



**Monroe County Domestic Violence Coalition
Meeting Minutes
Friday, August 21, 2020**

Mission: The Monroe County Domestic Violence Coalition is committed to improving our community's response to domestic violence issues through communication and coordination of services.

Attending: Catherine Stafford, Larae Powers, Harry Heyer, Christopher De Young , Shannon Bowman-Sarkisian, Peggy Smith, Pam Gladish, Andrea Bennet, Christi Basil, Brit Lawrence, Heather Rae, Lizzy McGrevy, Liz Stauth, Nora McVae, Lynn Keller

City Staff: Michael Shermis (CFRD), Kat Keller (CFRD)

Guest Speaker: Harry Heyer, Director of Abuse Awareness and Accountability, a Batterers Intervention Program in Indiana

Abuse Awareness and Accountability have thirteen different locations and they serve 52 counties in Indiana. AbuseAA is a BIP, a Batterers Intervention Program, certified by the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence. BIP's are victim advocates that work with perpetrators of abuse It is imperative that BIP's are a part of a larger community for stopping domestic violence. BIP's cannot be the only actors. It is important to note that the BIP is a class, not a treatment.

Most states require a court-ordered attendance to a BIP be at minimum 52 weeks. Kentucky, where Harry Heyer is also certified to be a BIP provider, has a minimum of 38 weeks. Indiana's minimum for BIP is 26 weeks, which is the lowest in the nation. Harry has been advocating to the Indiana legislature to raise the minimum to 40 weeks.

Couples counseling is not appropriate intervention for domestic violence and will often put victims at heightened risk because perpetrators can be master manipulators. In a group setting, perpetrators cannot manipulate a whole group using power and control tactics. Domestic violence is not an anger problem, it is coercive power and control behavior. Anger management programs are not appropriate and will also put victims at risk. Domestic violence is systemic terror through direct or indirect control, manipulation and degrading behavior. It is not impulsive behavior, therefore anger management programs are ineffective. Educational groups must be the primary approach.

Anyone who has completed the full 26 weeks can come back and participate in the AbuseAA program for free at any time. Since BIP is a class not a treatment, the program functions well with other treatment programs. AbuseAA in some counties works in conjunction with Centerstone, which offers anger management treatment and anger control therapy in Monroe County.

A question asked was how do we get the State of Indiana to raise the minimum BIP length to 40 weeks? Harry has been working for five years on this issue with little success. Michael asked if the

Coalition could sign on to a letter to the state about raising the minimum limit. Harry said he would get back to us.

Shannon Bowman-Sarkisian wants to know ways to increased education and reduce systemic barriers to that program. Harry shares that communities are often unwilling to face that domestic violence is a pervasive problem that can affect them.

Staff Update:

Again, if you want a stats booklet contact Michael for electronic or a physical copy. The spring conference from last year that was cancelled is looking less and less likely to happen before next Spring.

We are now considering recording these minutes for others who cannot make the meetings. With public comments, we will start recording the meetings next month.

Information Sharing

Elaine Banter shared the ICESAHT annual Sexual Assault & Human Trafficking Conference will be online, virtual, and free to attend. The conference will be on September 21st, and 22nd. Nationally recognized sex trafficker survivor and author Cyntoia Brown Long will be the keynote speaker.

The guest speaker for September is Lynn Keller. She will be talking about victim's advocacy at the Monroe County Prosecutor's office.