

## Nonviolent Alternatives Policy and Procedure Manual

### Policy on Reporting Client Progress

Operating an abuse program has some unique characteristics and requirements out of concerns for victim safety. Generally, by policy we do not offer opinions on a client's progress. This is because people who are abusive to themselves or others are very skilled at manipulation and control. If they learn that we can express opinions to benefit their situation or minimize the consequences of their actions, they are no longer authentic in their participation in class. They will manipulate us with false information and impressions in order to get us to manipulate others to their advantage. As it is now, our clients know that we only report objective compliance to the program rules and attendance. They know there is no benefit for them to come in and "tell us what we want to hear" in order to get us to send a positive progress report. Thus the program has more therapeutic value and accountability to the safety of victims.

As a Certified Batterer Intervention Program, we are actually advocates for victims of violence who work with the perpetrators of the violence. In order to maintain certification of our program with the Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (ICADV), we have demonstrated that we practice according to policies and procedures that have been reviewed to ensure compliance with the ICADV Standards. When developing the standards, the ICADV Batterer Intervention Program Standards Committee saw it as a problem that abusers can use attendance and completion of counseling as leverage in legal struggles with victims. (Custody disputes, etc.) That's why all reports from ICADV certified programs must include a disclaimer stating, *"Program completion is not predictive of future nonviolence or nonabusive behaviors."*

Our program policy is to report only compliance or non-compliance with program requirements and attendance. To be perfectly honest, we really have no way of knowing a client's true progress. There are 168 hours in a week and we see the participant only 1.5 hours, one time per week, in a class of up to 20 or more clients. Our philosophy is that for us to offer a non-objective opinion of progress generally endangers victims. Many times clients participate in class as if "they are really getting it" only to have staff receive a phone call the next day from the client's spouse (or someone else) because they want us to know the client is still being abusive.

Case Managers, Case Workers, Shelter Advocates, and others, likely interact with our client and their family much more than Nonviolent Alternatives' staff. They are in a much better position than we are to judge how a client is progressing. We provide a computer database generated "Status Report" to notify referral sources when a client enrolls or when they complete the program. A "Monthly Status Update" is also sent automatically on the first Saturday after the end of every month. An "Incident Report" is generated whenever a client is administratively discharged due to violation of the terms of the enrollment agreement, including failure to comply with attendance requirements. Status Reports, Monthly Status Updates, and Incident Reports list all client activity. They clearly show if the client has put forth an effort to attend every week without absences. It is also noted whenever a client has been disruptive in class. Status Reports are sent every Saturday. Incident Reports are sent within 24 hours of a client being discharged unsuccessful.