

February 14, 2018

Letter of Support,

Currently my non-profit Mobile Counseling in partnership with NEK Counseling of Newport, VT and others co-facilitates within three counties of Vermont the Batterer Intervention Program (BIP). We work closely with probation and parole in Morrisville, St. Johnsbury and Newport Vermont in running the 27 week program for each participant. As you know these group participants are required to complete this program as part of a condition of release for varying domestic assault convictions. They are primarily male (although there have been a few females) with most also recovering from their own substance use and abuse issues which typically contributed to some of their abusive behaviors.

I believe we are one of only a few in this state that has been entrusted with the responsibility to reach and teach these men. As you know we use the framework of the Power and Control/Equality Wheels (Duluth, Minnesota Model) as part of our program and it is our hope that their take-away is healthy alternative behaviors when responding to future conflict in their lives. However, there is currently absolutely NO funding from the State of Vermont for this programming. It lies entirely on the backs of these men who must pay for each group. This program is considered psycho-educational thus not qualifying for insurance reimbursement. Their inability to pay and/or absences as a result of having to choose between personal expenses such as rent, food or transportation has consequences whereby they may be violated and sent back to jail and NOT finish the program.

It is my hope that your support would impact group participants in hopes of successful program completion. Currently we administer this program once a week for 1.5 hours to 6 open groups of approximately 8 men in three counties in Vermont. Each man contributes \$35 at each group totaling \$945.00 per group member (not including \$50 intake). Understandably, for some in this rural area of Vermont it means having to choose between food, transportation and sometimes child support which can be a large barrier to participation in these necessary programs. At approximately 48 group members twice a year (every 6 months) the cost could be between \$3360 for one class or \$6720 for two classes.

These 6 open groups have been operating through NEK Counseling since approximately 2014 growing from one group of 8 individuals for 27 weeks to over 48 individuals for 27 weeks. This puts the total number of individuals well above 150 that have successfully completed and that have been reported to the State of Vermont Domestic Violence Task Force. Recently we have been asked to consider this work in Essex County. I hope to see this very needed program continue and contribute to the well-being of communities where these individuals reside.

While Vermont is successful in advocating for the needs and rights as victims advocates of domestic abuse we need to look at how to work with the other half of our population in Vermont. If these programs are to work we should set up the male participants for success with these programs rather than them having to choose between these programs and basic living needs. After all these men may just be YOUR brothers, uncles, fathers, sons, co-workers, employers, neighbors, etc. How will THEY teach the next generation of men if we DON'T teach them because they can't afford the program? Funding to keep the hope alive for the half of the population in need of learning alternative behaviors to violence is needed NOW!

Thank you.

Tina M. Tarryk