

Six Ways Fatherhood Programs Can Successfully Partner with DV Agencies and BIPs

Fatherhood programs that develop strong, functional partnerships with domestic violence (DV) agencies and battering intervention programs (BIPs) can better serve the fathers in their programs and their families. This section offers practices that are conducive to good collaboration among programs.

1 Common vision and principles

When fatherhood programs and DV agencies have overlapping visions and principles centered on better outcomes for all family members, they can more easily create true, functional partnerships. At minimum, fatherhood programs need to be explicit about the crucial need to address and prevent DV in their programs, and DV agencies need to acknowledge the importance of engaging men and fathers when working to end DV.

2 Mutual respect

It is essential that fatherhood programs and DV agencies get to know each other's work and show respect for each other's expertise. When partners establish mutual respect, they are better able to deal with difficult issues and resolve disagreements that may arise.

3 Cross training

Most fatherhood programs and DV agencies have staff who do trainings in the community. It is very important for both fatherhood programs and DV agencies/BIPs to develop tailored trainings for their partners, so that the partners can better understand each other's fields, areas of expertise, and available services. Targeted cross trainings can greatly benefit fatherhood programs and DV agencies or BIPs, even if they do not have a formal collaboration.

4 Ongoing, open communication

Successful partnerships often involve regular, frank communication between agencies. This can include standing meetings or ad-hoc exchanges. Consider focusing communication on general topics and not specific cases, as the latter requires a signed release of information from the program participants.

5 Cross referrals

Outcomes for fathers and their families can improve when there is sufficient trust between agencies to create an effective process for referrals. Referrals work best when working relationships exist among practitioners from various agencies who have important knowledge of the services available for the fathers. The use of "warm" referrals is recommended whenever possible; that is, practitioners should connect fathers directly to someone from a partner agency rather than only giving fathers the contact information of the agency or the person.

6 Collaboration on developing programming, protocols, and consultation on cases

A deeper level of partnership among agencies can involve seeking shared funding to collaborate on developing and delivering education materials, creating and revising protocols, and conferring about specific cases (including developing a release of information process). This collaboration applies both to DV agencies that serve survivors and battering intervention programs.