

**Utilization of Video Conference Software (VCS) for Men's BIPs**

**Experience, Research to date and COVID-19 Considerations**

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**Introductions**

**Melissa Petrangelo Scala, MPA**

- Pathways to Family Peace
- Global Rights for Women

**Jon Heath**

- Pathways to Family Peace
- Global Rights for Women

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**Introduction**

- Grew up in rural America and had been doing groups for 20 years.
- Knew that men were driving far – up to 2 hours one way
- Was using GoToMeeting for international work with Global Rights for Women
- Reached out to others and put it on Aquila list serve

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### VCS for BIP

- Other agencies talked about the "pros and cons" but few tried it. Many talked themselves out of it until COVID-19 shut down their agencies.
- Speculation for the "cons" was just that – speculation
- Knew of low quality court-ordered classes on-line
- We wanted to try it, be transparent,
- put in safeguards for women who were battered and
- have a researcher as part of the pilot.

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### VCS for BIP

- Researcher and assistant: Professor Nicole Westmarlad and Rosie Bellini of the University of Durham in England
- Professor Nicole Westmarland also co-authored the Project Mirabal study related to BIPs
- They have volunteered as researchers

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### Comparison and Referrals

- Criminal court referrals from judges and probation
- Sought to get referrals from Minnesota, Maine, and Texas but initially only Minnesota was approved
- Now we receive referrals from Minnesota and a few other states
- Developed fillable form for use by referral agency and men to fill out
- Men fill out form and e-mail it back and then intake interview is scheduled
- All communication done by e-mail

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### INTAKE INTERVIEW

- Intake Interview done individually with one man at a time to assess his readiness for group – personally and ease with use of technology
- Conduct demonstration of GoToMeeting framework
- Reiterate NO use of cell phones or cellular network
- Review rules and technology requirements
- Make contact with local victim agency and victim of offender

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### GROUP PROCESS

- The Duluth Model's curriculum "Creating a Process of Change for Men Who Batter"
- Co-facilitation of man and woman
- Facilitators and men can log in from anywhere
  - Travel abroad for work
  - Men who travel
- "Share Screen" function for use of whiteboard
- End with reflection question and send via e-mail and have men answer by the start of group the next week

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### Advantages of VCS BIPs

- More communication with men in-between groups
- Everything is documented in writing
- No absences for a cold and mild illness because you cannot get others sick
- Smaller groups
- Less weather interruptions of group
- Men and facilitators can log in from anywhere which means less absences from facilitators also

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### Disadvantages of VCS BIPs

- Smaller groups – takes more capacity of an organization
- Men could be drinking alcohol or taking drugs during or prior to group
- Harder to do small group work with the men
- Videos and audio can have a slight delay
- Data security and privacy
- Men who do not have the internet in their home have to find a private place to participate
  - Cook County, MN set up a room in their Health & Human Services building for the men to come to connect because they do not have internet at home
  - Local libraries
- Men who do not have a computer or iPad cannot participate
  - Carlton County, MN purchased 10 iPads for their men to use just for this purpose

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### Lessons Learned and “the Unexpected”

- Confirm that the e-mail the man is using is only used by him
- Men who light up a cigarette during group
- The family dog sits with the man
- Communicate that the men must sit still while participating in group
  - Make your coffee before group
  - Go to the bathroom before group
  - Be fully clothed – including pants!
  - Men cannot be doing childcare during the group unless the child is an infant and not disruptive to the group process
- Woman came and listened by the door of his room

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### The future of VCS

- Waiting for final research document to be completed by researchers
- VCS groups fill the gaps of rural and geographically isolated areas
- Precautions need to be taken to assure victim safety
- Where the men do the groups from matters

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### Considerations during COVID-19 pandemic

- Interviewed five women in March 2020 about their thoughts and concerns about doing videoconference men's group during COVID-19.
- They all strongly cautioned to not do it with men who are currently living with a partner who has used violence against them unless you can verify she will not be home during the group process.
- All concerned about the threats and harm to the children who may be home now because not in school.
- The "closer access" he has to women and children immediately after group the more worried they were. "If he leaves group feeling bad he will take it out on us. At least with in-person group he has the drive home to chill out."
- Some women felt it was better to give him a break right now from group because of concerns of money, and other women felt like it is best to keep it going.
- All women cautioned programs from making contact with them during this time over the phone because women are more likely near him.

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### Initial Lessons from Researchers

Summary document from:

- Professor Nicole Westmarland
- Rosanna "Rosie" Bellini, PhD Researcher

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### Overview of Research

**Researchers:**

- observed 25 VCS sessions,
- interviewed four facilitators from two VCS groups,
- Interviewed five men who attended one of the VCS programs,
- Ethical approval was granted by Durham University Department of Sociology, and
- Have transcribed all interviews, were transcribed and we are in the process of analyzing these thematically.

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**Draft Adaptation**

- The European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence (WWP EN)
- Pathways to Family Peace
- Global Rights for Women
- Family Violence Project

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**Draft Adaptation**

- Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Violence during COVID-19
- In general, there are three options for your perpetrator program during COVID-19:
  - 1) Stop all services;
  - 2) Offer crisis management services; or
  - 3) Modify behavior change programming (batterers intervention program)

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**Draft Adaptation**

- Contact a diverse and representative group of victims and advocates for their input as a basis for making any significant changes to policy or practice of your perpetrator programming during COVID-19.
- Victims who give input should not be the victims of the men in the perpetrator program but victims who have had distance of time from their crisis situation. They are able to look back on and reflect and provide useful information to the perpetrator program. Consider financially compensating victims for their time when giving feedback and input on your perpetrator programming. Pathways to Family Peace provided \$50 compensation to each victim who provided feedback on perpetrator programs during COVID-19.
- The risk factors for lethality of domestic violence do not change because of COVID-19. However, the circumstances that perpetrators and victims of domestic violence are all living in might change the outcome of the assessment. - Scott Miller, Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs "the Duluth Model"

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**CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHOOSING INTERVENTION OPTIONS**

- 1) Voluntary participation
- 2) Capacity to participate
- 3) Living situation
- 4) Level of risk for lethality and dangerousness for domestic violence during COVID-19
- 5) Options provided by the perpetrator program
- 6) Crisis level for COVID-19 in your community

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**POSSIBLE INTERVENTION OPTIONS**

- A) Individual weekly support via phone/VCS for Crisis Management
- AA) Individual weekly contact via phone/VCS for adapted behavior change programming
- BB) Intensive individual contact for adapted behavior change programming via phone/Skype for high risk cases
- C) Group format via videoconference software (Skype, Zoom, GoToMeeting, etc.) for Crisis Management and Support
- CC) Group format via videoconference software (Skype, Zoom, GoToMeeting, etc.) for adapted behavior change perpetrator program
- D) Partner8 support – Guidelines

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**MANDATED GROUP INTERVENTION FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE USED FORCE**

- o Do not take guidelines for male groups and use for women's groups
- o Consideration for Women Participating in Mandated Groups during COVID-19:
- o We recommend that agencies do not offer virtual videoconference groups for women mandated to services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, we recommend programs consider brief, weekly facilitator-client check-ins via phone and/or text message. Brief check-ins will provide women with additional resources for safety and support during the COVID-19 pandemic rather than placing them at additional risk of harm. These recommendations are temporary measures to meet the group member needs during the COVID-19 crisis.

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