



European
Commission

Good practices for tackling domestic violence in the context of COVID-19

Webinar, 19th of May 2020

Working with perpetrators of domestic violence in the context of COVID-19

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Justice

Basic information

- Association for Nonviolent Communication is an NGO working with perpetrators of VAWG in Slovenia
- we provide services for the victims as well
- established in 1996, 35 employees, 60 volunteers
- 700 perpetrators per year, most referred
- 700-900 victims per year
- members of WWP EN, WAVE, EWL

Programmes for perpetrators

- Training of Social Skills for Perpetrators of VAW
- Training of Parental Skills (incl. women)
- Caring Dads groups
- Group for Teenage boys
- Individual counselling (incl. women)

Guidelines during lockdown

- https://www.work-with-perpetrators.eu/fileadmin/WWP_Network/redakteure/Resources/COVID_19/20200406_Guidelines_final.pdf
- <https://www.caringdads.org/news/2020/3/30/caring-dads-and-the-covid19-pandemic>

Implemented changes

- Individual work with new referrals
- Groups via Zoom
- Check in phone calls and texts
- Phone and video counselling

Why work with perpetrators had to change

- Change of long term patterns of behaviour is not a realistic goal during crisis.
- Risks that women and children are dealing with right now are not necessarily the same as the ones that they faced before.
- Note: some victims have expressed concern about online groups (perpetrators being triggered, children overhearing discussions and the potential stress to victims overhearing perpetrators engage in minimization, denial and blame).

Groups online

- Goals during lockdown:
 - reduce the risk of violence
 - decrease perpetrators level of stress and emotional arousal
 - increase coping mechanism for perpetrators
 - mitigate increased risk factors in families forced into lockdown
 - indirectly mitigate the effects of violence on family members
 - as much as possible and safe, coordinate with victim support services.
- Interventions are based on providing support, facilitating emotional release and increasing coping skills.

New format and rules

- Groups on Zoom have a different format and rules than regular groups.
- Due to privacy concerns (living together and having other people possibly overhearing conversation) the sharing is limited and nobody is required to contribute.
- The content and discussion in the groups is limited to catching up with each other in a supportive way and making sure everybody is ok and healthy.
- The check-in on violence is limited, concerns are dealt with individually (no confrontation).

Check in phone calls

- In situations of higher risk, a more intensive approach is necessary.
- Focus on managing crisis:
 - Make a connection so the perpetrator has someone to reach out to.
 - Ask questions to assess and monitor perpetrator's risk to their families. This includes thinking about recent and current stressors that perpetrators and their families are facing.
 - Provide practical support to help manage immediate stress (complete forms, look for information...).
 - Help them understand their risk to others and to counter this with prosocial desires such as being a good father, keeping their relationship, avoiding arrest, etc.
 - Encourage collaboration with other social service providers to manage and reduce dynamic risk.

Lessons learned

- With a lot of proactive work we only lost contact with 5% of perpetrators in our programmes.
- Teenagers prefer meetings online and participate better this way.
- Perpetrators resisted check in phone calls in the beginning but most start to cooperate after a few weeks.
- Zoom groups are especially well accepted by commuting perpetrators.
- Perpetrators with poor computer skills have difficulty getting on Zoom. Some perpetrators do not have a computer or a smart phone and can't participate in online groups.
- Popular topics: custody and contacts during lockdown, financial difficulties, suicide, parenting, school work with children, loss of employment.

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