



## Responding to Perpetrators

### For safety, accountability, and change.

Health and peace cannot be restored to a violent relationship unless the abusive person takes responsibility for the abuse and changes his or her behavior. Friends, family members, faith communities, and other concerned members of the community can encourage this process by holding batterers completely responsible for their behavior. The following information may help increase understanding of battering and the potential for change:

#### About batterers:

- ▽ Battering is a learned patterned behavior; it is not an impulse or an instinct that can not be controlled. Batterers often say they are “out of control,” but really they are being controlling.
- ▽ Using violence to control someone else – whether it is physical, emotional, or sexual – is always a choice that a person makes.
- ▽ Batterers need to take responsibility for the choice they make in their own behavior.
- ▽ There is no excuse for using violence.
- ▽ Violent behavior is learned from and supported by our society that often believes “might makes right.”
- ▽ Although praying can be an effective healing modality, it may not change behavior. It may also support the batterer’s position that the victim is not capable of doing anything for herself.
- ▽ Couple’s counseling is inappropriate for violent relationships. Couple’s counseling works to support both individuals in their growth process, but in a domestic violence relationship there is a power imbalance. Victims are unlikely to feel

safe speaking openly with the batterer present, and they may be “punished” later for what they do reveal. Couple’s counseling is also unlikely to teach batterers that they are responsible for their abusive actions regardless of relationship problems or external forces.

▽ Couple’s counseling may be appropriate after the batterer has attended a Batterer Intervention Program and violence has completely ceased.

#### Intervention:

Batterers Intervention Programs (BIPs) attempt to change battering behavior by educating batterers about the choices that they make and by holding batterers accountable for their choices. The goal of these programs is to end the use of violent behavior. Priority is given to maintaining victim safety. Certified BIPs work in collaboration with other community agencies such as Domestic Violence Programs, law enforcement and the criminal justice system. Unlike anger management programs, BIPs do not work under the assumption that managing anger will end violent behavior. Battering behavior is a learned and chosen behavior that is illegal and inexcusable, used to control another’s behavior. It is not simply a response to being angry. Therefore, BIPs are longer than anger management programs and include additional elements, such as fees, to hold batterers accountable.

To find the BIP nearest you, call your local Domestic Violence Program or the Virginia Family Violence and Sexual Assault Hotline (1.800.838.8238 v/tty).

