV recommends minimising the possibility of harmful or dangerous outcomes arising from such involvement, by putting in place a number of safety conditions.

NTV believes that if previous participants are to be involved in formal, ongoing roles within men's behaviour change groups, they should at least:

- Have completed an accredited men's behaviour change program focused group.
- Have been in regular contact with the program for at least 12 months.
- Be able to articulate details of their past violent and controlling behaviour, and to have verified through continuous partner contact that this behaviour has not continued.
- Not be in a state of crisis regarding their relationship.
- Be able to make a 12-month commitment to the program, and be aware of the responsibilities that this entails.
- Have an awareness and clear sense of self and others, and the capacity to draw therapeutic boundaries so as not to use their role to push a personal agenda.
- Be able to engage men appropriately, have good basic listening skills and while articulating a point of view, be able to tolerate and accept differing perspectives.
- Have a high degree of personal responsibility and demonstrated self control, both within the group and outside the program.
- Have a sound working knowledge of the power and control issues that surround men's choices to use violent and controlling behaviours.
- Be comfortable in a leadership and educative role.
- Accept the need for ongoing contact between the provider and their partner, if they have one, and provide up-to-date contact information for this to occur.
- Disclose any use of violent or controlling behaviour to the provider as soon as it occurs.

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### **GPG 3**

When involving a previous group participant in a men's behaviour change program in an ongoing formal capacity in a group (for example, as a mentor, educator or facilitator), program providers:

- Provide a written role description, including aims, prerequisites and selection criteria for the role; rights and responsibilities of both the participant and the provider; accountability processes; and, scope, limitations and boundaries for the role.
  - Ensure that the man satisfies all of the provider's selection criteria.
  - Provide effective training and induction.
  - Have regular contact with his partner, if he has one (including if he commences a relationship).
  - Involve him in briefing and debriefing for every group session.
  - Provide regular supervision with a professional facilitator.
  - Have a formal contract with him for the provision of his services (whether paid or voluntary).
  - Have a policy on payment/honoraria for volunteers.
  - Conduct an exit interview upon his departure from the program.
-



## Theoretical positioning

Professionals working in men's behaviour change programs bring to their work many different theoretical perspectives, disciplines, and personal and political beliefs. NTV centres its Minimum Standards and approach to male family violence and men's behaviour change work on an understanding of gendered power and control. However, this does not preclude providers integrating this approach with other understandings that complement feminist perspectives.

NTV requires providers to articulate their underlying assumptions, values and ways of seeing male family violence and men's behaviour change work by documenting their theoretical underpinnings. NTV regards this as a crucial aspect of accountability to women and children and encourages providers to make their theoretical underpinnings publicly available.

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**GPG 4** Providers document the theoretical underpinnings of their men's behaviour change program.

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## Partnerships and networking

Men's behaviour change programs need to be developed and maintained in association with other family violence programs in the local area. Strong local relationships enable:

- Appropriate referrals and support for women, children, and men.
- Exchanges of experience, news, views, and information with other professionals.
- Opportunities to identify and respond to local issues.
- Continuing input from other professionals in the field into the planning, delivery and evaluation of men's behaviour change programs.
- Accountability to women's services.
- Prompt responses to threats to safety.
- Greater possibilities of access for men, women, and children from marginalised communities.

Over the years, the experience of collaboration between providers of women's services and male family violence programs has been varied, depending on factors such as resource availability, understandings of male family violence, personalities and communication styles.

NTV recognises that limited resources frequently constrain the amount of time available for networking activities. However, networking is vital to ensure that women and children receive appropriate support and responses when they experience violent and controlling behaviours. Providers must make all reasonable attempts to have contact with their local family violence outreach service, family violence networker and police at least quarterly, and should attend meetings of their local family violence network.

At a minimum, NTV believes that providers of men's behaviour change programs should be guided by a reference group comprising representatives of relevant providers. Reference groups should have formal terms of reference that define their role, responsibilities, composition, and scope of decision making and accountability.

Reference groups should include representatives from:

- Local women's services (including, but not limited to, family violence services)
- Local men's services
- Family violence networker
- The local regional family violence network
- Local court
- Local police
- Child protection services – in government and community-based agencies
- Correctional services
- Local multicultural resource centre and/or other providers that can assist in responding to cultural and linguistic diversity

- Representatives of local Indigenous services or organisations
- Any other providers, populations or groups relevant to local needs.

Partnerships are also an important way to improve the quality of service provision to women, children and men. NTV encourages providers to work towards memoranda of understanding with local family violence outreach services, local police and local magistrates, to clarify roles, responsibilities and referral protocols.<sup>15</sup>

Ideally, men's behaviour change program providers should be engaged in broader male family violence prevention activities in partnership with other local organisations. They should also be aware of debates and developments concerning male family violence at state and Federal levels, and where possible, contribute their practice-based experience to these.

**MS 10** Men's behaviour change program providers have a Reference Group that meets at least quarterly. This group comprises representatives of local women's services and as many other relevant service providers as possible.

**GPG 5** Providers make all reasonable attempts to have contact with their local family violence outreach service, family violence networker, and police at least quarterly.

**GPG 6** Providers attend meetings or other activities of their local family violence network at least quarterly.

**GPG 7** All staff in men's behaviour change programs have access to up-to-date information about services that could be used by men, women and children, including those provided by regional and state-wide providers.

**< See Resource Manual for sample Terms of Reference for a Reference Group >**

## Program structures and duration

Whilst the earlier NTV Standards of Practice specified a model for the conduct of men's behaviour change groups, over the years, providers have modified this model according to local needs and resources. There is now considerable variation amongst providers in terms of group curriculum, duration and composition. There is no evidence for prescribing models for the delivery of voluntary men's behaviour change programs. Rather, NTV has compiled a brief overview of some common models, with some perceived pros and cons of each.

### **< See page 61 for matrix of different models >**

Previously NTV suggested that 'program-focussed' men's behaviour change groups should run weekly for at least 10 weeks, for a total of at least 20 contact hours (not including time spent on initial assessment or follow-up processes).<sup>16</sup> There is diversity of opinion between NTV members as to whether this is sufficient for even initial engagement. Many providers implement a version of men's behaviour change program that has been influenced by the 'Duluth model', an American program that runs for 26 weeks and is conducted as part of an integrated community response to violence. Another model suggests that programs should 'offer a minimum of 40 hours direct contact time in order to achieve the basic levels of cognitive and behavioural change required to achieve ... safety [for women and children]'.<sup>17</sup> A 2004 report to Partnerships Against Domestic Violence<sup>18</sup> suggested a minimum of 12 weeks duration. The majority of groups reported in overseas literature run for between 10-36 weeks, usually for 2 hours per session.<sup>19</sup> Most of these groups involve men who are directed by a court to participate in a men's behaviour change program.

Whilst there is significant variability between providers and no research evidence for *any particular duration*, NTV believes there are significant grounds for establishing a minimum number of contact hours and minimum number of sessions for men's behaviour change groups. This belief is founded on the recognition that whilst participation in a men's behaviour change group for the minimum number of hours and sessions does not guarantee change in a man or safety for his family, setting minimums:

- Maximises the likelihood of participants being exposed to all of the core messages of the program.
- Discourages the view that behaviour change can be achieved quickly or easily.
- Prevents the conduct of 'short courses' (for example, weekend intensives).
- Might increase the chance of engaging men on an ongoing basis.
- Maximises the length of time for providers to engage with women and children on a meaningful basis.

On the basis of available research and the collective experience of NTV members, NTV requires program providers to provide men with access to a minimum of 24 hours of group work, spread over a minimum of 12 sessions, spaced no more than fortnightly. Time spent on assessment or follow-up is additional to these hours. There is no stipulation as to how men's behaviour change programs should be structured.

**MS 11**

Programs provide men with access to a minimum of 24 contact hours of men's behaviour change group-work, spread over a minimum of 12 sessions and spaced no more than fortnightly.

Contact hours do not include time spent on initial assessment or follow-up processes.

Model	Entry	Curriculum	Who may participate*	Frequency	Pros include that:	Cons include that:
Intake group	Open	Rotation of topics across a set program	Newcomers waiting for a place in a time-limited program	Weekly/ fortnightly	Men can access the process of change at a time when their motivation is likely to be high (this might also be positive for women and children)	There are no experienced men in the group to stimulate discussion and model change
Open group with set duration for men's participation#	Open	Rotation of topics across a set program (usually matching the number of sessions that men must participate in)	Any man	Weekly	Men can access the process of change at a time when their motivation is likely to be high More experienced men can stimulate discussion and model change Might increase the number of men who can participate	If men have to leave a group after a certain duration, the group might lose men who can stimulate discussion and model change
Open group program with no set duration for men's participation#	Open	Rotation of topics across a set program	Any man	Weekly	Men can access the process of change at a time when their motivation is likely to be high More experienced men can stimulate discussion and model change, which assists them and new participants	Can be disparities between the issues/concerns/approaches of newcomers and more experienced men, so that the latter might feel bored and/or frustrated with introductory content
Time-limited program	Closed	Works according to a set program	Closed to newcomers after introductory session(s)	Weekly	Group can build on its learning in a more sequential, organised fashion Group dynamic can be stronger	Unless conducted in parallel with an open group, men have to wait until a new program commences, which might undermine their participation. Might be construed that men's behaviour change takes X number of weeks
Support group	Open	Rotation of topics or topics set by group members	Men who have completed programs and wish to consolidate and/or sustain their behaviour change	Regular, often monthly	Men can have ongoing support for their behaviour change Flexibility of curriculum means that group has potential to respond to individual needs	Potential for story telling or in-depth discussion of men's issues to divert attention from behaviour and responsibility
Intensive Response Program	Closed	Individual and/or group work	Men who are directed to participate in a men's behaviour change group by a court or other statutory body		Provider has capacity to offer specialist interventions to men who are assessed as unmotivated, resistant or otherwise unsuitable for a men's behaviour change group <sup>20</sup> and to impose real consequences for non participation	Levels of resentment might be high, interfering with willingness to change and or learn

\* Subject to assessment interview and fulfilment of eligibility criteria

# Some providers of open groups routinely give men pre-group reading to acquaint them with some of the ideas of the program and/or provide more than one pre-group interviews.

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## Core messages and skills

NTV believes that there is a set of core messages<sup>21</sup> that men must understand and accept if they are to change their behaviour. There are also core skills that men must have if they are to change their behaviour. These core messages and skills are not exclusive of other approaches or theoretical positionings. However, where other approaches are also posited, facilitators must take care not to reinforce, excuse or otherwise collude with men about their use of violence.

NTV members use a range of techniques and activities to introduce the core messages to group participants, and NTV does not prescribe any particular approach or type of technique.



## MS 12

Providers emphasise all of the following core messages in all aspects of program promotion and delivery:

- The safety of women and children always comes first.
- There are many different ways that a man can be violent and controlling.
- Violence and abusive reactions are controlling of others, even though men might feel 'out of control'.
- Male family violence has wide-ranging, long-lasting negative effects on those who experience it.
- Male family violence is never acceptable or excusable, and some forms of violence are illegal.
- Every man has a choice to use or not use violence.
- It is each man's responsibility to stop his violence and abuse.
- Being responsible means giving up using force and power to get what you want.
- Male family violence has a context in patriarchal attitudes and structures, and the association between masculinity and violence is socially constructed.
- There is a difference between a feeling and a behaviour, and men have a choice about how to behave when they are experiencing a certain feeling.
- Responsibility, equality, respect and trust can promote more equal and non-violent relationships.
- Being aware of others' feelings is important in non-violent ways of relating.
- Being aware of one's own feelings is important in non-violent ways of relating.
- Everyone needs to challenge sexism and secrecy about male violence – including within men's behaviour change programs.
- Women and children are in the best position to judge whether men are behaving in less violent and controlling ways.

## MS 13

Providers help men to develop skills to:

- Identify and challenge any of their ideas, attitudes, beliefs and myths that stand in the way of them taking responsibility for their behaviour in the past, present and future.
- Recognise the many ways that they can be violent and/or controlling.
- Recognise the effects of their violent and controlling behaviour on others.
- Listen to, accept and integrate feedback about their behaviour from women and children.
- Place others' needs and emotions on at least an equal footing to their own.
- Respond to their own and others' strong emotions in non-violent and non-controlling ways.
- Use appropriate non-violent and non-controlling behaviours and ways of relating.
- Manage and use appropriately their feelings of guilt and shame about their violent behaviours, in ways that enable them to take responsibility for their behaviour.
- Prioritise settings and personal relationships (for example, friendships) that support their choice to use non-violent and non-controlling behaviours and ways of relating.
- Enhance and draw upon positive personal qualities such as persistence and openness.
- Identify thoughts, feelings, physiological reactions and behaviours that are part of the 'winding up' process; use strategies to interrupt that process; and use 'winding down' thoughts before using non-violent and non-controlling alternatives.
- Advocate against men's use of violent and controlling behaviours, especially in male-dominated spaces, and challenge the social contexts and conditioning in which these take place.
- Reshape their own masculine identity and sense of manhood so that they are characterised by non-violence.
- Identify how non-violent and non-controlling behaviour and ways of relating will help them to strengthen their existing positive attributes and become a better person, partner and parent.

## Marketing men's behaviour change programs

Promoting men's behaviour change programs provides an opportunity not only to increase use of services, but also to increase awareness of male family violence and promote the importance of men's behaviour change. Providing accessible information about men's behaviour change programs is also an important aspect of accountability.

The marketing ideas in this Manual might provide a starting point for marketing a men's behaviour change program, however NTV recommends taking advantage of the many training opportunities and resources now available to assist human service professionals to market their programs and core messages.

### Audience

There are many audiences for information about men's behaviour change programs.

- Men who acknowledge their use of violent and controlling behaviours.
- Men who do not yet acknowledge their use of violent and controlling behaviours.
- Women and/or adolescents who experience violent and controlling behaviours from a male family member.
- Human service professionals, including family violence professionals, counsellors, women's health professionals, doctors, clergy, social workers, teachers and allied health workers.

It is important to keep these different audiences in mind when marketing men's behaviour change programs.

**< See Resource Manual for sample brochures for men and professionals >**

### Messaging

Devising promotional material advertising or marketing men's behaviour change programs is always difficult. Research has found that men generally miss the key messages in most community education material regarding male family violence. There is always a risk that the dialogue will provoke an unwanted negative reaction amongst the primary target audience, for example, the view that the woman may 'deserve it' in some way, or that the service is 'against men'.

Research and practice have found that promotional material aimed at men who have been using violence and abuse is most effective if it:

- Clearly names the types of family violence but avoids jargon, labels or terms such as 'domestic violence', 'male family violence', 'violent men' or 'perpetrators'.
- Uses a narrative or second-person approach such as 'Have you ...?', 'Are you ...?', or uses stories of men who have been using violence.
- Is designed with an understanding of national, regional, local, cultural, racial, ethnic, and class differences between men and masculinities.
- Names particular emotions, behaviours and states such as 'guilty', 'ashamed', 'angry', 'hurting the ones you love'.
- Includes a depiction of the personal consequences if the problem is not addressed, for example, loss of relationship, damage to partner, damage to children and/or loss of children.
- Includes a pathway or options to address the problem and avoid the consequences. For example, using phrases such as 'help yourself', 'admit you have a problem', 'help is available'.
- Provides specific direction towards obtaining help.

#### Basic principles for marketing men's behaviour change programs

Promotional material for men's behaviour change programs should always fulfil the following principles:

- Messaging must be consistent with the aims of a men's behaviour change program. As such, the twin themes of women's and children's safety and men's responsibility must always be at its centre.
- Materials should be about men's violence occurring within family or intimate relationships, and not confused with other settings of violence.
- Materials should not use the phrase 'anger management' (see page 35-36 for more explanation).
- Materials should be appropriate to the intended audience(s).
- Words and images should minimise any opportunity for counter argument or justification for the violence.
- Crude messages of men as 'bad' should be avoided, as they are generally unhelpful.
- Materials should include information on sources of support for people who have experienced violence.
- Materials aimed at children should not further traumatise children who have experienced male family violence. They should not make children think that they are being asked to contact the service, or that they should ask their father to contact the service.

## Testing marketing materials

Material to promote men's behaviour change programs should always be tested with the intended audience(s). Important issues to check are:

- The audience's understanding of the message.
- The audience's acceptance of the message (this includes checking for undesirable reactions or areas of potential 'backlash').
- The credibility of the message.
- The perceived impact on men using violence.

It is often helpful to involve men already in programs in the design of promotional activities or materials. In addition to assisting with the appropriateness and quality of materials, this also provides an opportunity for them to be actively involved in collective advocacy against male family violence.

## Forms of marketing

Generally, the least resource intensive approach to marketing is to develop a generic brochure about the program, aimed at women and men, and to disseminate this to human service professionals with a covering letter specifying:

- How the provider would like them to disseminate the brochure.
- The processes the provider has in place for intake and referral.
- How they can contact the provider.
- It is also important to have relevant printed information for clients of the service once they have entered a program.

In addition to marketing brochures, the following can also be ways for providers to market their programs:

- Internet sites
- Press releases or letters to the editor in response to topical issues
- Speaking at local meetings or events, for example, a Lion's Club meeting
- Short articles in local newsletters, for example, primary schools or playgroups
- Activities as part of broader campaigns or advocacy events, for example, Week Without Violence
- Information kits for school students.

The book *101 Ways Great and Small to Prevent Family Violence*<sup>22</sup>, features many different ways to raise awareness about male family violence.

**< See Resources Manual for sample brochures >**

### Some points on language

In producing information for a general readership, writers must take into account the many factors that can hinder people's comprehension. Some of these include not being able to read English, high levels of distress, substance abuse, effects of prescription drugs (especially sedatives) and visual impairments. It is generally recommended that writers of materials for a non-professional audience aim for a reading level of Year 8, which is equivalent to a magazine such as *New Idea* or *Women's Weekly*. In practice, this means:

- Using short sentences
- Avoiding excessive or complex punctuation
- Avoiding long words (over three syllables)
- Using active language ('*the cat sat on the mat*', rather than '*the mat was sat on by the cat*')
- Using first person ('we believe') rather than third person voice ('the organisation believes')
- Using lists to break up bodies of text (making sure that each point on the list agrees with the introductory line)
- Highlighting important text, for example in bold.

The layout of any written information should be clear, straightforward and easy to navigate.

### Distributing information

Providers of men's behaviour change program must link with a wide range of services to promote men's behaviour change groups and ensure appropriate referrals. Because staff change, and printed resources become out-of-date or get lost or run out, NTV recommends updating and distributing information at least annually.

When distributing information about their program, take care to include:

- Women's health services
- Women's domestic violence services
- Supported/emergency accommodation services
- Schools
- Offices of local council
- Mental health services
- Men's Referral Service
- Maternal and child health services
- Local police
- Local libraries (for noticeboards)
- Local Indigenous communities
- Local culturally and linguistically diverse community organisations
- Legal services
- Hospitals
- Generalist women's services
- Generalist counselling services
- General practitioners
- Family services
- Community health services
- Clergy
- Children's access services
- Childcare centres
- Centres Against Sexual Assault
- Alcohol and other drug services

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**GPG 8**

Providers offer information about their men's behaviour change program to all local health, welfare, legal and other providers that provide services to women, men, children and families.

This information includes the provider's approach to men's behaviour change; intake and assessment process; processes for accountability to women and children; program structure; statement of rights and responsibilities for male program participants and their family members; and, a clear differentiation between men's behaviour change programs and anger management groups.

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## Eligibility

Most providers of men's behaviour change programs have some eligibility criteria. Sometimes this is to limit group numbers, or to achieve a certain mix or balance in group dynamics. Mostly however, eligibility criteria are used to try to ensure that group participants are ready and suited to men's behaviour change via group work. NTV recommends that men only be admitted to a men's behaviour change group if they:

- Acknowledge that they have a problem, or at least demonstrate a willingness to consider the possibility of acknowledging their violent behaviour.
- Show a desire, commitment, and capacity to attend and participate in the entire program.
- Show a willingness to keep their partner and children safe (or acknowledge their right to be and feel safe, where men do not have contact).
- Agree to program staff having regular contact with any women and children who might be affected by their violent and controlling behaviours.
- Agree to abide by the law, including all the requirements of any legal orders in force.
- Agree to the provider's policies on limited confidentiality and responding to criminal acts or breaches of court orders.
- Agree to give up their access to guns or other weapons, unless they require them for their livelihood (in which case staff should discuss this safety risk with their partner and incorporate this factor into safety planning).
- Agree to an ongoing evaluation and monitoring of their progress in changing their violent behaviour and attitudes.
- Whilst these basic eligibility criteria are relatively straightforward, there are many other issues surrounding eligibility and inclusion in men's behaviour change groups that are the subject of ongoing debate.
- Below is a brief discussion of some of the more common dilemmas to guide providers in making decisions about extra eligibility criteria. To ensure that extra eligibility requirements are not arbitrary or set for all time, NTV believes that the rationale for any extra eligibility criteria adopted by a provider should be clearly documented and regularly reviewed.

### **The social/legal mandate continuum**

Men's behaviour change groups are explicitly intended for men who want to stop using violent or controlling behaviours towards family members. Mostly these family members are (or were) partners, wives, girlfriends and children. Sometimes however, they are mothers, sisters or housemates.



Many of these men are still in relationships, and have been given an ultimatum: they must do something or their family member(s) will leave. This has been referred to as a social mandate<sup>23</sup>; that is, men are not entering the process of their own volition, but rather because someone in their social environment is making them.

A significant number of men seek to participate because of a legal mandate; that is, a court or other statutory body has told them they must:

- As an alternative to a penalty
- As a condition of bail, parole or another court order
- As a condition of access to their children.

Often these men have been legally mandated to attend because they have been violent or abusive towards a family member. Other times it is because of their violent behaviour at work, whilst driving, in social settings or in other places. Frequently, men in this latter category say that they do not use violent or controlling behaviours towards family members.

Sometimes men seek to enter a men's behaviour change program on the advice of their lawyer, usually in the hope of averting criminal sanctions or increasing their chances of access to their child.

The issue of 'mandate' is therefore a complex one. Most recently, it has been presented as a continuum from 'social' to 'legal'<sup>24</sup>, in recognition that participants are not dichotomous groups, but rather, present with varied experiences and motivations for attending.

Men who participate because they want to, rather than because they are in some way mandated, might be more motivated. However, many men who are initially resistant, or who are participating for questionable ends, ultimately find the process worthwhile.

The complexity of the social/legal mandate continuum means that NTV no longer takes a position about the maximum number or proportion of participants in a group who have been directed by a court to participate. Rather, providers should admit or refuse men on the basis of (a) their fit with the eligibility requirements, and (b) group dynamics.

At a minimum, men who are mandated to attend must participate in the same intake and assessment process as men who are not mandated to attend. They should have the same conditions, rights and responsibilities as men who are not, and contact with their family members should occur in the same way as for other men.

Participation in a group should never be rewarded by reduced penalties for violence, and NTV strongly believes that providers should not provide any feedback to a court that might result in such. Where providers believe that a man's desire to participate is motivated solely by his desire for lighter sanctions, they have the option to refuse his participation.

**< See page 99 about reporting to courts >**

## **Men who present for reasons other than family violence**

NTV believes that it is important that men's behaviour change groups maintain their focus on male family violence. For that reason, it may be appropriate for providers to exclude men who present because of other forms of violence, or to set quotas for participation by these men.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that it is often very difficult to know (especially in the early stages) whether men *really are not* using violent and controlling behaviours towards family members. It is also possible that men's violence in situations outside family settings might also create fear for their partners or children.

Contact with family members of men who present for reasons other than male family violence is as important as contact for other men. If they ultimately participate in the group, the focus of their participation should always be on the gendered aspects of their violence.

### **Men concerned about their potential for violence**

Occasionally, men wishing to participate in a men's behaviour change program do not appear to be using violent or controlling behaviours towards family members. Usually these men wish to participate because they feel they have a capacity for such behaviour, or because they fear becoming violent or controlling. Admission to the program for these men should be at the discretion of providers. Once again, contact with family members is imperative.

### **Men who are unpartnered**

Some program providers exclude men from the group if they are not currently in relationships on the basis that they cannot apply their learning and that there is no-one outside the group to provide feedback on their behaviour. Other providers are opposed to this practice, believing it is important to engage with men when they are wishing to change, in order to promote the safety of their future partners and children. Where a man is unpartnered, some providers have contact with his mother, sister, former partner or a friend instead.

### **Men who cannot speak English (including men who are deaf)**

A man's inability to speak English (well or at all) should not necessarily be a barrier to his participation. Some facilitators say that his presence would simply require all participants to listen more carefully and to be inclusive, empathic and patient. Given that these skills are core to non-violent ways of relating, some facilitators feel that it can be positive and productive for group members to have opportunities to practise them in a supportive setting.

Other facilitators believe that linguistic difference is too disruptive of group dynamics. Moreover, they feel that the risk that men will not understand key concepts is too great, and that women's and children's safety might be compromised as a result.

They also note the difficulties that can stem from using interpreters who are not necessarily committed to or understanding of men's behaviour change work.

NTV believes that there is a need for men's behaviour change groups conducted in languages other than English. In the absence of these, or where men prefer to participate in English-speaking groups, NTV encourages providers to consider intake of men with limited or no capacity to speak English on a case-by-case basis.

Where interpreters are used, they should be briefed on the aims and processes of the group before the session.

**< See pages 86-92 for more comments and ideas about working inclusively >**

### **Men in same-sex relationships**

Whilst men's behaviour change groups were originally established for men in the context of heterosexual relationships, there is increasing recognition of male family violence occurring in same-sex relationships. In addition to the forms of violence experienced in heterosexual relationships, men in same-sex relationships can also experience additional controlling behaviours such as threats to 'out' them about their sexuality or HIV status. Internalised homophobia can also play a big part in the experience and effects of male family violence in same-sex relationships.

Access to mainstream services, including men's behaviour change programs, might be limited by homophobia on the part of providers, and also by the view (often held by men themselves as well as providers) that programs are only for men and women in heterosexual relationships.

Indeed, many providers report being uncertain about the suitability of mainstream programs for same-sex attracted men. Whilst NTV encourages the development of groups specifically for same-sex attracted men, they should not be excluded from mainstream groups.

Same-sex attracted men in predominantly heterosexual men's behaviour change groups might need extra support systems to deal with difficult issues, and it is important that issues such as 'coming out' be discussed with them beforehand.

**< See pages 92-93 for more discussion of sexually inclusive practice and addressing homophobia in groups >**

Working with same-sex attracted men requires a thoughtful and highly developed understanding of the ways that gendered power and control are implicated in men's violence. It is imperative that heterosexual men do not use the participation of a same-sex attracted man in their group to discount or 'disprove' the nature of gendered power.

Providers should encourage same-sex attracted men in their group to explore ways that patriarchy and patriarchal attitudes have impacted on their choices to use violence, and to reflect on connections between homophobia and patriarchy, in particular, patriarchal family relations. It is important that violent behaviour is never condoned or excused on the basis of men's experiences of marginalisation, discrimination or homophobia.

Men who experience male family violence must receive the same levels of support as women and children. Information and resources specific to their relationship context are available from gay men's health services.

### **Men who have limited or impaired cognitive capacity**

Impaired cognitive capacity due to intellectual disability or acquired brain injury might affect men's capacity to participate fully in groups. In assessing men's suitability for entry into a men's behaviour change group, staff should look at their capacity to work within the group structure and to understand the core ideas. Inclusion of men with limited or impaired cognitive capacity might influence group processes, however this is not necessarily a negative outcome. Consideration could also be given to a combination of group work and individual work to give men greater time or opportunities to absorb ideas or develop skills.

The safety of a man's family members must be paramount in any decision to include or exclude him from a group.

### **Men who are experiencing mental health problems**

Anecdotal evidence, recent data and literature all suggest that a significant number of men in male family violence programs experience mental health problems, most usually clinical depression and anxious arousal.<sup>25</sup> A small number of men have manifestations or past history of severe mental illness.

The first consideration in deciding whether to admit men with mental health problems into a men's behaviour change program is the extent to which their mental health problems have the potential to interfere with their ability to function within the group in a way that is safe for them and not detrimental to the group as a whole. Consideration should also be given to the place of individual counselling to address the mental health problem.

**< See pages 39-39 for a discussion about group work in relation to other interventions >**

**Extra support and monitoring of men who are experiencing mental health problems is vital.**

**Rarely, men with significant so-called personality disorders, with little or no capacity for displaying or feeling empathy, seek to join men's behaviour change programs. This is usually upon direction from a court. Assessment from a forensic mental health service is most appropriate for these men in the first instance.**

### **Men who abuse alcohol or other drugs**

Data collected from one men's behaviour change program<sup>26</sup> revealed that half the men presenting at the program reported levels of alcohol consumption that were regarded as problematic, and a significant number (27 percent) also used marijuana once a week or more. An earlier study found that many men within the program who were disclosing alcohol intake were in a high risk category and were frequent binge drinkers.<sup>27</sup>

Program providers differ in their approaches to men who substance abuse but who do not have significantly impaired cognition that would preclude their participation in the group. Some suggest that the most important factor is to engage men in behaviour change processes, and then to work on their substance abuse issues at the same time. This might provide a multi-streamed engagement with men's issues and assist them to acknowledge their violence as a matter of choice, rather than as a consequence of substance abuse. Other providers feel that men's substance abuse must be addressed first, because it impairs men's capacity to participate in group processes and reflect on their behaviour.

The safety of a man's family members must be paramount in any decision to include or exclude him from a group.

Formal pre-group substance abuse assessment might be needed before a man can enter the program. However, in the interim, it is important to maintain the man's momentum and to encourage his progress and commitment to the program. It is vital that there is formal intra/inter-provider networking and communication in relation to the man's substance abuse and his involvement with the program.

### **Men who are paedophiles**

It is generally felt that it is not appropriate for men with known histories of sex offences against children to participate in men's behaviour change groups, even when they also have a history of other forms of violent and controlling behaviours towards family members. Working with men to stop their sexual violence towards children is beyond the scope of generalist men's behaviour change groups and NTV considers that this work should take priority. Furthermore, there are obvious risks to men's safety if their crimes were known by others in a group. There are instances in which facilitators have admitted men in these circumstances to groups, but have counselled against them disclosing their offences to the group. NTV recommends against this practice, believing that legitimising non-disclosure or partial disclosure defeats the purpose of groups.

### **Skills and experience of facilitators**

Occasionally, facilitators might feel that it is beyond their skill or experience to engage certain men in a group setting. In these circumstances, there are many options other than exclusion of men:

- Professional development
- Consultation with a more appropriately skilled and experienced practitioner
- A combination of group work and individual work.

**MS 14**

Groups' eligibility requirements include that men must:

- Acknowledge that they have a problem, or at least demonstrate a willingness to consider the possibility of acknowledging their violent behaviour.
- Show a desire, commitment and capacity to attend and participate in the entire program.
- Show a willingness to keep their partner and children safe (or acknowledge their right to be and feel safe, where men do not have contact).
- Agree to program staff having regular contact with any women and children who might be affected by their violent and controlling behaviour.
- Agree to abide by the law, including all the requirements of any legal orders in force.
- Agree to the provider's policies on limited confidentiality and responding to criminal acts or breaches of court orders.
- Agree to give up their access to guns or other weapons, unless they require them for their livelihood (in which case staff should discuss this safety risk with their partner and incorporate this factor into safety planning).
- Agree to an ongoing evaluation and monitoring of their progress in changing their violent behaviour and attitudes.

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**GPG 9**

All eligibility criteria have a documented rationale.

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## Handling enquiries

Provider protocols need to be in place to ensure that all staff (including duty workers and receptionists) who receive enquiries from men regarding family violence issues or men's behaviour change programs respond to the call appropriately.

Enquiries about men's behaviour change programs should be seen as a call for help and an indication that women and children might be at risk of harm. Men expressing an interest in changing their violent behaviour are often in crisis and motivated to change. A prompt response increases the likelihood of the man enrolling in a program or receiving other assistance. It also increases the likelihood of support for women and children, which might lower the risk of ongoing or escalated violence. For these reasons, all enquiries require prompt follow-up by a family violence worker. NTV considers 48 hours or two working days to be a reasonable timeframe for a response to an enquiry. One week is the maximum acceptable length of time between initial and follow-up contact.

Whilst some providers prefer the man requiring the service to make contact himself, some providers accept referrals from a woman if a wide-ranging discussion indicates that there are no safety risks inherent in doing so. In these circumstances, the woman must also be provided with information, support and referrals to meet her own needs. Providers should only accept referrals from other professionals on behalf of men *only* if the man is actively involved in the process. Men who do not make an appointment themselves should be asked to ring to confirm their appointment time

Many providers find that the quality of engagement with men during initial phone discussions is an important variable in whether or not men attend for assessment. Motivational interviewing is thus an important skill for first contact.

It is important that all men who enquire about men's behaviour change programs are aware of the services of the MRS. They should be provided with an MRS brochure and encouraged to use the counselling services as a complementary source of support (for example, after hours).

**< See Resource Manual for a sample reception process >**

**MS 15** All men who enquire about a men's behaviour change program are provided with a Men's Referral Service brochure and encouraged to use the service as a complementary source of support.

**MS 16** Men or women making an enquiry about a men's behaviour change program are contacted by program staff within one week, but preferably within 48 hours.

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**GPG 10** In following up an initial enquiry, staff provide the enquirer with information about what the provider can offer and the timelines and processes for assessment.

**GPG 11** Providers encourage men to make their own bookings for assessment.

**GPG 12** Providers taking a booking for a man from a woman first assess her safety, situation and options before discussing the pros and cons of her making a booking on his behalf.

**GPG 13** Providers accept referrals from other providers or staff outside the program only if the man is involved in the process.

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## Intake assessment

Intake assessment is an integral part of the men's behaviour change process. It is imperative for checking on women's and children's safety, and for making a realistic assessment of the man's suitability for group work. It is the first step in engaging men in the behaviour change process. Assessment also forms part of the evaluative process.

Providers vary in their intake assessment processes. Some have a single session; others conduct multiple interviews or use a group setting to assess men's suitability for group work. Assessment over a number of sessions enables staff to collect more information and observe the man more closely. Intake assessments that are not conducted on a face-to-face basis (for example, via telephone or survey) are not appropriate as they are less likely to facilitate full disclosure of all relevant facts.

Providing information about male family violence is an important step in the assessment process. In addition to helping men to contextualise and understand the questions they are being asked in the assessment process, providing information during assessment ensures that men who do not participate in any subsequent program have at least had access to some basic ideas about male family violence and men's behaviour change. Indeed, some practitioners routinely treat an assessment as if it might be the only encounter they have with a man.

It is imperative that assessment includes information gathered from those who are affected by a man's violence. Self-reports of violent and controlling behaviours by violent and abusive men commonly minimise the amount of violence being experienced by their family members. It is not uncommon to find that women describe more frequent and severe levels of all forms of abuse.<sup>28</sup> Self-reporting tools often focus on physical behaviours and overlook a range of more subtle psychological or controlling forms of violence. Any self-report measures can be easily, though sometimes unconsciously, distorted and are unreliable when used in isolation.

Contact with women and children should form part of the assessment process.

**< See page 103-113 for discussion and Minimum Standards about contact with women and children, including in the assessment process >**

**< See Resource Manual for sample intake assessment protocols and tools, including behaviour checklists >**

### **MS 17**

Intake assessment includes at least one face-to-face interview conducted by an appropriately qualified family violence worker.

## **MS 18**

At a minimum, assessment covers the man's:

- Current relationship status and relationship history.
- Parenting status.
- History of using all forms of violent and controlling behaviours.
- Capacity for using all forms of violent and controlling behaviours.
- Possession of weapons.
- Legal standing, including current or previous court proceedings or orders, charges or convictions, and any reports required by statutory or other bodies.
- Understanding of the need for change and willingness to change.
- Commitment and ability to attend group sessions.
- Ability to keep women and children safe, particularly in relation to physical violence.
- Acceptance that, throughout the group program, group facilitators will contact women and children who are affected by his violence.
- Willingness to accept the provider's policies regarding limited confidentiality and responding to criminal acts and breaches of court orders.

Any potential barriers to the man's participation are also assessed and managed appropriately.

If women and children affected by the man's violence agree to contact with the program, they are invited to contribute information to the man's assessment.

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## **GPG 14**

When a man is returning to a group program after an absence of more than three months, he is re-assessed.

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## Referral for men who are ineligible or choose not to participate

If a man is not eligible to enter a provider's men's behaviour change program, or decides against joining a group, staff should try to assist him to identify and explore other options. These might include:

- One-on-one counselling (either generalist or to address a specific issue)
- Group work with another men's behaviour change program provider recognised by NTV
- Initiating contact with another appropriate service provider with a view to providing secondary consultation about male family violence issues whilst they work with the man.

Even if a man is not entering the program, staff should request his permission to contact relevant women and children to offer assistance, support, and referral.

In all circumstances, men should be provided with written information about male family violence and men's behaviour change.

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**GPG 15** If a man is not eligible to enter a provider's men's behaviour change program, or decides against joining a group, staff try to assist him to identify and explore other options.

**GPG 16** If a man participates in an intake assessment but is not eligible to enter the provider's men's behaviour change program, or decides against joining the program, staff request his permission to make contact with relevant women and children in order to check on their safety.

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## Induction to the group

Induction is an important aspect of the intake process. It may take place concurrently with intake assessment, or separately. Induction should include:

- Introduction to the men's behaviour change process, and in particular, the importance of committing to a long process.
- Expectations about attendance and participation.
- Explanation of client rights and responsibilities, including the provider's position on limited confidentiality and disclosures of criminal acts.
- An outline of how the group operates, including the group's agreement on conduct.

These points should be restated at the men's first group session.

## Waiting list management

Limited resources and/or the structure of men's behaviour change programs often mean that men are placed on waiting lists to participate in a men's behaviour change group. As with any behaviour change process, motivation is critical. NTV encourages providers to develop ways to continue to engage and support men whilst they wait for an opportunity to participate in a group.

Some ways that program providers currently do this include:

- Providing pre-group reading
- Multiple assessment sessions, with 'homework' between sessions
- Individual sessions
- Open groups.

For safety and accountability reasons, contact with men's family members should begin when assessment commences, not when a man commences group work. In addition to contributing to women's and children's safety, this also embodies the idea that services provided to women and children are as important as those for men.

### **MS 19**

Program providers have a process to continue to engage and support men, women and children, in circumstances when men cannot enter a group immediately.

## Client rights and responsibilities

Providers must provide documentation to all parties about their rights and responsibilities. This serves to emphasise to men the provider's commitment to placing the safety of women and children at the centre of its work. For women and children, a statement of their own rights and responsibilities, and the responsibilities of the man who has been violent and controlling, can be a small yet powerful statement of belief, support and commitment to their safety.

Whilst there is no research evidence on the effectiveness of contracts in stopping men's use of violence, NTV believes that they can be a useful tool to reinforce to men the seriousness of the process. Furthermore, they provide a mechanism whereby men agree to limited confidentiality, staff contacting their family members, and disclosure of .

**< See Resource Manual for a sample of client rights and responsibilities >**

**MS 20** Program providers give men, women and children documentation about the rights and responsibilities of all parties.

**MS 21** Participation in the provider's program is contingent upon men signing a contract agreeing to:

- Program staff contacting any women and children affected by their use of violence.
- Limited confidentiality.
- Staff disclosing information about them to statutory bodies as required by law.
- Pay fees as set by the provider.

## Group agreements

All men's behaviour change groups need to be conducted in a manner consistent with the principles of equality between women and men, individual responsibility and opposition to all forms of violence. NTV believes that people can only learn non-violent ways of behaving in an environment in which these are practised. Power-over behaviours reinforce rather than challenge the use of power and control.

In group-work practice, a concrete example of non-violent ways of relating is in the establishment of group agreements. Rather than establish a fixed 'code of conduct' that applies to every group, NTV encourages facilitators to work with groups to establish agreements for a set period. This has the potential to maximise participants' support and commitment to agreements, and provides an extra tool for facilitators and other group members when a participant is not behaving in a desirable manner. An additional benefit of negotiating group agreements is that the group context can be used as analogous to men's relationships in other contexts.

In ongoing groups, it is helpful for more experienced participants to explain group agreements to newcomers. This provides an opportunity to reinforce positive group norms and demonstrate that the whole group is committed to non-violent behaviour.

Together, facilitators and participants must decide on a process to alert men if they are breaking group agreements and to respond to breaches of group agreements. In some circumstances, this will necessitate facilitators establishing their own procedures to accompany those of the group. For example, the group might decide that men who arrive drunk will not be able to attend that session. Facilitators would then need a procedure to address immediately the safety of the man's partner and children.

Facilitators must also discuss with participants what general 'statements of principle' mean in practice. For example, if a group agrees that participants' privacy and confidentiality must be respected, it needs to discuss how participants can talk outside the group about their learning in the group, without breaching others' confidentiality. They might, for example, agree that participants can discuss issues in a general way with people outside the group; however, they will not use names, places of work or other distinguishing characteristics that might enable those outside the group to identify other participants.

**MS 22** All groups have an agreement about acceptable conduct and behaviour within the group and about the consequences of breaking the agreement.

## Inclusiveness (1): Accountability to Indigenous people<sup>29</sup>

An Indigenous person in Victoria is eight times more likely to experience family violence\* than a non-Indigenous person,<sup>30</sup> and 2.9 per cent of Victoria's Indigenous community experienced family violence, compared with 0.55 per cent of non-Indigenous people. Indigenous women are more likely to die a violent death than non-Indigenous women. Statistics suggest that some 80 per cent of perpetrators of Indigenous violence are men.<sup>31</sup>

Whilst it must be noted that the collection of data about Indigenous family violence has been significantly affected by Indigenous people's experiences of institutional racism generally, and black deaths in custody in particular, it is widely recognised that family violence is adversely affecting the health and social, cultural, emotional and economic well-being of Indigenous people, families and communities.

Indeed, there has been a perception within Indigenous communities that family violence is 'inherent'; that is, that the 'abused' go on to be abusers. Often, a person can be a perpetrator and victim at the same time in a family situation.

The 2003 report of the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force highlighted many of the complexities of responding to male family violence in Indigenous contexts. It noted that factors contributing to Indigenous family violence include:

- Dispossession of land and loss of traditional language and cultural practices
- Breakdown of community kinship systems and Aboriginal lore
- Racism and vilification
- Economic exclusion and entrenched poverty
- Alcohol and drug use
- The effects of institutionalisation and child removal policies
- Inherited grief and trauma
- Loss of traditional Aboriginal roles and status (for males and females)
- Difficulties in confronting the issues (by which is meant a culture of shame, secrecy, and fear).<sup>32</sup>

Whilst the Task Force agreed that family violence in all intimate relationships is essentially about power and control, irrespective of the label attached to describe the relationship, it noted that the causes of family violence stem from the history and impacts of white settlement and the structural violence of race relations since then. The Task Force regarded the context of Indigenous family violence as unique and called for a holistic approach to family healing.

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\* This section of the Manual refers to family violence, rather than male family violence, in deference to the language used by the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce

Thinking about Indigenous family violence means challenging white definitions, preconceptions and understandings. For example, given the widespread and multilayered experiences of family violence in Indigenous communities, the Task Force rejected narrow definitions of spousal abuse or domestic violence. Rather it viewed Indigenous family violence as encompassing the entire community, including '... a wide range of physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural and economic abuses within families, extended families, kinship networks and communities. It extends to one-on-one fighting, abuse of Indigenous community workers as well as self-harm, injury and suicide'.

Working against Indigenous family violence means working in partnership with Indigenous people and being guided by their needs, their priorities and their understandings. The Task Force identified fifteen priorities for responses to Indigenous family violence. Of these, men's behaviour change program providers clearly have a role to play in:

- Promoting safety and security for victims of violence.
- Involvement of Indigenous people in identifying priorities and driving processes at the local community level.
- Building stronger partnerships with Government and other services to enhance service responses at the local community level.
- Providing service responses for men to ensure they have opportunities to address their issues in a manner that will lead to fewer family violence incidents in the short, medium and longer term.
- Providing access to data gathered by service providers to Indigenous groups so they can make more informed decisions about what needs to happen in their local communities.
- Developing a marketing strategy that includes access to resources to support local community education and awareness campaigns that seek to change attitudes about family violence.
- Supporting activities which focus on specific groups within Indigenous communities – such as children, youth, women, men, Elders, people in same-sex relationships and staff of Indigenous service providers.
- Providing support to Indigenous people to engage in discussions about family violence so they can share information and focus their efforts on implementing 'good practice' processes.
- Developing integrated strategic processes which involve Indigenous representatives participating in decision-making activities that focus on service planning and implementation.

All providers have a responsibility to engage with Indigenous family violence. Whether they do so with individual men, or more systemically, depends on their resources and their will. NTV encourages providers to be pro-active in working with Indigenous communities to respond to Indigenous family violence issues. Engagement with Indigenous communities and individuals in the context of Indigenous family violence issues must be consistent with the findings and recommendations made by the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force.



Guidance and support for building partnerships with Indigenous communities, or for working with individual men, is available from Indigenous family violence or community health organisations.

It is important to note that the Task Force has endorsed men's behaviour change work for Indigenous men taking place within NTV's Minimum Standards.<sup>33</sup> Providers should be guided by a relevant Indigenous family violence service when they provide services to Indigenous individuals. Documenting how engagement takes place is an important first step towards greater accountability to Indigenous communities.

**< Further commentary and Good Practice Guidelines are contained in the following section, 'Working in a context of cultural and linguistic diversity' >**

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- GPG 17** Providers document how they engage with Indigenous communities and individuals in the context of Indigenous family violence.
- GPG 18** Providers who work with Indigenous individuals have regular contact with a relevant Indigenous family violence service for the purposes of secondary consultation and support.
- GPG 19** Engagement with Indigenous communities and individual Indigenous men in the context of Indigenous family violence issues is consistent with the findings and recommendations of the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force.
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## Inclusiveness (2): Working in a context of cultural and linguistic diversity

Australia has a culturally and linguistically diverse population, comprising Indigenous people and many generations of migrants who each came here under vastly different circumstances. Cultural backgrounds, and lived experience in Australia and elsewhere, shape not only constructions of gender and violence, but also people's access to services and support.

Male family violence occurs in all patriarchal cultures, and in all such cultures, there are also people who advocate for non-violence. Whilst it is important to point out that Australia has laws against many forms of family violence, NTV believes it is never appropriate to talk about male family violence as something that is 'not part of Australian culture' or 'not acceptable in Australia'. Both of these statements imply that men's violence is acceptable elsewhere, which potentially legitimises men's use of violence in non-Western places or cultures.

Furthermore, highly prescribed gender roles are common to all patriarchal societies, including Australia's. It is important that facilitators do not downplay sexism in Australia by comparing it to sexism in other countries.

NTV believes that all violent behaviour is inappropriate and must never be condoned or excused on the basis of culture or lived experience.

However, whilst male family violence is never acceptable, facilitators need to recognise that most men do believe it is, and that they find plenty of reinforcement for their belief within their own social, legal and religious institutions. This is as true for Anglo-Australian men as it is for others.

NTV believes that people have the right to participate in all men's behaviour change programs, regardless of their culture, language, race, spirituality or religion. In practice, to fulfil this right, providers would need to:

- Develop appropriate partnerships with local and state-wide Indigenous and ethnic community organisations.
- Promote men's behaviour change programs in local Indigenous and non-Anglo communities.
- Provide interpreters for assessment, groups and contact with men's families.
- Translate their written materials.
- Develop and/or use educational materials that can provide other-than-Anglo examples of male family violence, and that engage with or express other-than-Anglo cultural norms.
- Reflect on and review all Anglo-specific aspects of service delivery.

NTV recognises that most providers simply do not have the resources to maximise their inclusiveness in these ways, however, at a minimum, they should:

- Invite representatives from their local Indigenous organisations and Migrant Resource Centre or other relevant ethnic community organisations to participate in their Reference Group.
- Provide information about their men's behaviour change program to local Indigenous and ethnic community workers.
- Provide interpreters for assessment, groups and contact with men's families wherever possible.
- Avoid Anglo-centrism in educational materials by using a variety of cultural settings for scenarios in group work.
- Ensure appropriate referrals for men who have experienced torture or trauma.
- Monitor group dynamics and respond to marginalisation or other forms of exclusion on the basis of race, culture or English-language ability.
- Take care to avoid language that implies that male family violence is acceptable in some places or cultures.
- Challenge racism and racist stereotypes from group participants, making it clear that these power-over ways of relating are another form of violent and controlling behaviour.

Most non-Anglo men and women in Australia will have had experiences of marginalisation, racism or racist violence. In addition, those who are refugees have frequently experienced torture and trauma. NTV encourages staff to use the secondary consultation services of relevant support services to ensure that staff fully and sensitively engage with the impact of those experiences on clients' health and wellbeing. It is important to note that experiences of torture and trauma might impact significantly on men's and women's narratives about violence, participation in group work, and engagement with the law and law enforcement providers.

It is essential that staff reflect on their own culturally constructed understandings, Anglo-centrism, racist assumptions and language.

NTV also encourages providers to explore possibilities for providing other-than-Anglo culturally specific groups. A recent Vietnamese program<sup>34</sup> that was piloted in Melbourne confirmed that it is possible to adapt models of men's behaviour change programs to the ethno-specific needs of men from communities that are culturally and linguistically diverse. It appears that the most significant difficulty of conducting non-Anglo groups is recruiting appropriately skilled and experienced bi-lingual facilitators.

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- GPG 20** Providers :
- Invite representatives from their local Indigenous organisation and Migrant Resource Centre or other relevant ethnic community organisation to participate in their Reference Group.
  - Provide information about their men's behaviour change program to local Indigenous and ethnic community workers.
  - Provide interpreters for assessment, groups and contact with men's families wherever possible.
  - Avoid Anglo-centrism in educational materials by using a variety of cultural settings for scenarios in group work.
  - Ensure appropriate referrals for men who have experienced torture or trauma.
  - Monitor group dynamics and respond to marginalisation or other forms of exclusion on the basis of race, culture or English language ability.
  - Take care to avoid language that implies that male family violence is acceptable in some places or cultures.
  - Challenge racism and racist stereotypes from group participants, making it clear that these power-over ways of relating are another form of violent and controlling behaviour.
- GPG 21** Providers document the processes they use to ensure cultural and linguistic inclusiveness.
- GPG 22** Providers never condone or excuse violent or controlling behaviour on the basis of culture or men's experiences.
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## Inclusiveness (3): Challenging homophobia

Whilst the majority of men who participate in mainstream men's behaviour change programs will have a primary heterosexual relationship or heterosexual identity, some may also be same-sex attracted. The discussion in this section is intended to raise the issue of homophobia as a form of violent and controlling behaviours and to address the issue of inclusiveness within mainstream men's behaviour change programs. However, some of the issues raised might also be valuable to providers of groups for men who are same-sex attracted.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that men who use violent and controlling behaviours are also more likely to express homophobic and racist attitudes. Whilst they might moderate these in the presence of a man who is clearly 'other' to them (for example, a dark-skinned man or a man who is 'out' about his sexuality), it is very likely that group participants will assume men's heterosexuality because of their presence in the group. Their assumptions about heterosexuality are frequently reinforced by unconscious heterocentrism in language and behaviour on the part of facilitators.

Unless heterocentrism is directly acknowledged, it is rarely visible to those who are not same-sex attracted. For those who are, it frequently reinforces their marginalisation, difference and oppression. Heterocentrism is not inclusive. More dangerously, it hides the diversity of our community and therefore serves to perpetuate homophobia, including homophobic violence.

In addition to affecting the sense of safety of any same-sex man in the group, homophobia is a power-over way of relating that is entirely counter to the aims of the process. As such, homophobia must never be tolerated in men's behaviour change groups. This includes, but is not limited to stereotypes, statements about the 'naturalness' of heterosexuality, implicit or explicit threats, harassment, bragging about homophobic violence, or aspersions about the character or masculinity of a same-sex attracted man.

NTV encourages inclusive practices such as:

- Naming homophobia as behaviour that will not be condoned
- Drawing attention to heterocentrism and homophobia
- Talking about ways that patriarchy also oppresses people in same-sex relationships
- Using examples of gay couples as well as straight couples in talking about ways that men try to exert power and control
- Addressing homophobia in discussions reflecting on masculinity.

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**GPG 23**

To challenge homophobia and be sexually inclusive, providers: .

- Provide appropriate referrals, information and resources for men who are in same-sex relationships.
- Have regular contact with a relevant gay men's health worker or counsellor for the purposes of secondary consultation and support.
- Monitor group dynamics and respond to marginalisation or other forms of exclusion.
- Challenge homophobia and homophobic stereotypes from group participants, making it clear that these power-over ways of relating are another form of violent and controlling behaviour.

Providers document the processes they use to ensure sexual inclusiveness.

Providers never condone or excuse violent behaviour on the basis of sexuality or men's experiences.

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## Record keeping and files

Up-to-date written information is essential for accountability, quality service provision, continuity and evaluation. With myriad legal dimensions to records keeping and files, there are some important minimums for all providers of men's behaviour change programs:

- File notes need to discriminate between fact and interpretation.
- Records should never contain speculation about future behaviour.
- Quotes should be written down wherever possible.
- Disclosures should be attributed to the person who makes them (for example, 'Mr N said ...').

Whilst every effort has been made to provide legally sound advice, providers should be aware that the information contained in the following section has not been tested in an Australian court.

### **Men's files**

All men who are assessed should have a file created for them. Men who enter a program should be registered as clients.

Records should be kept of:

- All conversations, actions, queries or concerns pertaining to men
- Anything disclosed by men about their violent and controlling behaviour
- Men's attendance and non-attendance at groups and appointments
- Basic demographic data such as postcode, relationship status, ethnicity, and number of children.

Because of the possibility of records being subpoenaed, staff should take care not to include any information in men's files that might jeopardise another person's safety (for example, women's addresses or women's file notes).

### **Women's files**

Many program providers do not register as clients the women and children affected by men's violent and controlling behaviour. Sometimes this is because the services associated with the men's behaviour change program that the women and children use are provided by another provider, or contact with them is infrequent and/or unstructured. Occasionally, this might reflect a philosophical position. Mostly however, it is believed that not registering women and children is a way of avoiding having information about them subpoenaed by a court (a file cannot be subpoenaed if it does not exist). It is important to recognise that this supposition has never been tested in Australia.

Some providers have a policy to register women as clients. This is generally to give women independent standing within the provider, so that they are considered in their own right, rather than simply through their relationship with a man.

Some providers use coding systems for files, or offer women the option of being registered under a pseudonym.

Regardless of the provider's systems, information that could reasonably be considered to jeopardise women's and children's safety should never be documented. Examples of such information include women's relationships with other men or women's specific intentions about when or how they might leave a violent situation.

### **Children's files**

It is not appropriate to register children with their father or male caregiver if he has used violent or controlling behaviour. If the father or male caregiver is the sole carer, the child should be registered as a separate client, if at all.

The question of whether children should be registered separately from their female parent is not so clear cut. Registration of child(ren) with their mother and inclusion of their records with her file might strengthen a legal case to subpoena her records. However keeping files for each child is administratively difficult. Clearly, registration and record keeping will need to be informed by the age of the child(ren) and provider policy.

Children too may be registered under pseudonyms or codes.

Where children are registered with the provider, utmost care should be taken not to record in the file any information that could later be used against them or another person.

### **Storage of files**

Some providers co-locate the individual records of each family member, usually using colour-coded folders. This practice is intended as a cognitive reminder to keep women and children at the centre of their work. If files are stored in this way, NTV believes it is important that each is clearly differentiated and that all efforts are made to ensure that they cannot be legally constructed as one file.

Files and notes must never leave the provider's premises. They must be stored in a secure environment, with access limited only to relevant personnel.

Providers differ in the length of time that a client is considered as such when their file is inactive. NTV believes that providers of men's behaviour change programs should be guided by their broader general policies and procedures regarding this issue. Clients who notify the provider that they do not wish to continue as a client must have their file closed and stored according to provider policy.



- MS 23** In all record keeping:
- File notes discriminate between fact and interpretation.
  - Records never contain speculation about future behaviour.
  - Quotes are written down wherever possible.
  - Disclosures are attributed to the person who makes them (for example, 'Mr N said ...').
- MS 24** Information that might reasonably be considered to have the potential to jeopardise a person's safety is never recorded.
- MS 25** Women's and children's files are separate to men's files.
- MS 26** Files and notes never leave the provider's premises. They are stored in a secure environment, with access limited only to relevant personnel.

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of counselling. However, counselling professionals have a legal and/or ethical duty to disclose information that may compromise the safety of any individual. In men's behaviour change work, where men have used violent and controlling behaviours, the issue of confidentiality frequently poses challenging questions for program staff. Aside from the obvious safety considerations, confidentiality also has political dimensions. Some providers feel it is important to challenge the 'conspiracy of silence' that has been a feature of Australia's response to male family violence. They argue that some forms of confidentiality can be seen as complicity with, or tacit acceptance of, men's violent behaviour.

NTV advocates the concept of limited confidentiality for men, which entails holding information about someone in trust and confidence unless it might affect the safety of others.

Information that should always be confidential is that which is personal for men, does not pertain to their use of violent and controlling behaviours, and does not pertain to their safety or the safety of others.

Generally, information that has limited confidentiality is that which pertains to the men's violent and controlling behaviours, and also pertains to one or more of the following:

- Women's and children's safety
- Staff safety
- Criminal acts or breaches of court orders
- Men's own safety.

As a general principal, any information that has limited confidentiality should only be disclosed as needed and only to relevant people, with due care taken to safeguard its future use.

To give primacy to the safety of women and children, NTV believes that men should be permitted to join a men's behaviour change group only if they have agreed that their personal information will have limited confidentiality.

It is important that program staff retain the right to decide what is confidential. Giving men a say in this process opens the possibility of bargaining – a controlling behaviour – and counter to the aims and intentions of men's behaviour change work. In most instances, decisions about what is confidential need to be informed by legislation, in particular, relevant sections of Commonwealth and State privacy acts and child protection laws. Some program staff also have responsibilities imposed by their professional associations.

Men's behaviour change work is different from counselling in that more than one professional will have access to information about clients. In men's behaviour change programs, the contract of confidentiality is between a provider and a person, not between two people. Information may (and should) be shared amongst all relevant program staff.

Information held by program staff may be shared with:

- Family members whose safety or wellbeing is in jeopardy
- Relevant staff within the same provider
- Staff from other providers who are supporting family members of male participants
- Police
- Child protection workers.

Whilst the question of when a client's agreement to limited confidentiality ends has never been tested in a court of law, it is generally presumed that (unless specifically time-limited) an agreement endures until it is revoked.

**< See pages 107-109 for more discussion on what may be communicated to men's family members >**

For safety and accountability reasons, all conversations between women and program staff, and all information given to program staff by women, must be kept confidential unless women wish otherwise or unless the circumstances require mandatory reporting.

**MS 27** Men are permitted to join a men's behaviour change group only if they have agreed that their personal information will have limited confidentiality.

**MS 28** All conversations between women and program staff, and all information given to staff by women, are kept confidential unless women wish otherwise or unless the circumstances require mandatory reporting.

## Reporting to courts and other statutory or non-statutory bodies

As noted earlier, a significant number of men seek to participate because of a legal mandate; that is, a court or other statutory body has told them they must. Other times, men choose to participate in a men's behaviour change program on the advice of their lawyer, in the hope that this might help them to avoid a criminal conviction or achieve a lesser penalty.

Usually men who are directed to participate by a statutory body are required to prove their attendance by having a facilitator sign an attendance sheet. However, courts or child protection workers do occasionally request information additional to an attendance record. Facilitators sometimes find themselves asked to give feedback on a man's participation in the group, his attitudes, and behaviour in or outside the group, or timelines for 'improvement in his behaviour'. In child protection matters, sometimes staff are asked to suggest reunification timelines.

Clearly, facilitators' views about a man's behaviour outside a group are conjecture, based on their own observations of the man, and what he and his family members say. Confidentiality precludes making public any information from family members, which can mean that facilitators are unable to back up their assertions and/or that only the man's voice is heard.

For these reasons, NTV recommends that program staff do not provide a court or other statutory body with any comments about a man's behaviour outside the group, or timelines for behaviour change or family reunification. Furthermore, NTV strongly discourages providing information about a man's participation or behaviour in a group, as likelihood of this information being taken out of context, misunderstood, or misused is too great.

It is imperative that men's behaviour change groups are not used cynically by men to avoid taking responsibility for their violent and controlling behaviour. Program staff must not provide any feedback about men that helps them to avoid penalties, or that lessens the strength of a justice or child protection response to their use of violent and controlling behaviours.

From time to time, program staff are also asked to provide reports about men to non-statutory bodies. A common example is when men are directed to participate in a men's behaviour change program by their employer. This can be a complex issue (for example, when a family's income depends on a man's continued employment). NTV believes that in these circumstances, program staff should be guided by the principles embodied in the standards for reporting to courts and other statutory bodies, bearing in mind men's rights to limited confidentiality.

**< See Resource Manual for a sample letter to a court >**

Occasionally women request that staff make reports to statutory bodies about men's behaviour. In judging whether to fulfil these requests, staff must always be satisfied that providing a report will not jeopardise women's or children's safety. Upon a written request from women, program staff may include in a report:

- Anything women have disclosed about their experiences and feel safe to make public.
- Anything men have disclosed about their violence during assessment and groups.
- Descriptions of any behaviour or attitudes of men that facilitators have observed in the group.

Women should be actively involved in decisions about what to include in any report written in their interests.

**MS 29** When providing any information to a court or other statutory body, providers include information about the complexities and uncertainties of men's behaviour change work. They do not:

- Provide any feedback about men that helps them to avoid penalties, or that lessens the strength of a justice or child protection response to their use of violent and controlling behaviour.
- Provide a court or other statutory body with any comments about men's behaviour outside the group, or with timelines for behaviour change or family reunification.

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**GPG 24** Facilitators who undertake to sign the attendance sheets of legally mandated clients negotiate any further feedback with the mandating provider, bearing in mind Minimum Standard 29.

**GPG 25** Program staff who provide reports to statutory bodies at the request of women take into account the possible implications for their safety now and in the future. Upon written requests from women, they can choose to provide information about:

- Anything women have disclosed about their experiences and feel safe to make public.
- Anything men have disclosed about their violence during assessment and group sessions.
- Any behaviour or attitudes of men that facilitators have observed in the group.

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## Follow-up after a man's exit from a program

Where providers provide continuous men's behaviour change groups, most allow a man to stay in a group for as long as he wishes, as long as he continues to meet the group's eligibility criteria. In the case of time-limited programs, many providers allow a man to participate more than once, though usually not more than three times.

This means that, unless a man is directed to participate in a men's behaviour change program by a court or other statutory body, his exit from a program will, to varying degrees, be self-determined.

There is very little research evidence about exit planning and follow-up of men after their departure, and the practice of providers differs greatly.

NTV believes that when a man is leaving a program on a planned basis, it is desirable to work with him to develop an exit plan that will look at:

- What he feels he has achieved
- What challenges he might experience in the future
- How he might respond to these challenges
- What he will do if he uses violent and controlling behaviour.

Men should always be encouraged to return to the provider if they are having any difficulties relating non-violently.

Follow-up after a man has left a group frequently depends on the circumstances under which he left. At a minimum, NTV believes that all group participants should be contacted at some point after their departure. Follow-up enables providers to reinforce the importance of maintaining behaviour change and remind men that the program has a continuing interest in their changed behaviour.

Women should always be notified when a man leaves or drops out of a program. As noted earlier, his departure should not necessitate the winding up of services to women and children who have been affected by his violence.

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- GPG 26** Reasonable attempts are made to have further contact with men who drop out of a program.
- GPG 27** Men who are making a planned exit from a program are invited and assisted to develop an exit plan.
- GPG 28** Men are contacted at least once after their departure from a program, to reinforce the importance of maintaining behaviour change, and remind men that the program has a continuing interest in their changed behaviour.
- GPG 29** Women are always notified when a man leaves or drops out of a program.
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# Accountability to family members

## Thinking about accountability

Contact with women and children is integral to men's behaviour change programs. NTV believes that program providers have a responsibility and duty of care to ensure that a man's participation does not endanger his family or exacerbate abuse. Furthermore, providers also have a duty to provide information and support that can enhance women's and children's decision making and recovery.

Contact with women and children has many purposes. It:

- Assists staff to ascertain and respond to the safety needs of women and their children.
- Enables staff to ascertain and respond to other support and information needs of women and their children (thereby becoming a pathway into the support system).
- Offers women a chance to discuss their options and decisions about the relationship.
- Helps women and older children to get accurate information about the program and the man's participation.
- Offers opportunities for women and children to give information to staff about the man's behaviour.
- Contributes to holding a man accountable for his ongoing behaviour.

Contact and support of women and children should primarily be about their safety and wellbeing. It is equally important for women and children who appear to be in no physical danger.

It is important that program providers engage with women in their own right, not simply as (ex)partners. NTV encourages staff to take care to avoid language that might seem to limit a woman's options or identity. Issues that might be of concern to women are wide-ranging and encompass much more than those of their identities as partners or mothers. This same care with language and identity needs to be extended to children.

Understandably, women and children who have experienced male family violence often find it difficult to trust. Frequently they feel themselves to be unworthy of assistance and/or 'beyond help'. This means that the process of engagement between staff and family members can take some time. Contact, especially in its initial stages, is as much about building a quasi-therapeutic relationship as it is about assessing safety and giving information.

It is particularly important that women and children do not feel that they are responsible for monitoring a man's behaviour. Indeed, a key message in all contact with women and children must be 'You are not responsible'.

**MS 30** Contact with and support of women and children is primarily about their safety and wellbeing.



## Hearing women's and children's voices in the process

Placing women and children at the centre of men's behaviour change programs means that their voices must be heard, not only by staff, but also by men who use violent and controlling behaviours.

There are many ways to provide opportunities for men to hear the individual and collective voices of women and children, keeping in mind that these do not necessarily need to be voices of those they know. Ideas for bringing women's and children's voices into group work include:

- Presenting stories, statistics and facts about their experiences, and the effects of male family violence.
- Using quotes drawn from books, video or audio recordings.
- Exhibiting drawings, paintings or other artwork.
- Inviting men to reflect on and talk about what they think women or children would feel or think in their situation (some facilitators include role exploration in which men are invited to step into the role of a woman).
- Having guest speakers who can talk first hand about their experiences working with women and children who have experienced male family violence.
- Providing feedback from the program's women's support group, if one exists.
- Having women observe group sessions and give feedback to facilitators afterwards.
- Meetings between facilitators and contact workers before each group session to identify issues to address in the session.
- Ensuring that female facilitators always have the last word at the conclusion of a group session.
- Self-audits and record keeping by facilitators about the ways that they have helped to bring women's and children's voices into group sessions.

Women's and children's voices should have a place in every group session.

Information about men's behaviour shared by women may be shared with the group only with their consent, and only if it is considered by women and program staff to be safe.

Information from children should only be introduced when there is explicit permission from their mother or other primary caregiver and the facilitator(s) and contact worker agree that it is safe to do so. Children should be included in decision making on an age-appropriate basis.

Where disclosure is not to be reported to men, facilitators must instead try to create as many invitational spaces as possible for men to talk about their behaviour. If using invented scenarios to invite men to reflect on their behaviour, it is essential these do not 'tip off' men to disclosures.

When women or children raise fears of repercussions or payback for their disclosures, it is important that program staff discuss the basis of these fears and that contact workers help women to revisit their safety plans.

**< See pages 118-121 for a discussion of responding to illegal acts of violent and controlling behaviour and pages 122-123 for responding to breaches of court orders >**

Concern about the effects of their violence on their children, or for their relationships with their children, is often a motivation for men to participate in a men's behaviour change program. This means that, in addition to holding men accountable for their impact on their children's lives, children's voices can be an important contribution to men's changed behaviour. It is important that the consequences of men's use of violent and controlling behaviours are clearly articulated so that men can have an appreciation of the effects of their violent and controlling behaviour on their children.

In particular, men need to know:

- Experiencing male family violence has serious and long-lasting effects on children of any age.
- Research has demonstrated that witnessing violence is as harmful as experiencing it directly.
- There is evidence that children who grow up in an environment where violence and abuse occur are much more likely to either experience or use violence and abuse in adult life.<sup>35</sup>
- They are responsible for the effects of their violent and controlling behaviours on their children.
- Becoming non-violent will enable them to have more positive and supportive fathering relationships, based on respect rather than fear.

NTV believes that men must be provided with information about the effects of their violence on children and that children's voices should have a place in every group session.

Children who have experienced male family violence need to be encouraged, educated and supported to develop appropriate methods of managing and expressing their feelings. Specialist work of this nature is often beyond the scope of men's behaviour change program providers. However, NTV strongly encourages providers to explore collaborative approaches for the development of children's programs. Contemporary approaches to dealing with male family violence argue for children's programs running concurrently with the men's program.<sup>36</sup> At the very least, contact workers should be attentive to the needs, concerns and experiences of children and adolescents.

- MS 31** Men are encouraged to talk about and reflect on the impacts of their violence on women and children. Men are provided with information and evidence about the effects of their violence on women and children, and women's and children's voices have a place in every group session.
- MS 32** Program staff always ask about and respect the wishes of women when they share information about men's behaviour.
- MS 33** Information provided by women and children is shared with men or the group only if they have given explicit permission, and the program staff agree that it is safe to do so.

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- GPG 30** Children are included in decision making on an age-appropriate basis.
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## What may be communicated

Communication between individuals and between program providers differs according to the role of the contact worker, the desires of women and children, and the frequency and nature of contact. At minimum, contact workers have a responsibility to ask women and children about:

- Their safety
- What information and support they need
- Their experiences of the man's behaviour.

Contact workers have a responsibility to tell women about:

- Any threats, direct or indirect, to their or their children's safety
- The man's attendance and participation in the group
- What the group has been talking about
- The limitations of groups for men and the possibility that the violence and controlling behaviours might not stop
- Their rights, including rights to live in safety, legal protection, support, and information
- What the provider will do in the event of a man breaching a court order or committing any act of violence against them or their children
- Services and resources that might help them to make decisions for themselves and in their and their children's interests
- Any concerns that they have about the wellbeing or safety of children.

Contact workers must refrain from making any comment about any positive changes in men's behaviour, as these (a) might be counter to women's and children's experiences, (b) might not be sustained, and (c) might be construed as encouragement to stay in the relationship. Women must always be considered to be the expert about their relationship, and their experiences and needs must always be respected.

Any engagement on a deeper level is likely to evolve over a significant period of time, and is primarily at the discretion of women and children.

Women and children can provide valuable information to staff about a man's behaviour. However, this is not in itself a reason for contact. Many women and children fear the consequences of 'reporting', even if they are assured of confidentiality. Where they are reluctant to talk about men's behaviour at home, this should be respected, though the reasons behind their reluctance should be fully explored to ensure that all current safety risks are thoroughly assessed and that safety plans are in place.

Some providers use an interview schedule for initial and/or ongoing contact.

**MS 34**

At minimum, contact workers ask women and children about:  
Their safety.  
What information and support they need.  
Their experiences of the man's behaviour.

**MS 35**

Contact workers tell women about:  
Any threats, direct or indirect, to their or their children's safety.  
The man's attendance and participation in the group.  
What the group has been talking about.  
The limitations of groups for men and the possibility that the violence and controlling behaviours might not stop.  
Their rights, including rights to live in safety, legal protection, support and information.  
What they, as the provider, will do in the event of a man breaching a court order or committing any act of violence against them or their children.  
Services and resources that might help them to make decisions for themselves and in their and their children's interests.  
Any concerns that they have about the wellbeing or safety of their children.

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**GPG 31**

Contact workers do not make any comment to family members about any positive changes in the man's behaviour.

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## Frequency of contact

Ideally, initial contact with women and children should occur as part of a man's intake assessment. If this is not possible, contact should be made before a man attends his first group session.

Where women and children express interest in being contacted by program staff, additional contact must occur at least:

- After the man's second or third session
- Every three or four weeks through the program
- When the man leaves the program.

Program providers should also consider offering to continue contact with women in the longer term, possibly six months after the man leaves the program.

Within this framework, it is imperative that women and, where appropriate, children, can determine the pattern of contact that suits them. Many women and children choose to have program staff contact them more frequently. Others prefer to instigate contact themselves, and do so regularly or intermittently or only in times of crisis.

Contact arising from specific safety concerns (for example, to advise a woman that her partner has not attended) is extra to the schedule of contact outlined above.

### **MS 36**

Initial contact with women and children occurs as part of a man's intake assessment, or if this is not possible, before a man attends his first group session. Where women and children express interest in being contacted by program staff, additional contact occurs at least:  
After the man's second or third session.  
Every three or four weeks through the program.  
When the man leaves the program.  
More or less contact than this is at the discretion of individual women and children.  
Contact arising from specific safety concerns (for example, to advise a woman that her partner has not attended) is imperative and is counted as extra to the schedule of contact outlined above.

## Duration of contact

Whilst the decision to end contact should also rest with a client, some program providers refer women and children elsewhere if their male family member withdraws from the program. For some providers, referral is a result of resource constraints, for others it is considered inappropriate to provide services to women and children if their male family member is no longer actively engaged in the process. NTV has no position on this issue, however, if a provider will no longer provide services to women and children for any reason, NTV believes that it must formulate and implement a handover plan (if another provider is to provide future support) or an exit plan, and where possible conduct an exit interview with the woman (and children, if appropriate).

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**GPG 32** If a provider will no longer provide services to women and children for any reason, staff formulate and implement an exit plan or a handover plan (if another provider is to provide future support) and make all reasonable attempts to conduct an exit interview.

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## Form of contact

Program providers differ in their form of contact. Common forms of contact include:

- Telephone contact
- Regular women's support group
- One-on-one, face-to-face sessions with women and/or children
- Women's information session at the commencement of a new program and at specified intervals thereafter
- Outreach visits – if considered safe by staff and by the woman
- Provision of information materials for women and children.

Contact with women and children should primarily be about their safety and wellbeing. As such, it should be in a form that suits their needs and circumstances. Making available multiple forms of contact will maximise the chances of women and children being supported.

Clearly, women and children need to be able to speak privately about their experiences. In making telephone contact, providers need to have a procedure in place to manage calls when a man is present or when the phone has an answering machine. Most commonly, this simply entails instructing women to pretend that the caller was a market researcher.



## Who should be contacted

The question of who should be contacted is not always straightforward.

Many program providers report difficulties in deciding whether or not to contact women if a man says that the relationship has ended and they no longer have contact. Program staff are justifiably reluctant to intrude upon women who might have 'moved on', physically and emotionally, from man who has used violent and controlling behaviours. On the other hand, without contact, program staff have only a man's word that (a) the relationship has ended, (b) there is no longer contact, and (c) he is no longer being violent or controlling of her.

Sometimes men wishing to participate in a men's behaviour change group say that they are not using violent and controlling behaviours in their current relationship, and that their reason for wanting to attend the group is to prevent a recurrence of their past behaviours.

Men who participate in men's behaviour change programs do so because they use violent and controlling behaviours, often including lying, manipulation, denial and minimisation. Information that they provide might at best be understatements, or at worst, outright lies.

For this reason, any woman who has a current or recent intimate relationship with a man wishing to participate in a men's behaviour change program should be contacted. Intimate relationships include:

- Co-habitation
- Co-parenting of a dependent child or adolescent
- Sexual relationships.

Whilst there is room for some flexibility in definitions of 'recent', NTV believes that two years is a reasonable 'rule of thumb'. It is important to note here that violence often escalates post-separation.<sup>37</sup> The fact that the relationship has ended does not necessarily mean that the violent and controlling behaviours have stopped, or that the woman is not still affected by the man's past or current behaviour.

In circumstances where a woman has not recently had an intimate relationship with the man and has no children with him, decisions about contact with her must be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the period of time since separation and program staff's assessment of risk. As a rule of thumb, NTV recommends that women who have been separated from men for more than three months should be sent a letter inviting them to make contact with the program provider.

Of course, not all women want contact from a provider. Some feel that the violence and abuse is the man's problem, and that the men's behaviour change program is his business. Others have left the relationship and desire no further reminders about the man or their relationship with him. In these instances, contact workers should try to ensure that women have information relevant to their circumstances.

There is some conjecture amongst providers that contact initiated by them with a woman who has a court order forbidding contact by a man or any of his representatives, might constitute a breach of the court's order, and might leave the provider open to legal sanctions. This has never been tested in an Australian court, and NTV believes that, unless a court decides otherwise, providers should give primacy to the safety of women and children by initiating contact.

In circumstances where a woman has a court order, contact workers should approach her with extra care, emphasising that she has a right to support and information. They should be prepared to give contact details and information about other local services that she could use if they choose not to have further contact from the men's behaviour change program.

Some providers have also had difficulties when men are in concurrent relationships with more than one person. In this instance, all partners should be contacted. However great care must be taken not to disclose to one person the man's relationship with the other(s). If it appears that having multiple partners is a manifestation of a man's controlling behaviours, program staff should raise this with the man directly.

When men do not have any current or recent intimate relationships with women, some providers have contact with a sister, mother, female friend or employer to get feedback about how he relates.

Whilst it is imperative that women's choices about contact be respected, all women should be notified if there is an apparent threat to their or their children's safety.

### **MS 37**

Providers make all reasonable attempts to contact any woman who has had an intimate relationship (co-habitation, co-parenting of a dependent child or adolescent, or a sexual relationship) in the last two years with a man wishing to participate in a men's behaviour change group:

Women who currently live with or have recently separated from a man wishing to participate in a men's behaviour change group are sent an introductory letter, followed up by a telephone call.

Women who have been separated from a man wishing to participate in a men's behaviour change group for more than three months are sent a letter inviting them to make contact.

## Practices that help to keep people safe

Given the nature of men's behaviour change work, program providers have a responsibility to ensure that their places and practices do not pose safety risks to women and children.

Safety centred practice includes:

- Ensuring that women and children who do not want to see their male family member are not on the premises at the same time as him, or that if they are, there is no chance that they will encounter each other.
- Ensuring that all program activities are conducted in places that are safe, well-lit, comfortable, physically accessible, safe, located close to public transport and child-friendly.
- Ensuring that men's behaviour change groups always start and finish at the designated time.
- Making safety plans with women and children to cover foreseeable contingencies and revising these regularly.
- Putting policies and procedures for safety in writing (many of these are discussed in subsequent pages) and conveying these to men, women and children.

### **MS 38**

Program providers have and implement written procedures for:

- Documenting all risk assessments.
- Monitoring threats or risks to safety in an ongoing and systematic way.
- Responding to perceived threats to safety.
- Reviewing critical incidents.
- Responding to criminal acts.
- Notifying relevant authorities of possible risk to children, consistent with the notification pathways of their relevant authority.
- Relevant aspects of the procedures are explained to men, women, and children upon entry to the program, and thereafter as needed.

**MS 39** Program providers assist women and children to make and revise safety plans to cover foreseeable contingencies.

**MS 40** Providers ensure that women and children who do not want to see the man who has violated them are not on the premises at the same time as him, or that if they are, there is no chance that they will encounter each other.

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**GPG 33** Providers conduct program activities in places that are safe, well-lit, comfortable, physically accessible, located close to public transport and child-friendly.

**GPG 34** Providers ensure that men's behaviour change groups always start and finish at the designated time.

**GPG 35** In the extraordinary event that a group session is being facilitated by a single facilitator, another staff member is present in the building and within easy reach for the duration of the session, and is aware that the session is being conducted.

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## Evaluating and responding to threats to safety

Safety of family members must always be a primary consideration in the conduct of a men's behaviour change program. Program providers have a responsibility to monitor and attend to the safety of family members of group participants at all times during the program, and all safety risk assessments and safety plans must be documented.

Whilst women are in the best position to know what is likely to compromise their safety, they can sometimes be unrealistic or overly optimistic about the likely impact of the program on a man's behaviour. Program staff should also draw on their own knowledge and experience in making decisions about safety. However, whilst nuance, 'gut instinct', and what is unsaid are important pointers for experienced professionals, they should never be a substitute for detailed safety risk assessments.

If it seems that a woman is not fully aware of the risk to herself or to her child(ren), then contact workers have an obligation to raise this with her. In particular, they need to highlight the potential dangers to children of a man's violence, and inform the woman of the long-term consequences of exposure to violent and controlling behaviours.

Discussions with women about the safety of their children need to be sensitive to her situation and the effects the violence might be having on her capacities to parent.

**< See pages 124-125 for a full discussion about child protection notifications and safety of children >**

Threats to safety might include:

- A man being turned away from a group session because he is under the influence of alcohol or another drug.
- A man making implicit or explicit threats.
- A man being inexplicably absent from a session (this depends on knowledge of an individual and his circumstances).
- A man leaving a session early without explanation.
- A breach of an Intervention Order

Providers must have and implement procedures for responding to perceived threats to safety. Procedures to consider include:

- Discussing the situation with the man in question, with the aim of reminding him that he can choose not to use violence and that he is responsible for others' safety. Where program staff speak with a man about a perceived threat, they should not tell him that they will be informing others if they believe that this would increase the chance of him being violent.
- Contacting the people at risk, including women who declined at the beginning of the program to have regular contact with the program, to inform them of the perceived threat to safety, check their current levels of safety, offer support and revisit their safety plan.
- Informing the police and any other relevant authorities, depending on the nature of the threat.

These procedures should be discussed in detail with each participant prior to the commencement of the program and should be part of the conditions he agrees to in order to attend the group.

Providers must have and implement a Critical Incident review process for all breaches of safety.

**< See page 122-123 for a full discussion of responding to breaches of court orders, including Intervention Orders >**

## Responding to illegal acts of violent and controlling behaviour

Program providers have a responsibility to respond to all illegal acts of violent and controlling behaviour by participants in men's behaviour change groups. The nature of their response will be affected by factors including, but not limited to:

- The safety and wellbeing of the women and children who are experience the behaviour.
- Who tells the provider about the behaviour.
- The wishes of the women and children who are experience the behaviour.
- The nature of the behaviour.
- The criminality of the behaviour.

In most situations, there is a range of possible responses on the part of the provider. Whilst some of these are discretionary, NTV believes that there are certain responses that are necessary in all circumstances.

At a minimum, when a participant in a men's behaviour change group commits any illegal act of violent and controlling behaviour, whether reported by the man, a family member or a third party, program providers must always have contact with the woman to:

- Revisit her safety plan
- Offer support, or offer to organise support, for her to pursue legal action or to discuss her legal option
- Offer support, or offer to organise support, if she wishes to speak with police
- Discuss whether she wishes to pursue legal action (for example, criminal charges, seeking a court order) against the man
- Discuss any risks to her safety that she or the provider believe could arise from her taking legal action or speaking with police and make changes – as needed – to her safety plan
- Discuss any other action she would like the provider to take, including when and how often the provider should contact her again
- Discuss any risks to children and action that program staff feel they might need to take regarding a child protection notification
- Report back to her about what has been done in response to the man's act, what further support she can get, and what (if any), further action she needs to take.

Beyond this response, there is a range of other actions that providers might choose to take in the event of the behaviour being of a criminal nature. Whilst NTV does not have a position on which course of action is preferable, at minimum, providers must have a documented policy and procedure to respond to criminal acts.

### **Encouraging men to self-report**

Some providers and women's services believe that men who inform staff that they have offended must be encouraged to surrender to police. They feel that this reinforces the criminality and seriousness of the man's act and positions the provider as an upholder of law and supporter of women's rights. Furthermore, insofar as admissions of guilt and expressions of remorse are often part of the cycle of violence, a justice response may impose a 'reality check' in which men must face the full consequences of their action, including criminal sanctions. That is, some program providers feel that a justice response is a step towards breaking the cycle of confession and 'forgiveness'.

Other providers point out that, historically, police responses to men's admissions of violence have been patchy and that there is no guarantee police will always act, especially without the 'victim' instigating charges and/or giving evidence. In these circumstances, they argue that encouraging a man to surrender to police might actually have the unintended effect of demonstrating to men that they can indeed get away with violence. In Victoria, it is hoped that new police codes may improve police responses to men's criminal acts. At the time of writing, however, widespread change and consistent practice are not yet apparent.

Some providers also believe that automatic reporting would be a barrier to men disclosing their acts of violence, which might mean that women and children are actually less safe and less supported. Others would argue that this is not such a problem if providers are having regular contact with all women and children affected by men's violence.

### **Automatic responses by providers**

The question of whether or not providers should automatically make a legal response to any criminal act is a difficult one. Some people argue that reporting offenders whenever it is safe to do so is an important expression of community intolerance of violence. They suggest that automatic justice responses signal to women and to men that male family violence is a community matter, rather than a relationship issue, and that everyone has a responsibility to promote safety and prevent violence. Furthermore, they argue that any response less than automatic reporting may be construed by men as minimisation or tacit support of their violence, thereby supporting the idea that men can get away with violence. It has also been suggested that discretionary decision-making leaves staff open to pressure and bargaining by men.

Advocates of automatic reporting do not believe that women's wishes or preferences should be disregarded. Rather, they suggest that women's choices about reporting are often informed by many factors additional to their safety concerns and personal circumstances. These factors include previous experiences or expectations of ineffective justice responses and lack of time, practical support (for example, childcare), and confidence or emotional resilience to pursue a justice response. Advocates of automatic reporting believe that offering women an 'opt out' rather than 'opt in' response may relieve them of some of the pressure of pursuing a justice response. It may also relieve some of the burden of responsibility felt by women.



To take into account women's and children's safety needs, advocates of automatic reporting suggest that all the minimum actions listed above should take place, and that women should also be advised that program staff will report the violence unless they specifically request otherwise. Any safety fears or risks to women and children should be addressed as a first priority.

Automatic responses are not universally supported. Many providers believe that responses must be made on a discretionary basis, usually because of (a) the importance of supporting women to make their own choices, and (b) the possibility of an inadequate police response. They argue that telling a woman that the offence will be reported, and then having no police response, would undermine her confidence in justice responses.

Historically in Victoria, police have needed the active involvement of 'victims', including witness statements from them, to pursue justice responses. Thus far, it does not seem that the new police code will make it easier for police to act on men's acts of violence without the involvement of the individual women and children who experience it.

### **Other responses to men who use violence**

The question of how to talk with men about acts of violent and controlling behaviour that a woman or child has reported can be difficult when they do not want their disclosure to be revealed. The twin dictates of women's confidentiality and safety, require that facilitators always ask for and respect the wishes of the woman or child when they share information about a man's behaviour.

## MS 41

At a minimum, when a participant in a men's behaviour change group commits any act of violent and controlling behaviour, whether reported by the man, a family member or a third party, program providers always have contact with the woman to:

- Revisit her safety plan
- Offer support, or offer to organise support, for her to pursue legal action or to discuss her legal option
- Offer support, or offer to organise support, if she wishes to speak with police
- Discuss whether she wishes to pursue legal action (for example, criminal charges, seeking a court order) against the man
- Discuss any risks to her safety that she or the provider believe could arise from her taking legal action or speaking with police and make changes – as needed – to her safety plan
- Discuss any other action she would like the provider to take, including when and how often the provider should contact her again
- Discuss any risks to children and action that program staff feel they might need to take regarding a child protection notification
- Report back to her about what has been done in response to the man's act, what further support she can get, and what (if any), further action she needs to take.

## Responding to breaches of court orders

Many men who attend men's behaviour change groups are subject to an order from a court not to have any form of contact with family members affected by their violent and controlling behaviours.

Breaches of court orders must always be treated with the utmost seriousness. In addition to the ramifications for individuals, there is a danger that the effectiveness and uptake of court orders will be undermined if there is a widespread perception that they 'do not matter' or 'don't work'.

When men use violent behaviour, they are already breaking laws and violating others' rights. This means that the law is no guarantee of safety for women. Program staff should strongly discourage women from regarding a court order alone as a way of preventing a man's violent behaviour.

There are two common scenarios that often confront staff of men's behaviour change programs with ethical and legal dilemmas:

- Both partners are willingly breaching the order, for example, choosing to see each other despite an order from a court stipulating that the man must not have contact with the woman; OR
- A man has breached a court order, but his partner is unwilling to report him and he is unwilling to report himself.

### **Breaches of court orders that are mutual and consensual**

If a woman believes a court order is no longer needed or is not meeting her needs, program staff should encourage her to discuss her situation with a women's domestic violence service or community legal centre. It is possible for the woman to return to the court to have an order revoked or altered, unless it has been taken out by a third party (for example, police). In these cases, she should be encouraged to discuss her situation with the third party representative, preferably assisted by an appropriately qualified and experienced advocate.

In situations of mutual and consensual breach of a court order, the man must also be advised that he is breaking the law and that he can choose to exercise his responsibility by upholding all laws.

### **Breaches of court orders that are mutual, but not consensual**

Women who are breaching court orders often do so because of fear, ignorance or necessity (for example, because they need to get money from their partner). It is important to reinforce to women that breaching an order is breaking the law. It is also important to help women put in place practical strategies that enable them to avoid having to breach an order.

## **Breaches of court orders by men**

Program providers vary in the ways that they address breaches of court orders by participants in a men's behaviour change group. Generally, where a man has breached an order, program staff should:

- Actively support his family members to make and implement decisions about what action they wish to take (this may include assisting women to obtain legal support to take the matter to court)
- Be guided by the wishes of his family members in deciding whether or not to report the breach to the relevant authority
- Be guided by the wishes of his family members in deciding whether or not to raise the breach with the man if he has not disclosed the breach himself
- With the consent of his family members, discuss the breach with the man and encourage him to report the breach to the relevant authority, liaising with the relevant authority as needed (if the man reports the breach and the relevant authority does not act on the report, staff should follow this up with the authority)
- Gather information about the options available by consulting widely. This might include discussing it with other professionals or in supervision, and obtaining legal or other outside advice
- Consult with his family members in order to find out what assistance they need, whether they wish to report the breach to the relevant authority and if so, whether or not they need assistance to do so
- Encourage the man to raise his breach in the group and identify the ways he has avoided his responsibility.

Providers might wish to have a policy of automatically reporting breaches of court orders. The discussion on automatic responses to criminal acts (see previous pages) is also relevant to reporting breaches of court orders.

## Child protection

In any situation involving male family violence, children's safety is paramount. Male family violence can have a significant detrimental effect on a child's physical and/or emotional health, development and well-being, regardless of whether or not they directly observe or experience the abuse.

Male family violence significantly impacts on women's capacities to parent effectively. When considering the safety of children, it is imperative to recognise and validate the efforts of women trying to protect their children where these are evident. Most women take considerable steps to try to keep their children safe, however this is sometimes not enough to protect a child.

Because of the serious effects of family violence, it is essential that program staff understand the need to notify the child protection service where they believe children are at risk of significant harm.

The child protection service provides child centred family focussed services to protect children and young people from significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect within the family unit and to ensure children and young people receive services to deal with the impact of abuse and neglect. The child protection service works from the principle that the best protection for children is usually achieved within the family. However, if a child's safety at home cannot be guaranteed, child protection must take steps to ensure children are protected. This might involve an application to the Children's Court.

Staff of men's behaviour change programs often have to decide whether to notify to child protection of possible risk issues for children. Most professionals acknowledge that the issues surrounding the notification are not always clear cut and can pose many dilemmas. What is important to remember, however, is that the child's safety, health and development is paramount, and their safety needs to be assessed independent of women's.

Attendance at a men's behaviour change program does not ensure the safety of a man's partner or children. If during group work or individual work with a man who has used violence, program staff have cause to believe a child has been harmed or is likely to be harmed, then they should make a notification to child protection. A report to child protection might also be necessary even if the woman in the relationship is doing her best to protect the child.

When program staff make a notification to child protection, the child protection intake worker will ask them for certain information. This will generally include:

- The child or young person's name, age and address.
- The reasons for believing that the injury or behaviour is the result of abuse or neglect.
- An assessment of immediate danger to the child or children (information may be sought about the whereabouts of the alleged abuser/s).
- A description of the injury or behaviour observed.

- The current whereabouts of the child or young person.
- Any other information about the family.
- Any specific cultural or other details that will help understand the needs of the child, for example Aboriginality, non-English speaking background or disability.

If all the necessary information is not known, a report can still be made. Program staff only need to have 'reasonable grounds' for their belief, not proof that abuse has occurred. If the notification is made in good faith, then program staff cannot be held liable, regardless of the outcome of the notification. The legislation specifically prohibits child protection from disclosing the identify of staff if they make a notification.

Where a family's situation probably does not warrant notification (that is, there is no crisis and no immediate threat or apparent risk), but where there is still some concern about the child's welfare, program staff are encouraged to discuss this with their local community based intake or local child and family support service.

Some program providers have an arrangement with a local child protection worker to meet regularly for secondary consultation about a number of families. Others call their local child protection worker on an as-needed basis. These arrangements can help staff to feel more comfortable about their 'judgement calls' and can also assist child protection workers to develop a better understanding of men's behaviour change work.

NTV strongly believes that potential child protection notifications should be discussed with women. Above all, it is important that women do not feel that they are being punished for men's use of violence.

## Staff wellbeing and safety

Men's behaviour change groups are very different from generic men's support or personal growth groups. Men come to men's behaviour change groups because of their violent and controlling behaviours, and as such, all men's behaviour change work is potentially dangerous.

Safety is paramount in men's behaviour change work and the safety and wellbeing of staff is no less important than that of other people. All staff need to be mindful at all times of the need to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of everyone connected with the program, including students on placement and people conducting research. Their physical and emotional safety from all forms of violence must be considered at all times.

Providers need to have comprehensive occupational health and safety procedures specific to the context of men's behaviour change programs. These should include:

- Informing the local police station about the program, including locations and times that the program is running.
- Speed dial to local police station and emergency services (000).
- Safety protocols for after-hours work, including for procedures for staff leaving the premises after groups and/or at night.
- Multiple exits from rooms in which men's behaviour change groups are run.
- Alarm systems and duress buttons.
- Advising and supporting staff to safeguard personal information (for example, not using surnames, having silent home telephone numbers, having their name suppressed on the Electoral Roll).

Staff need to discuss their own safety with each other and the provider before commencing any men's behaviour change program. The provider must ensure that program staff have sufficient resources and skills to be able to get some sense about whether and how every man who is assessed might endanger staff safety.

Groups must never be run in a private home. Outreach visits for contact with women and children should only take place when staff consider it safe. Preferably, outreach should take place in a neutral environment such as a café or shopping centre.

Emotional safety is also an important aspect of staff wellbeing. The impacts on program staff of working in men's behaviour change can be detrimental to their own lives and relationships, so debriefing and supervision are imperative for all staff.

**< See page 136 for discussion on debriefing and pages 137-138 on supervision >**

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**GPG 36** Providers have documented occupational health and safety procedures specific to the context of men's behaviour change program.

**GPG 37** Providers and staff review staff safety procedures before the commencement of each group program, or every six months where the group is ongoing.

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## Activities in group work

It is important to note that this Manual is not intended as a training resource for group work, as NTV assumes that facilitators will have both experience and advanced skills in group work. NTV encourages facilitators wishing to improve their facilitation skills to participate in appropriate professional development, including observation at other men's behaviour change groups.

As with any group, facilitators need to use a variety of approaches to maximise participation and outcomes. Common activities include:

- Whole-of-group discussion
- Pair-work
- Structured presentations
- Small group discussions
- Videos and audio tapes
- Creative processes such as drawing
- Psychodrama, for example, role plays, 'human sculpture'
- Reading tasks
- Writing exercises, including diaries and journals
- Surveys
- Check-ins.

NTV has no view on what activities are necessary or desirable, however it is imperative that they:

- Focus on violence and control as primary themes
- Focus change processes on the cessation of violent and controlling behaviours as priorities over other potential outcomes, such as personal development.<sup>38</sup>

Where facilitators use check-ins, these should focus on issues concerning male family violence and men's behaviour change rather than general issues in men's lives. Facilitators should curtail discussions that are not related to the work of men's behaviour change and ensure that men who need to discuss other matters are referred appropriately.

**< See pages 38-39 for discussion about on group work in relation to other interventions >**

**< See Resource Manual for overheads and/or handouts about male family violence in an Australian context , and for Bibliography including resources for working with men >**

**MS 42** Men's behaviour change groups focus on violence and control as primary themes. Cessation of violent and controlling behaviour is prioritised over other potential outcomes, such as personal development.

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**GPG 38** Men are referred for counselling from appropriate generalist or specialist services for issues other than their use of violent and controlling behaviours.

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## Addressing collusion, condoning of violence and misogyny

All participants in men's behaviour change programs are likely to attempt to avoid responsibility for their violent behaviour. Typical ways that men try to do this are to:

- Minimise and deny the act or impact of their violence (most commonly by using minimising language, such as 'I only ...', or 'I was drunk/angry/stressed', or denying language such as 'I didn't ...')
- Blame the person they have violated
- Justify their actions
- Blame their past or present circumstances or experiences
- Use jokes or humour
- Selectively disclose facts
- Focus on women's or children's behaviour instead of their own.

They often attempt to get staff, other group participants, and other people in their lives to collude with them in denying their responsibility. Also, they often try to keep their violence secret, present their best side to the world at large, and portray themselves as victims in order to deny further their responsibility.

From the time of assessment, program staff need to be alert to the ways that individual men attempt to avoid responsibility, and take steps to counter these attempts. Facilitators should point out to all men that they cannot change their behaviour without first assuming responsibility for it.

Group culture and norms are extremely important in preventing or addressing collusion and/or condoning of violence and misogyny. Group agreements need to include processes for facilitators and participants to respond to misogyny, and collusion with or minimisation of violent and controlling behaviours within the group. It is important to reinforce to participants that this is not solely the responsibility of facilitators. Indeed, men taking responsibility for identifying and responding to misogyny, collusion and minimisation – whether from others or themselves – is a vital part of the behaviour change process.

**MS 43** Program providers work with specialist services and draw on information about good practice to maximise their inclusiveness for men who are marginalised because of their indigeneity, ethnicity, sexuality or other factors.

**MS 44** Group agreements include processes for facilitators and participants to respond to misogyny and collusion with, or minimisation of, violent and controlling behaviours within the group.

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**GPG 39** All group programs regularly talk about ways that men try to avoid responsibility for their violent and controlling behaviours, including misogyny, objectification of women, denial, justification, blaming others, minimisation, collusion, secrecy, disruption of the group process or portraying themselves as victims.

**GPG 40** Facilitators point out to men when they try to avoid responsibility or collude with others' avoidance of responsibility.

**GPG 41** Facilitators foster a group culture in which men monitor and point out each others' attempts to avoid responsibility or collude with others' avoidance of responsibility.

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## Reflective practice

As with any other form of interpersonal work, the experiences, attitudes, values, communication styles, and lives of staff both inform and are affected by interactions with clients. In men's behaviour change work, program staff have a responsibility to reflect continually on all of these things, and especially on their own experiences of power, gender and intimate relationships.

In facilitating a men's behaviour change group, it is vital to avoid sermonising to participants, or otherwise telling them in a forceful way how they should think, speak or be. Facilitators are in positions of power within men's behaviour change groups, even though they may feel very powerless at times. Power-over approaches are generally considered to be counter to the aims and processes of men's behaviour change groups, except where providers make appropriate responses to men's use of power over others.

There are many inappropriate roles that facilitators might adopt – either consciously or unconsciously – within groups: mate, nurturer, minder, governor or vigilante. In a highly gendered society, it is also very easy for facilitators to take on gendered roles within groups. Commonly in men's behaviour change groups, men take on the role of ally and women, the role of challenger.

Sometimes gendered roles are also adopted outside the group, with women organising refreshments and doing the administrative work such as photocopying, and men being the host of the group (for example, opening and closing group sessions) or being the public face of the provider.

Gendered roles in men's behaviour change programs serve only to reinforce sexual divisions of labour – for participants and staff alike. As such, they are unhelpful to the men's behaviour change process. Fluidity of roles, especially gendered roles, is likely to be much more conducive to men's change, as well as preventive of collusive relationships between facilitators and participants. If gendered roles are evident, these should be understood, negotiated and agreed to by all parties.

Men's behaviour change professionals must be very attentive to their own gendered or power-over ways of relating outside the men's behaviour change group setting. They should take opportunities to champion equal relationships, gender awareness, feminism and non-violent ways of relating, and to live their own lives according to the ideas they espouse.

Dynamics between facilitators are extremely important in men's behaviour change groups, especially where there is a mixed-gender facilitation team. Teams that have a long experience of working together, or who have relationships outside their professional settings, can be seamless in their facilitation. However, there is also a chance in well-established teams that roles become entrenched and/or that team members pay less attention to their team dynamics. On the other hand, new teams can take some time to feel comfortable working together.

Participants in men's behaviour change groups can benefit from witnessing facilitators negotiating roles and challenging each other, and NTV supports men and observers being invited to reflect on the dynamics between facilitators.

Debriefing, supervision and professional development are three important ways that facilitators and other program staff can challenge themselves about their gendered and/or power-over ways of relating. NTV encourages all program staff to challenge themselves and to be attentive to their own and colleagues' needs for support and encouragement.

## Observers

Many program providers welcome observers at men's behaviour change groups. Observers might be Reference Group members, other staff from the provider (for example, women's services), staff from a partner provider, trainee facilitators, other men's behaviour change professionals, students or researchers.

Observers attend a group only to observe; that is, they do not participate in the group in any active way. Sometimes, they are asked to sit outside the circle, and their presence is not acknowledged after an initial introduction. Some providers allow observers to attend for part of a session only; others allow observers to see all aspects of the group, from planning to debriefing. Some providers allow observers to sit in on a single session; others require attendance at a full program.

Providers who welcome observers believe that their presence adds another layer of accountability by inviting some 'public' scrutiny of participants. They also believe that observers are well-placed to provide feedback to facilitators about their practice, which can be especially important in avoiding collusion and minimisation. Some providers give observers a checklist to guide their observation and invite feedback on their work.

For observers, attendance at a group or groups can be helpful in understanding the processes and complexities of men's behaviour change groups. Facilitators attending other groups for professional development purposes find it very helpful in developing new approaches, understandings and techniques.

Many facilitators have reported that there are no appreciable differences in group dynamics due to observers. Some providers doubt this, and are opposed to having observers at their groups. Some are particularly concerned about participants becoming 'a spectacle'.

In addition to direct observation within the group, observation can also be achieved by videoing facilitators or using two-way mirrors.

NTV favours the presence of observers men's behaviour change groups. To ensure safety, confidentiality and appropriate behaviour, NTV believes that:

- Observers must be briefed about the group and the provider's expectations of them before the session
- Observers must participate in debriefing afterwards.
- Observers should be bound by the same confidentiality as facilitators; that is, personal information is confidential but information about men's violence, group process and group outcomes is not.

**< See Resource Manual for induction materials and feedback form for observers >**

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**GPG 42** Providers encourage and support observers to attend their men's behaviour change groups.

**GPG 43** Observers are briefed before the session and participate in debriefing afterwards.

**GPG 44** Observers are bound by the same confidentiality as facilitators.

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## Debriefing

Debriefing is a conversation between facilitators that takes place after a men's behaviour change group session. Debriefing serves four purposes:

- It provides an opportunity for facilitators to reflect on individual or group issues, processes, dynamics and outcomes, including difficulties or achievements.
- It assists with follow-up and continuity of issues raised in each session.
- It helps to ensure timely and appropriate follow-up on issues for individual participants, and women and children.
- It provides a space for facilitators to reflect on and share their experiences of the session, including their dynamics, and any personal or professional issues raised within the session.

Of these, the latter function of debriefing is often neglected.

Group sessions are often held at night and facilitators might be feeling tired, have some distance to travel home or have family responsibilities to attend to. However failure to debrief can have negative consequences including sleeplessness, defences being aroused, stress reactions, anxiety and inattention when driving home after a group.

Debriefing is an important aspect of occupational health and safety, and must be considered an integral part of program delivery. Program providers must allocate time and appropriate remuneration for participation in debriefing, and staff must participate fully.

The length of time taken for debriefing depends on the specific needs of the individuals involved. These vary with their level of experience, so it is not appropriate to set a maximum. However, the importance of debriefing necessitates stipulation of a minimum length of time for debriefing of twenty minutes. For maximal benefit, debriefing should occur at the conclusion of each group session.

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**MS 45** Facilitators debrief for a minimum of twenty minutes at the conclusion of each group session.

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**GPG 45** Processes and the length of time that will be spent debriefing are agreed by facilitators before the beginning of a group program.

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## Supervision

Supervision is a discussion between an individual worker and an appropriately skilled person, for the purpose of reviewing the worker's practice. Practice issues include intervention styles, case specific matters, and personal and political issues arising from the work.

NTV believes that supervision with an appropriately skilled supervisor is imperative for all staff of men's behaviour change programs. The amount of supervision required varies with the level of experience of the individual.

Supervision need not always take the form of face-to-face meetings, although NTV strongly recommends that all program staff have face-to-face supervision at least quarterly. NTV believes that there is also a place for peer or group supervision.

Within the requirements set in the Minimum Standards, NTV encourages program staff to plan their supervision to coincide with strategic points in their program cycle – for example, after two or three sessions, when the group has started to become established and difficulties or challenging practice questions might be emerging.

It is also good practice to have more supervision when a new facilitating partnership is being established.

NTV also encourages regular team meetings to identify and respond to issues as they arise, however this is not supervision.

**< See page 52-53 for discussion and a Minimum Standard for circumstances in which a program has no female facilitators >**

### **MS 46**

Level Two and Three Facilitators, and Contact Workers, have at least monthly, one-on-one supervision, with a Supervisor who meets NTV's criteria for supervisors.

Level One Facilitators have at least fortnightly, one-on-one supervision, with a Supervisor who meets NTV's criteria for supervisors.

Staff undertaking assessments of men have at least monthly, one-on-one supervision, with a Supervisor who meets NTV's criteria for supervisors.

## Issues in monitoring and evaluation

Properly conducted evaluation is essential for the ongoing development and accountability of men's behaviour change programs:

- Providers need information about the quality, costs, challenges and future needs of programs.
- Funding bodies seek evidence that their expenditure meets some demonstrated need and provides value for money.
- The whole community (including women and children who have been violated, women's services, and policy makers) needs evidence that men's behaviour change programs do not exacerbate the effects of family violence.

However, there is ongoing debate about what should be evaluated, what form evaluation should take, and what would be acceptable evaluation measures, instruments and processes.

There are many different aspects of men's behaviour change programs to be monitored and evaluated, and it is helpful to consider each separately:

- The safety of women and children
- The behaviour change of individual men
- The overall impact of a program
- The way a program was delivered.

For the purposes of this discussion:

- Monitoring refers to checking on processes, issues arising and progress towards outcomes in an ongoing and systematic way, and developing appropriate responses as necessary.
- Evaluation refers to all activities at a defined end point, including documenting and reflecting on processes measuring process and ascertaining outcomes.

## Monitoring or evaluating the safety of women and children

Monitoring the safety of women and children is an ongoing responsibility of providers of men's behaviour change program. However, evaluating safety is much more difficult.

Firstly, safety is individually defined. Secondly, 'safer' is a relative term, and each family member's baseline will differ. Thirdly, safety has both felt and actual aspects. That is, a woman might feel safer, but not actually be safer; or vice versa.

Fourthly, and most importantly, safety cannot be predicted for the future. That is, there is no guarantee that any change in an individual man's behaviour will be sustained indefinitely.

A common outcome of men's behaviour change programs is that women have space, support, information or encouragement to leave. Another common outcome is that women feel more supported or confident to assert themselves and/or establish 'ground rules'. In either case, they might feel and/or be safer. But this is not necessarily indicative or reflective of men's own behaviour change. It should also be noted that leaving can sometimes increase danger to women and children.

Despite all these qualifications, women must be invited to comment on their perceptions of safety and their levels of fear before, during and after the group. Questioning women in open-ended ways, with sensitivity to their needs, can provide insights about program quality and efficacy. It is important, however, that any information obtained about safety is cross-referenced with other evaluation indicators in order to obtain an accurate overview.

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**GPG 46** Providers seek women's and children's views about their own safety before, during and six months after men's participation in a men's behaviour change program.

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## Monitoring or evaluating the behaviour change of individual men

Monitoring change in a man's behaviour is difficult. Even if it is assumed that men make changes in their behaviour, over what length of time will these changes be sustained? If a study reveals that a certain group of men were not violent six months after the program, can it be assumed that they will never, ever, use violence again? Whilst there is evidence that men can and do modify their behaviour, research over the longer term demonstrates that it is exceedingly difficult to predict *which* men will sustain positive change, or *for how long*.

Despite these qualifications, there is clearly a need to monitor the behaviour of individual men, and to this end, NTV encourages periodic assessment.

As noted earlier in the discussion on intake assessment, self reports of violent and controlling behaviours by violent and abusive men commonly minimise the amount of violence being experienced by their family members. Also, it is not uncommon to find that women describe more frequent and severe levels of all forms of abuse.<sup>39</sup> Self-reporting tools may focus on physical behaviours and overlook a range of more subtle psychological or controlling forms of violence. Any self-report measures can be easily, though sometimes unconsciously, distorted, and are unreliable when used on a stand alone basis.

Information from women and children is vital in order to assess men's behaviour change and must be incorporated into any monitoring process. NTV believes that program providers or researchers wishing to evaluate changes in men's behaviour should use women's and children's voices as their primary source of data.

Follow-up of women in the medium-term (for example, six months after the conclusion of the program) can provide a valuable way to check their safety needs and gather evaluation data. Information from children is also very valuable, and should be collected if their mother consents. Providers who have pre-existing, positive relationships with women and children are probably best-placed to gain accurate information about men's behaviour change. Generally, the greater the length of time since contact, the more difficult it will be to obtain information.

Perhaps the best assessment of men's behaviour change could be obtained by collating all available information (from direct observation, from family members, and from the man himself) and noting discrepancies or commonalities.

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**GPG 47** Providers monitor the behaviour of individual men on an ongoing basis.

**GPG 48** Providers seek women's and children's views about men's behaviour before, during and six months after their participation in a men's behaviour change group.

**GPG 49** Providers undertake an assessment of the behaviour change of individual men at least every six sessions.

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### **Monitoring or evaluating the overall impact of a program**

Measuring the overall impact of a men's behaviour change program would necessitate collection and analysis of data about a set of participants. This is frequently beyond the scope and skill of providers, however, occasionally providers do collaborate in research processes that include program impact measures.

Generalised impact data rarely conveys the complexities of delivering men's behaviour change programs, and there is a danger that it might be taken to imply rates of 'success' or 'failure' of either participants or a program.

NTV does not discourage providers from quality research about the impacts of men's behaviour change programs, but cautions against simplistic approaches, especially those that do not give primacy to the voices and experiences of women and children.

### **Monitoring or evaluating the way a program was delivered**

Monitoring or evaluating men's behaviour change program delivery is the least problematic aspect of monitoring and evaluation. Although frequently constrained by providers' resources, monitoring and evaluating program delivery should include:

- Inviting participants (women, children, men) in the program to contribute their experiences, ideas, stories, feelings, criticisms or suggestions for change.
- Documenting processes that have occurred.
- Documenting any dilemmas, difficulties or challenges that have been encountered, and how they were responded to.
- Documenting the content of group work.
- Documenting the costs and funding sources of the program.
- Collecting and collating quantitative data (for example, number of men assessed, number of men participating, average period of participation, amount of contact with family members).
- Collecting and collating demographic data about participants in the program and comparing it to local demographic or research findings to try to assess the program's inclusiveness and consistency with other (like) programs.
- Program staff reflecting on their experiences, ideas, stories, feelings, criticisms or suggestions for change.
- Inviting other stakeholders (for example, women's services) to contribute their experiences, ideas, stories, feelings, criticisms or suggestions for change.
- Documenting processes for inclusiveness.
- Documenting action plans for future program delivery.

When inviting and collecting input from family members, men and other stakeholders, providers should be aware of differentials of power, speaking position and experience. It is important to use methods of data collection that are appropriate and sensitive to stakeholders' needs. In the case of data collection from family members, it is especially important to avoid re-traumatisation.

In the interests of shared learning, evaluation reports should be written and published. At a minimum, they should be provided to all members of the program's Reference Group, but consideration should also be given to providing them to all stakeholders, and especially women who have contact with the program.

**MS 47**

Program providers evaluate each program they deliver, drawing on quantitative and qualitative data, including information and feedback collected from participants, women and children, and other stakeholders. The findings of evaluation are reported to all members of the Program Reference Group and are used to inform future program planning and delivery.

## Language of evaluation

NTV strongly discourages providers from using words such as success, effectiveness, progress and completion unless these words are very carefully defined. All these words might be construed to suggest time-limited or linear processes of change, and/or the possibility that men's behaviour change programs operate on a pass or fail basis.

NTV also strongly discourages any conjecture or speculation about a man's future positive behaviour on the basis of his behaviour at any point in time.

## Use of control groups

There are clear ethical dilemmas and safety issues in performing scientific experiments which require the establishment of control groups to determine effectiveness of program delivery. The first responsibility in an evaluation is to protect people from harm. This responsibility is compromised if services are withheld from a group of men in order to create a 'control' or non-treatment group. The ethical issue of likely danger to women and children inherent in such an evaluation design clearly prohibits its use.

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**GPG 50** Providers never participate in research that establishes control groups.

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## Research by people other than program staff

Any research undertaken by third parties (including research by students) must have the approval of a relevant ethics committee. The research proposal and approval must be sighted by the program provider.

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**GPG 51** Any research undertaken by third parties (including students) has the approval of a relevant ethics committee, and the research proposal and approval are sighted by the program provider.

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# Self-regulatory framework for NTV's Minimum Standards

## Overview of the self-regulatory framework

The NTV Management Committee has adopted a self-regulatory framework for upholding its Minimum Standards and quality in men's behaviour change group work. This framework is based on the following principles:

- When monitoring and upholding the Minimum Standards and quality practice, NTV's primary concern is the provision of safe and appropriate programs that are consistent with NTV's philosophy.
- The continuum of responses when providers' practices are not congruent with the Minimum Standards should range from support to become compliant, through to sanction.
- NTV's role as monitor should not be overly surveillant or intrusive upon providers.

In summary:

Compliance with all Minimum Standards will be monitored. These Minimum Standards are based on policies, procedures, and practices that are *imperative* for safe, ethical men's behaviour change work. They represent *the minimum necessary* to ensure that men's participation in behaviour change programs does not further endanger women and children.

All providers of men's behaviour change programs wishing to be members of NTV will be monitored, regardless of whether they are agencies, organisations, businesses, or sole traders.

All programs aimed at facilitating or supporting men's behaviour change, which are run by NTV members, will be monitored, regardless of what they are called.

NTV will monitor compliance with the Minimum Standards via a Membership Review Panel comprising representatives from the Management Committee.

Compliance with the Minimum Standards will be actively monitored on an annual basis, via a survey and Statutory Declaration.

Action when a provider does not comply with the Minimum Standards will range from support to become compliant, through to sanction. A four-step process will be in place when non-compliance is alleged. This will comprise assessment, review, and recommendations. Compliance with the Minimum Standards will continue to be a condition of membership of NTV.

NTV will review its Minimum Standards and Good Practice Guidelines on a triennial basis.



## Rationale for a self-regulatory framework

Men's behaviour change programs are provided by many different agencies and in many different settings. They are facilitated by professionals of diverse backgrounds, disciplines, and theoretical positionings. There are great disparities in the resources available for men's behaviour change work. These differences mean that each men's behaviour change program will be unique.

Whilst respecting and valuing uniqueness, and recognising the importance of continually developing practice, theories and concepts, NTV believes there are some commonalities in the provision of all men's behaviour change programs:

- If not conducted with proper safeguards, they have the potential to jeopardise the safety and wellbeing of women and children.
- If not conducted with proper accountability, they have the potential to reinforce men's use of violence.
- If not conducted within a culture of continuous improvement, they might not meet stakeholders' needs.
- If not conducted transparently, learning might not be shared, and dangerous, preventable mistakes might occur.

In this sense, the context for a Minimum Standards and a Quality Framework in men's behaviour change programs is unique.

Most self-regulating (and indeed statutory regulated) professional bodies in the health field use a process of self-monitoring and self-disclosure. Members sign a statement of intent to comply with the ethics and Standards of the profession, and it is assumed that they do so unless it is proven otherwise.

Given the complexities and inherent risks involved in men's behaviour change work, NTV believes that it is imperative to take a more proactive stance than this. As men's behaviour change is a relatively new field of work, and given the very real risks to safety associated with the work, NTV believes there is a good case for actively monitoring the ways that members uphold the Minimum Standards and responding appropriately if they do not.



## Principles for a self-regulatory framework

The NTV Management Committee has identified the following principles for self-regulation:

- When monitoring and upholding the Minimum Standards and quality practice, our primary concern is the provision of safe and appropriate programs that are consistent with NTV's philosophy.
- The continuum of responses when providers practices are not congruent with the Minimum Standards should range from support through to sanction.
- NTV's role as monitor should not be overly surveillant or intrusive upon providers.

The self-regulatory framework is intended to be:<sup>1</sup>

Accountable. It will meet the needs of members and the broader community.

Transparent. It will be open, clear, and understandable to all stakeholders.

Fair. It will maintain an acceptable balance between protection of the rights of stakeholders, and those of the people and organisations being regulated.

Effective. It will contribute to limiting the potential harm associated with provision of men's behaviour change groups and foster the provision of high quality care.

Efficient. The resources expended and the administrative burden imposed by the regulatory framework will be justified in terms of the benefits.

Flexible. It will be able to respond to emerging issues in a timely manner as the men's behaviour change field evolves.

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1 Based on DHS's Principles guiding the review of regulation of health professions in Victoria, cited in Carlton, A L, 2003, *Regulation of the health professions in Victoria: A Discussion Paper*, Department of Human Services, Melbourne, p. 10.



## NTV's process for monitoring compliance.

### What will be monitored

NTV will monitor members' compliance with all of the Minimum Standards.

The Minimum Standards are applicable to any programs or groups aimed at facilitating or supporting men's behaviour change that are run by NTV members, regardless of what they are called

### Who will be monitored

NTV regards the issue of responsibility as critical. Firstly, fulfilling NTV's Minimum Standards and providing quality men's behaviour change programs requires a comprehensive approach. Secondly, men's behaviour change programs are usually conducted in the name of an entity, and thus, the reputation and good standing of that entity is at stake in its delivery of quality men's behaviour change programs. Thirdly, many aspects of men's behaviour change work are policy or procedural in nature, and are beyond the influence of individual members of staff. Thus providers, not individuals, will be monitored.

The Minimum Standards are applicable for all entities that provide men's behaviour change programs or groups, regardless of whether they are agencies, organisations, businesses, or sole traders.

### Who will monitor

The self-regulatory framework will be administered by NTV through a Membership Review Panel comprising representatives of the NTV Management Committee. The panel must comprise at least one practitioner of men's behaviour change and one representative of a women's family violence service.

### How monitoring will take place

NTV will survey providers annually about their implementation of the Minimum Standards. The survey sheet will be accompanied by a Statutory Declaration, which must be signed by the Chief Executive Officer (or equivalent).

## Responding to a complaint about non-compliance

Any decisions about responding to non-compliance with the Minimum Standards will be made by the NTV Management Committee, informed by recommendations from a Membership Review Panel.

It is the responsibility of the Membership Review Panel to respond – in the first instance – to complaints about non-compliance. In practice, for reasons of functionality, initial enquiries will be undertaken by a representative of the Membership Review Panel (assisted by NTV staff), who will then report to the full panel.

It should be noted that the Minimum Standards are not intended to hamper the development of new and innovative ways of working with men who use violence. There are a range of models and theoretical approaches people can use for behaviour change work. There are also unique situations in some workplaces. Providers may apply to NTV for an exemption if they believe their practice to be safe and effective, even though it does not comply with the Standards.

To ensure that the response process is accountable and consistent:

- Members will be advised in writing of any complaint about non-compliance within fourteen days.
- Members will receive written communication at each step of the process in responding to a complaint about non-compliance.
- The process and findings of all complaints of non-compliance will be documented.



## Steps in the review process

Steps in the review process are:

### 1 Complaint

- a) A complaint regarding a member's compliance with the Minimum Standards may arise from:
  - NTV (in response to information provided by a member in the course of the annual survey)
  - An employee of the member
  - Another member of NTV
  - A male user of the member's program
  - A female user of the member's program
  - An observer of the member's program
  - Any other person with an interest in men's behaviour change work.
- b) Complaints must be lodged on the form provided by NTV for that purpose.
- c) Complaints may be anonymous, however the complainant must be willing and able to substantiate their complaint.

### 2 Assessment

- a) A representative of the Panel will be responsible for checking whether there is non-compliance, by reviewing relevant policies and procedures of the provider, interviewing staff, reviewing the provider's practice based on de-identified case notes, interviewing other stakeholders, including but not limited to, women's services and other human service professionals (as relevant).

### 3 Consideration and action by the Membership Review Panel

- a) The representative of the Membership Review Panel will report to the Membership Review Panel and the complaint will be discussed.
- b) The Panel will review the available evidence and draw upon the professional judgement of its members, current thinking and relevant research.
- c) The member, or a representative of the member, is welcome to put a case to the Membership Review Panel.
- d) The Membership Review Panel will make its decisions in-camera (that is, without observers).
- e) If the Membership Review Panel can find no evidence that a member is not complying with the Minimum Standards, no further action will be required and the member's membership status will stand.
- f) If the Membership Review Panel finds evidence that the provider has a practice that does not comply with the Minimum Standards, options depend on the reasonableness and the potential safety risk of the practice(s) in question.

- g) If the practice in question appears to be reasonable and does not appear to increase risk, the Panel may suggest that the provider apply to the NTV Management Committee for an exemption.
  - h) If the practice in question appears to be unreasonable or potentially risky, the Panel may:
    - Immediately suspend accreditation, pending a decision by the NTV Management Committee OR
    - Grant provisional membership, pending implementation of the Minimum Standards within a specified time frame.
- 4 Step four: Recommendation
- a) The Panel may then make a recommendation to the NTV Management Committee.
- 5 Step five: Action by the NTV Management Committee
- a) The NTV Management Committee may:
    - Accept, refuse, or revoke membership.
    - Grant provisional membership, pending implementation of the Minimum Standards within a specified time frame.
    - Inform other relevant bodies if the matter involves breach of the law or of the professional Standards of another professional body.
  - b) NTV may also publish the names of providers whose membership has been accepted, refused, or revoked (subject to Privacy Legislation), and the basis on which providers' membership has been decided.

At present, the decision of the NTV Management Committee is final. Any entity that has had its membership revoked may reapply for membership when and if it can demonstrate that it complies with all of the Minimum Standards.



## A process for providers to review and improve their existing policies, procedures and practice

Many providers have internal processes for quality improvement and NTV does not propose that these be disregarded or duplicated. It is clear however, that the men's behaviour change field will benefit from greater uniformity in processes to review and improve providers' existing policies, procedures, and practice. This might also have the benefit of assisting NTV to identify factors that affect quality in service delivery.

The Good Practice Guidelines provide a benchmark against which providers may measure their quality. As they are specific to men's behaviour change programs, it is unlikely that they will duplicate providers' internal quality measures.

NTV will not monitor members' adherence to the Good Practice Guidelines, however it does strongly endorse efforts to achieve or exceed them. To that end, this Manual contains a checklist about the Minimum Standards and Good Practice Guidelines that providers may use as a guide to review and improve their existing policies, procedures and practice.

## A process for NTV to review and improve its self-regulatory framework

As the field of men's behaviour change continues to develop, there will no doubt be new thinking, new approaches, and new ways of doing things. The self-regulatory framework, Minimum Standards and Good Practice Guidelines will be subject triennial review.

# Summary of Minimum Standards

## INTRODUCTION TO THE MINIMUM STANDARDS

**MS 1** Responsibility for implementation of NTV's Minimum Standards rests with the governance body of the lead provider.

## RESPONDING TO MALE FAMILY VIOLENCE

**MS 2** Program providers only provide couple therapy or relationship counselling if the woman is willing to participate, does not feel threatened in the counselling situation and feels safe at home. They never provide couple therapy or relationship counselling when the man is still using physical violence or significant levels of controlling behaviour.

## STAFFING MEN'S BEHAVIOUR CHANGE PROGRAMS

**MS 3** For every men's behaviour change group session:

- At least one facilitator is a Level Three Facilitator.
- A second facilitator is at least a Level Two Facilitator.
- Third and subsequent facilitators are at least Level One Facilitators.

Level One Facilitators meet all the following

*Level One criteria:*

- Has a demonstrated understanding of the men's behaviour change process and the gendered nature of male family violence
- Has observed a minimum of 10 men's behaviour change group sessions.

Level Two Facilitators meet all the following

*Level Two criteria:*

- Has a demonstrated understanding of the men's behaviour change process and the gendered nature of male family violence
- Has at least 80 hours of experience facilitating relevant group work
- Has observed a minimum of 10 men's behaviour change group sessions
- Has at least 2 years experience in direct service provision with women in the context of family violence OR in a program that adheres to NTV Minimum Standards (or an equivalent for men's behaviour change). This includes the MRS.

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Level Three Facilitators meet all the following

*Level Three A criteria:*

- Has a demonstrated understanding of the men's behaviour change process and the gendered nature of male family violence
- Has at least 3 years professional experience in counselling
- Has at least 2 years experience facilitating relevant group work
- Has a 4 year degree from a recognised tertiary institution in a relevant discipline (for example, Social Work, Psychology, Psychiatry, Community Welfare, Behavioural Science or Medicine)
- Has at least 100 hours of experience facilitating men's behaviour change groups

*OR Level Three B criteria:*

- Has a demonstrated understanding of the men's behaviour change process and the gendered nature of male family violence
- Has a Graduate Certificate of Social Science (Male Family Violence - Group Facilitation)\*
- Has at least 100 hours of experience facilitating men's behaviour change groups.

\* Or an equivalent men's behaviour change group facilitator qualification from a recognised tertiary or training institution

Note that that the NTV Management Committee may deem a person's experience and qualifications to be equivalent to these criteria.

**MS 4** Contact workers meet all the following

*Contact Worker criteria:*

- Has a demonstrated understanding of the men's behaviour change process and the gendered nature of male family violence
- Has knowledge of the processes and content of the provider's group sessions
- Has observed a minimum of 6 men's behaviour change group sessions
- Has experience in direct service provision with women in the context of family violence OR a Graduate Certificate of Social Science (Male Family Violence - Group Facilitation)\*.

\* Or an equivalent men's behaviour change group facilitator qualification from a recognised tertiary or training institution

Note that that the NTV Management Committee may deem a person's experience and qualifications to be equivalent to these criteria.

- MS 5** Staff undertaking assessments of men:
- Are a Level 3 (A) Facilitator OR
  - Have a Graduate Certificate of Social Science (Male Family Violence - Group Facilitation)\* AND at least 200 hours of experience facilitating men's behaviour change groups.

\* Or an equivalent men's behaviour change group facilitator qualification from a recognised tertiary or training institution

Note that that the NTV Management Committee may deem a person's experience and qualifications to be equivalent to these criteria.

- MS 6** Supervisors of men's behaviour change program staff meet all the following *Supervisor Criteria*:

- Has a Graduate Certificate of Social Science (Male Family Violence - Group Facilitation)\* OR a 4 year degree from a recognised tertiary institution in a relevant discipline (for example, Social Work, Psychology, Psychiatry, Community Welfare, Behavioural Science or Medicine)
- Has relevant and diverse skills in counselling and group work
- Has at least 3 years professional experience in the family violence field
- Has at least 100 hours of experience facilitating men's behaviour change groups
- Has current knowledge of issues in male family violence and the men's behaviour change field.

\* Or an equivalent men's behaviour change group facilitator qualification from a recognised tertiary or training institution

Note that that the NTV Management Committee may deem a person's experience and qualifications to be equivalent to these criteria.

- MS 7** Initial contact is made by a female worker and women are able to have contact solely with female staff if they wish.

- MS 8** Facilitators and contact workers participate in at least four relevant professional development activities each year (of which two are activities conducted by NTV) and keep a log of their professional development activities.

- MS 9** All group programs are facilitated by at least two co-facilitators, one male and one female co-facilitator, unless there are demonstrably exceptional circumstances, in which case, they are facilitated by two male facilitators, both of whom:

- Have at least fortnightly contact with at least one experienced woman worker in peer supervision, individual supervision, telephone supervision (in cases of geographical isolation) or the program's Reference Group AND
- Have their sessions observed (directly or via audio or video tape) by an appropriately experienced female at least monthly.

## PROGRAM PLANNING

- MS 10** Men's behaviour change program providers have a Reference Group that meets at least quarterly. This group comprises representatives of local women's services and as many other relevant service providers as possible.
- MS 11** Programs provide men with access to a minimum of 24 contact hours of men's behaviour change group-work, spread over a minimum of 12 sessions and spaced no more than fortnightly.  
Contact hours do not include time spent on initial assessment or follow-up processes.
- MS 12** Providers emphasise all of the following core messages in all aspects of program promotion and delivery:
- The safety of women and children always comes first.
  - There are many different ways that a man can be violent and controlling. Violence and abusive reactions are controlling of others, even though men might feel 'out of control'.
  - Male family violence has wide-ranging, long-lasting negative effects on those who experience it.
  - Male family violence is never acceptable or excusable, and some forms of violence are illegal.
  - Every man has a choice to use or not use violence.
  - It is each man's responsibility to stop his violence and abuse.
  - Being responsible means giving up using force and power to get what you want.
  - Male family violence has a context in patriarchal attitudes and structures, and the association between masculinity and violence is socially constructed.
  - There is a difference between a feeling and a behaviour, and men have a choice about how to behave when they are experiencing a certain feeling.
  - Responsibility, equality, respect and trust can promote more equal and non-violent relationships.
  - Being aware of others' feelings is important in non-violent ways of relating.
  - Being aware of one's own feelings is important in non-violent ways of relating.
  - Everyone needs to challenge sexism and secrecy about male violence – including within men's behaviour change programs.
  - Women and children are in the best position to judge whether men are behaving in less violent and controlling ways.

**MS 13** Providers help men to develop skills to:

- Identify and challenge any of their ideas, attitudes, beliefs and myths that stand in the way of them taking responsibility for their behaviour in the past, present and future.
- Recognise the many ways that they can be violent and/or controlling.
- Recognise the effects of their violent and controlling behaviour on others.
- Listen to, accept and integrate feedback about their behaviour from women and children.
- Place others' needs and emotions on at least an equal footing to their own.
- Respond to their own and others' strong emotions in non-violent and non-controlling ways.
- Use appropriate non-violent and non-controlling behaviours and ways of relating.
- Manage and use appropriately their feelings of guilt and shame about their violent behaviours, in ways that enable them to take responsibility for their behaviour.
- Prioritise settings and personal relationships (for example, friendships) that support their choice to use non-violent and non-controlling behaviours and ways of relating.
- Enhance and draw upon positive personal qualities such as persistence and openness.
- Identify thoughts, feelings, physiological reactions and behaviours that are part of the 'winding up' process; use strategies to interrupt that process; and use 'winding down' thoughts before using non-violent and non-controlling alternatives.
- Advocate against men's use of violent and controlling behaviours, especially in male-dominated spaces, and challenge the social contexts and conditioning in which these take place.
- Reshape their own masculine identity and sense of manhood so that they are characterised by non-violence. Identify how non-violent and non-controlling behaviour and ways of relating will help them to strengthen their existing positive attributes and become a better person, partner and parent.

## ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

**MS 14** Groups' eligibility requirements include that men must:

- Acknowledge that they have a problem, or at least demonstrate a willingness to consider the possibility of acknowledging their violent behaviour.
- Show a desire, commitment and capacity to attend and participate in the entire program.
- Show a willingness to keep their partner and children safe (or acknowledge their right to be and feel safe, where men do not have contact).
- Agree to program staff having regular contact with any women and children who might be affected by their violent and controlling behaviour.
- Agree to abide by the law, including all the requirements of any legal orders in force.

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- Agree to the provider's policies on limited confidentiality and responding to criminal acts or breaches of court orders.
- Agree to give up their access to guns or other weapons, unless they require them for their livelihood (in which case staff should discuss this safety risk with their partner and incorporate this factor into safety planning).
- Agree to an ongoing evaluation and monitoring of their progress in changing their violent behaviour and attitudes.

**MS 15** All men who enquire about a men's behaviour change program are provided with a Men's Referral Service brochure and encouraged to use the service as a complementary source of support.

**MS 16** Men or women making an enquiry about a men's behaviour change program are contacted by program staff within one week, but preferably within 48 hours.

**MS 17** Intake assessment includes at least one face-to-face interview conducted by an appropriately qualified family violence worker.

**MS 18** At a minimum, assessment covers the man's:

- Current relationship status and relationship history.
- Parenting status.
- History of using all forms of violent and controlling behaviours.
- Capacity for using all forms of violent and controlling behaviours.
- Possession of weapons.
- Legal standing, including current or previous court proceedings or orders, charges or convictions, and any reports required by statutory or other bodies.
- Understanding of the need for change and willingness to change.
- Commitment and ability to attend group sessions.
- Ability to keep women and children safe, particularly in relation to physical violence.
- Acceptance that, throughout the group program, group facilitators will contact women and children who are affected by his violence.
- Willingness to accept the provider's policies regarding limited confidentiality and responding to criminal acts and breaches of court orders.

Any potential barriers to the man's participation are also assessed and managed appropriately.

If women and children affected by the man's violence agree to contact with the program, they are invited to contribute information to the man's assessment.

**MS 19** Program providers have a process to continue to engage and support men, women and children, in circumstances when men cannot enter a group immediately.

**MS 20** Program providers give men, women and children documentation about the rights and responsibilities of all parties.

**MS 21** Participation in the provider's program is contingent upon men signing a contract agreeing to:

- Program staff contacting any women and children affected by their use of violence.
- Limited confidentiality.
- Staff disclosing information about them to statutory bodies as required by law.

Pay fees as set by the provider.

**MS 22** All groups have an agreement about acceptable conduct and behaviour within the group and about the consequences of breaking the agreement.

## ADMINISTRATION

**MS 23** In all record keeping:

- File notes discriminate between fact and interpretation.
- Records never contain speculation about future behaviour.
- Quotes are written down wherever possible.
- Disclosures are attributed to the person who makes them (for example, 'Mr N said ...').

**MS 24** Information that might reasonably be considered to have the potential to jeopardise a person's safety is never recorded.

**MS 25** Women's and children's files are separate to men's files.

**MS 26** Files and notes never leave the provider's premises. They are stored in a secure environment, with access limited only to relevant personnel.

**MS 27** Men are permitted to join a men's behaviour change group only if they have agreed that their personal information will have limited confidentiality.

**MS 28** All conversations between women and program staff, and all information given to staff by women, are kept confidential unless women wish otherwise or unless the circumstances require mandatory reporting.

**MS 29** When providing any information to a court or other statutory body, providers include information about the complexities and uncertainties of men's behaviour change work. They do not:

- Provide any feedback about men that helps them to avoid penalties, or that lessens the strength of a justice or child protection response to their use of violent and controlling behaviour.
- Provide a court or other statutory body with any comments about men's behaviour outside the group, or with timelines for behaviour change or family reunification.



## ACCOUNTABILITY TO FAMILY MEMBERS

- MS 30** Contact with and support of women and children is primarily about their safety and wellbeing.
- MS 31** Men are encouraged to talk about and reflect on the impacts of their violence on women and children. Men are provided with information and evidence about the effects of their violence on women and children, and women's and children's voices have a place in every group session.
- MS 32** Program staff always ask about and respect the wishes of women when they share information about men's behaviour.
- MS 33** Information provided by women and children is shared with men or the group only if they have given explicit permission, and the program staff agree that it is safe to do so.
- MS 34** At minimum, contact workers ask women and children about: Their safety. What information and support they need. Their experiences of the man's behaviour.
- MS 35** Contact workers tell women about:
- Any threats, direct or indirect, to their or their children's safety.
  - The man's attendance and participation in the group.
  - What the group has been talking about.
  - The limitations of groups for men and the possibility that the violence and controlling behaviours might not stop.
  - Their rights, including rights to live in safety, legal protection, support and information.
  - What they, as the provider, will do in the event of a man breaching a court order or committing any act of violence against them or their children.
  - Services and resources that might help them to make decisions for themselves and in their and their children's interests.
  - Any concerns that they have about the wellbeing or safety of their children.
- MS 36** Initial contact with women and children occurs as part of a man's intake assessment, or if this is not possible, before a man attends his first group session.
- Where women and children express interest in being contacted by program staff, additional contact occurs at least:
- After the man's second or third session.
  - Every three or four weeks through the program.
  - When the man leaves the program.
- More or less contact than this is at the discretion of individual women and children.
- Contact arising from specific safety concerns (for example, to advise a woman that her partner has not attended) is imperative and is counted as extra to the schedule of contact outlined above.

**MS 37** Providers make all reasonable attempts to contact any woman who has had an intimate relationship (co-habitation, co-parenting of a dependent child or adolescent, or a sexual relationship) in the last two years with a man wishing to participate in a men's behaviour change group.

Women who currently live with or have recently separated from a man wishing to participate in a men's behaviour change group are sent an introductory letter, followed up by a telephone call.

Women who have been separated from a man wishing to participate in a men's behaviour change group for more than three months are sent a letter inviting them to make contact.

## SAFETY

**MS 38** Program providers have and implement written procedures for:

- Documenting all risk assessments.
- Monitoring threats or risks to safety in an ongoing and systematic way.
- Responding to perceived threats to safety.
- Reviewing critical incidents.
- Responding to criminal acts.
- Notifying relevant authorities of possible risk to children, consistent with the notification pathways of their relevant authority.
- Relevant aspects of the procedures are explained to men, women, and children upon entry to the program, and thereafter as needed.

**MS 39** Program providers assist women and children to make and revise safety plans to cover foreseeable contingencies.

**MS 40** Providers ensure that women and children who do not want to see the man who has violated them are not on the premises at the same time as him, or that if they are, there is no chance that they will encounter each other.

**MS 41** At a minimum, when a participant in a men's behaviour change group commits any act of violent and controlling behaviour, whether reported by the man, a family member or a third party, program providers always have contact with the woman to:

- Revisit her safety plan
- Offer support, or offer to organise support, for her to pursue legal action or to discuss her legal option
- Offer support, or offer to organise support, if she wishes to speak with police
- Discuss whether she wishes to pursue legal action (for example, criminal charges, seeking a court order) against the man
- Discuss any risks to her safety that she or the provider believe could arise from her taking legal action or speaking with police and make changes – as needed – to her safety plan

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- Discuss any other action she would like the provider to take, including when and how often the provider should contact her again
- Discuss any risks to children and action that program staff feel they might need to take regarding a child protection notification
- Report back to her about what has been done in response to the man's act, what further support she can get, and what (if any), further action she needs to take.

## PRACTICE AND PROGRAM DELIVERY

**MS 42** Men's behaviour change groups focus on violence and control as primary themes. Cessation of violent and controlling behaviour is prioritised over other potential outcomes, such as personal development.

**MS 43** Program providers work with specialist services and draw on information about good practice to maximise their inclusiveness for men who are marginalised because of their indigeneity, ethnicity, sexuality or other factors.

**MS 44** Group agreements include processes for facilitators and participants to respond to misogyny and collusion with, or minimisation of, violent and controlling behaviours within the group.

**MS 45** Facilitators debrief for a minimum of twenty minutes at the conclusion of each group session.

**MS 46** Level Two and Three Facilitators, and Contact Workers, have at least monthly, one-on-one supervision, with a Supervisor who meets NTV's criteria for supervisors.

Level One Facilitators have at least fortnightly, one-on-one supervision, with a Supervisor who meets NTV's criteria for supervisors.

Staff undertaking assessments of men have at least monthly, one-on-one supervision, with a Supervisor who meets NTV's criteria for supervisors.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

**MS 47** Program providers evaluate each program they deliver, drawing on quantitative and qualitative data, including information and feedback collected from participants, women and children, and other stakeholders. The findings of evaluation are reported to all members of the Program Reference Group and are used to inform future program planning and delivery.

# Summary of Good Practice Guidelines

## **STAFFING MEN'S BEHAVIOUR CHANGE PROGRAMS**

- GPG 1** Position descriptions and performance appraisals for all staff involved in the provision or management of a men's behaviour change program are informed by the NTV Minimum Standards.
- GPG 2** Providers delegate a staff member to oversee implementation of the NTV Minimum Standards.
- GPG 3** When involving a previous group participant in a men's behaviour change program in an ongoing formal capacity in a group (for example, as a mentor, educator or facilitator), program providers:
- Provide a written role description, including aims, prerequisites and selection criteria for the role; rights and responsibilities of both the participant and the provider; accountability processes; and, scope, limitations and boundaries for the role.
  - Ensure that the man satisfies all of the provider's selection criteria.
  - Provide effective training and induction.
  - Have regular contact with his partner, if he has one (including if he commences a relationship).
  - Involve him in briefing and debriefing for every group session.
  - Provide regular supervision with a professional facilitator.
  - Have a formal contract with him for the provision of his services (whether paid or voluntary). Have a policy on payment/honoraria for volunteers.
  - Conduct an exit interview upon his departure from the program.

## **PROGRAM PLANNING**

- GPG 4** Providers document the theoretical underpinnings of their men's behaviour change program.
- GPG 5** Providers make all reasonable attempts to have contact with their local family violence outreach service, family violence networker, and police at least quarterly.
- GPG 6** Providers attend meetings or other activities of their local family violence network at least quarterly.
- GPG 7** All staff in men's behaviour change programs have access to up-to-date information about services that could be used by men, women and children, including those provided by regional and state-wide providers.

## **ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION**

**GPG 8** Providers offer information about their men's behaviour change program to all local health, welfare, legal and other providers that provide services to women, men, children and families.

This information includes the provider's approach to men's behaviour change; intake and assessment process; processes for accountability to women and children; program structure; statement of rights and responsibilities for male program participants and their family members; and, a clear differentiation between men's behaviour change programs and anger management groups.

**GPG 9** All eligibility criteria have a documented rationale.

**GPG 10** In following up an initial enquiry, staff provide the enquirer with information about what the provider can offer and the timelines and processes for assessment.

**GPG 11** Providers encourage men to make their own bookings for assessment.

**GPG 12** Providers taking a booking for a man from a woman first assess her safety, situation and options before discussing the pros and cons of her making a booking on his behalf.

**GPG 13** Providers accept referrals from other providers or staff outside the program only if the man is involved in the process.

**GPG 14** When a man is returning to a group program after an absence of more than three months, he is re-assessed.

**GPG 15** If a man is not eligible to enter a provider's men's behaviour change program, or decides against joining a group, staff try to assist him to identify and explore other options.

**GPG 16** If a man participates in an intake assessment but is not eligible to enter the provider's men's behaviour change program, or decides against joining the program, staff request his permission to make contact with relevant women and children in order to check on their safety.

**GPG 17** Providers document how they engage with Indigenous communities and individuals in the context of Indigenous family violence.

**GPG 18** Providers who work with Indigenous individuals have regular contact with a relevant Indigenous family violence service for the purposes of secondary consultation and support.

**GPG 19** Engagement with Indigenous communities and individual Indigenous men in the context of Indigenous family violence issues is consistent with the findings and recommendations of the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Task Force.

**GPG 20** Providers :

- Invite representatives from their local Indigenous organisation and Migrant Resource Centre or other relevant ethnic community organisation to participate in their Reference Group.
- Provide information about their men's behaviour change program to local Indigenous and ethnic community workers.
- Provide interpreters for assessment, groups and contact with men's families wherever possible.
- Avoid Anglo-centrism in educational materials by using a variety of cultural settings for scenarios in group work.
- Ensure appropriate referrals for men who have experienced torture or trauma.
- Monitor group dynamics and respond to marginalisation or other forms of exclusion on the basis of race, culture or English language ability.
- Take care to avoid language that implies that male family violence is acceptable in some places or cultures.
- Challenge racism and racist stereotypes from group participants, making it clear that these power-over ways of relating are another form of violent and controlling behaviour.

**GPG 21** Providers document the processes they use to ensure cultural and linguistic inclusiveness.

**GPG 22** Providers never condone or excuse violent or controlling behaviour on the basis of culture or men's experiences.

**GPG 23** To challenge homophobia and be sexually inclusive, providers:

- Provide appropriate referrals, information and resources for men who are in same-sex relationships.
- Have regular contact with a relevant gay men's health worker or counsellor for the purposes of secondary consultation and support.
- Monitor group dynamics and respond to marginalisation or other forms of exclusion.
- Challenge homophobia and homophobic stereotypes from group participants, making it clear that these power-over ways of relating are another form of violent and controlling behaviour.

Providers document the processes they use to ensure sexual inclusiveness.

Providers never condone or excuse violent behaviour on the basis of sexuality or men's experiences.

## **ADMINISTRATION**

- GPG 24** Facilitators who undertake to sign the attendance sheets of legally mandated clients negotiate any further feedback with the mandating provider, bearing in mind Minimum Standard 29.
- GPG 25** Program staff who provide reports to statutory bodies at the request of women take into account the possible implications for their safety now and in the future.  
Upon written requests from women, they can choose to provide information about:
- Anything women have disclosed about their experiences and feel safe to make public.
  - Anything men have disclosed about their violence during assessment and group sessions.
  - Any behaviour or attitudes of men that facilitators have observed in the group.
- GPG 26** Reasonable attempts are made to have further contact with men who drop out of a program.
- GPG 27** Men who are making a planned exit from a program are invited and assisted to develop an exit plan.
- GPG 28** Men are contacted at least once after their departure from a program, to reinforce the importance of maintaining behaviour change, and remind men that the program has a continuing interest in their changed behaviour.
- GPG 29** Women are always notified when a man leaves or drops out of a program.
- GPG 30** Accountability to family members
- GPG 31** Children are included in decision making on an age-appropriate basis.
- GPG 32** Contact workers do not make any comment to family members about any positive changes in the man's behaviour.
- GPG 33** If a provider will no longer provide services to women and children for any reason, staff formulate and implement an exit plan or a handover plan (if another provider is to provide future support) and make all reasonable attempts to conduct an exit interview.

## **SAFETY**

- GPG 34** Providers conduct program activities in places that are safe, well-lit, comfortable, physically accessible, located close to public transport and child-friendly.
- GPG 35** Providers ensure that men's behaviour change groups always start and finish at the designated time.
- GPG 36** In the extraordinary event that a group session is being facilitated by a single facilitator, another staff member is present in the building and within easy reach for the duration of the session, and is aware that the session is being conducted.
- GPG 37** Providers have documented occupational health and safety procedures specific to the context of men's behaviour change program.
- GPG 38** Providers and staff review staff safety procedures before the commencement of each group program, or every six months where the group is ongoing.

## **PRACTICE AND PROGRAM DELIVERY**

- GPG 39** Men are referred for counselling from appropriate generalist or specialist services for issues other than their use of violent and controlling behaviours.
- GPG 40** All group programs regularly talk about ways that men try to avoid responsibility for their violent and controlling behaviours, including misogyny, objectification of women, denial, justification, blaming others, minimisation, collusion, secrecy, disruption of the group process or portraying themselves as victims.
- GPG 41** Facilitators point out to men when they try to avoid responsibility or collude with others' avoidance of responsibility.
- GPG 42** Facilitators foster a group culture in which men monitor and point out each others' attempts to avoid responsibility or collude with others' avoidance of responsibility.
- GPG 43** Providers encourage and support observers to attend their men's behaviour change groups.
- GPG 44** Observers are briefed before the session and participate in debriefing afterwards.
- GPG 45** Observers are bound by the same confidentiality as facilitators.
- GPG 46** Processes and the length of time that will be spent debriefing are agreed by facilitators before the beginning of a group program.



## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

- GPG 47** Providers seek women's and children's views about their own safety before, during and six months after men's participation in a men's behaviour change program.
- GPG 48** Providers monitor the behaviour of individual men on an ongoing basis.
- GPG 49** Providers seek women's and children's views about men's behaviour before, during and six months after their participation in a men's behaviour change group.
- GPG 50** Providers undertake an assessment of the behaviour change of individual men at least every six sessions.
- GPG 51** Providers never participate in research that establishes control groups.
- GPG 52** Any research undertaken by third parties (including students) has the approval of a relevant ethics committee, and the research proposal and approval are sighted by the program provider.

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