

The service needs of women mandated to a domestic violence treatment program

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Objectives

- Identify the population of women that the Women's Adult DV Program comprises
- Understand the choice to focus DV counseling on a psycho-ed basis instead of on trauma
- Understand the voice of women mandated to DV counselling by CFS
- Explore policy implications of the findings

Overview

- Relevance of the research
- The transition from a Trauma-based program to a psycho-ed program
- Qualitative research of mandated women's voices
- New direction of women's DV counseling at YWCA

Introduction: History

- The YWCA Sheriff King Home Women's Program:
 - Began group in 1993
 - Response to the men's group counseling program
 - Philosophy
 - Structure: 2-phase, 24 week pgm, then 18-wk pgm ('99), 14-wk pgm ('08)

Introduction: Research Relevance

- With ubiquitous evidence that exposure to DV affects children, countries (Can, US, UK) incorporated child protection policy (Nixon, Tutty, Weaver-Dunlop, & Walsh, 2007)
 - CFS mandates women to attend DV counselling when their child was exposed
 - Many of these clients may not yet see the need to understand abuse or resolve trauma
- What impact does mandating women to group have?

The Trauma Emphasis

- Implemented in approx. 2002
- Trauma's affects the brain, & PTSD
- Trauma Interventions
 - Understand abuse: Power & Control (Duluth)
 - Focus on self (esteem/care, relaxation, safety, self-regulation, recovering Self, empowerment)
 - Understanding shame, trauma, healing, change

Numbers

- From 2002-2004:
 - **906** clients - **435** completed phase I
 - **52% drop-out**
 - **906** clients - **221** completed both phase I & II
 - **76% drop-out**
 - Trauma Scores (IES: clinical elevation = 25-40)
 - Pre: M= 15i & 17a Low levels of trauma
 - Post: M= 11i & 14a sig @ $p < .001$

- The women seeking our treatment program were not identifying as traumatized

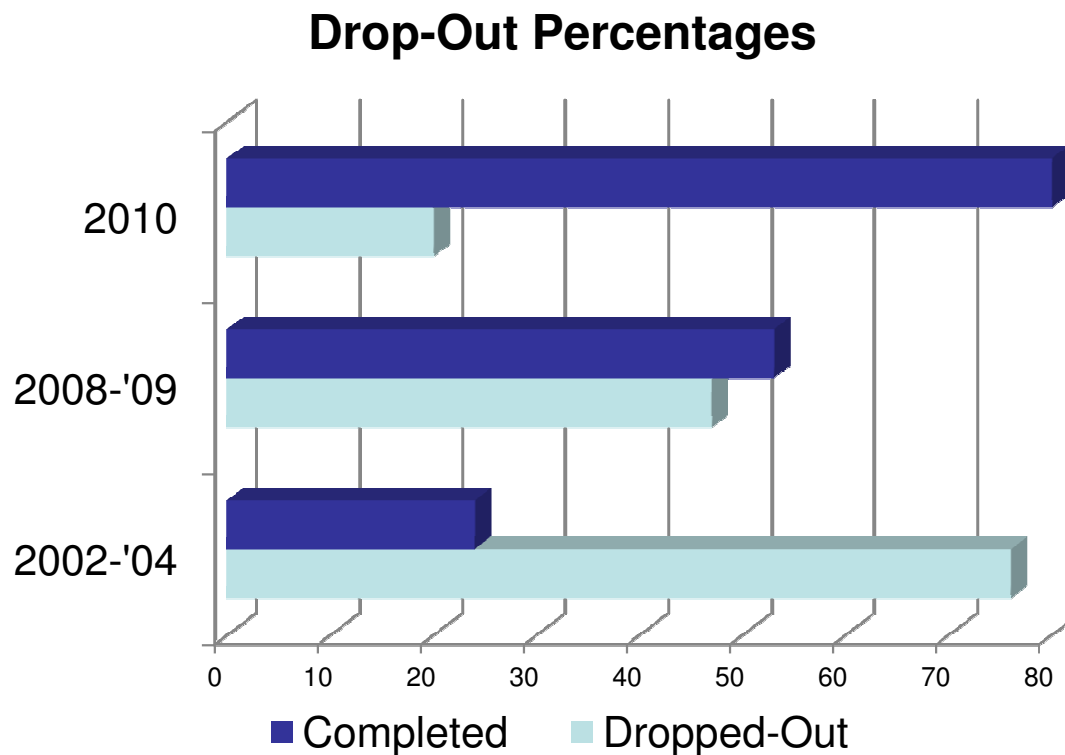
- Many are being “recommended” or mandated by CFS
 - CFS mandate: understand abuse and its effects; child & personal safety

Changing Population:

Growing Proportion of CFS Referrals

	Self %	CFS %
2004	77	11
2008	40	50
2010	32	55

Completion Numbers



Program Restructuring: Transition out of Trauma-Focus

- Population a mix of abused women and women in “domestic abuse relationships”
- Trauma-focus optimal for a subset of clients
 - not all clients were ready to do this in a group format
- The work remains Trauma-Informed
 - Understanding/identifying abuse
 - Understanding the impact & effects
 - Keeping self and children safe from exposure
 - Substance Abuse
 - Self-esteem, self-care, self-regulation (thinking, emotions, behavior)

Research: Methodology

- Participants
 - 8 women, mandated by CFS to DV counseling
 - 5 women's children apprehended
 - Children aged 3 mo – 13 yr
- Semi-structured interview guide
- Qualitative analysis:
 - Constant Comparative Method (Coleman & Unrau, '05)

Research: Findings

- Women experienced both physical and emotional abuse
 - Children exposed to the abuse
- Some women described abusing their partners (some self-defense, some “mean” and vengeful acts)
- Most women described the program positively

Research: Findings

- *“He told me...he was gonna hang me. He was gonna hang the kids and then hang him and me.”*
- *“Telling me I’m crazy, that I need help, checking my text messages.”*
- *“He grabbed me by the neck; he kept on punching me... the face, my neck, and my shoulder.”*
- *“I was afraid he was going to kill me.”*
- *“[My daughter] was in my arms.”*
- *“I just don’t want [my son] to remember it.”*
- *“While he was on top of me, I pinched underneath his arm to get him off.”*
- *“There were some physical things that I did to him to protect myself.”*
- *“I was very aggressive in the way I communicated; I’ve done some work on it.”*
- *“You have to understand your own behaviors before you can understand somebody else’s.”*
- *“It made me understand that there was abuse back in my childhood.”*

Implications

- Reactions to CFS involvement:
 - Depressed, upset, couldn't sleep, scared, angry
- Positive response to program:
 - “I found it helpful to have women who related to me.”

The question is: how can we best uphold the learning/therapeutic criteria laid out by the referring agent, while honoring victim vulnerability?

Implications

- Avenues for improvement:
 - Preparatory Sessions
 - A group for CFS mandated women
 - Substance abuse & DV program
 - “It escalates when you drink and then you blow up and start fighting”
 - Policies regarding Partner’s attendance
 - Both parents need to be consistently mandated, as on going contact is common

References

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