

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTORIA PRACTICE DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

MEETING HELD: 10th December 2007

SUMMARY OF ISSUES RAISED AND DISCUSSED

1. Changes, issues and requirements within the family violence field.

Workers are noticing fewer vacancies in THMs which means that women are forced to stay longer in refuge. This, in turn, results in fewer vacancies for women requiring refuge.

2. DV Vic Practice Development Network Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference were reviewed and some alterations made. Please see attachment for the final version of the Terms of Reference for the DV Vic Practice Development Network.

3. Employing reflective practice in the family violence field:

Reviewing your work, your learning and your development in 2007 & planning for 2008.

a) Thinking back over the past year, what type of work has been the most challenging for you? Eg. challenging in terms of the skills you have needed to use; the nature of the issues you (and women) have faced; your attitudes and values that may have been confronted.

- Homelessness issues
- Complex needs such as A & D, mental health. Workers have needed to become more knowledgeable, to expand their networks for information and consultation about these needs. Need to find a balance between women with complex needs and other women; eg. Women with children.

- Workers aim to provide a range of practical supports and information (eg. Legal, health) for women, but women often only want housing; referrers often only emphasize housing. How can workers provide a holistic, comprehensive response?
- Support periods seem to be shorter than in the past. This leads to pressure on workers. Sometimes there are limited choices for women; conflict with feminist perspectives
- The anxiety and frustration experienced by women who feel they are not moving quickly enough out of refuge and into other accommodation.
- Educating other workers outside the sector about what is involved in family violence work and the role of dv workers
- Importance of documenting everything in order to achieve solid and improving practice, but also to ensure that stakeholders and those outside the family violence sector have clear information about actions taken. Document, for example, case plans, decisions made, exit planning, etc.
- In some instances, reframing what the service provides; eg. Crisis accommodation and high security, not high support.
- Working from strength based, feminist perspective with self determination as a key component.

b) *In what area of your practice do you think you have developed in the past year? Eg. your skills (eg communication, advocacy, negotiation, counselling, report writing); your understanding of the links between theory and your practice; your understanding and analysis of the dynamics of family violence; your use of the DV Vic Code of Practice.*

- Planning and assessing rather than reacting and responding automatically.
- Negotiation with other services and with women.
- Contracting with women; this also enables thorough assessment and the establishment of priorities.

- Networking with other agencies; eg. Police, outreach.
- Being assertive and saying 'No' to some clients; eg. The service/worker can't provide a particular activity, how might you do this yourself?
Saying 'No' to other agencies.
- Inviting Child Protection and Police to staff meetings for example – educating them about what the refuge does and how it works.
- Linking policies and procedures to the DV Vic Code of Practice
- Case work professional development and case work variety for workers.
- Accreditation and continuous quality improvement
- Responding to security issues; attempting to prevent situations that may escalate into security issues. Eg. By assessing and observing women, speaking with them ahead of time to problem solve and work out what they might do and to encourage them to think through consequences (an example being a woman's plan to have contact with the perpetrator of the violence). Open communication is vital.

c) *In what ways has the reflective practice framework assisted you in your work?*

- Group supervision
- Critical incidents
- Always a useful process
- The time spent in reflective practice enables workers to feel supported, able to get on with other work
- Debriefing
- Critical reflection – 2 workers present a scenario each month; questions are asked to enable reflection and learning in a safe environment
- Individual supervision with Manager; eg uncertain situations, decision making, action plans, consequences, thoughts and feelings.
- Workers' meetings; aim to provide more structure for this in 2008
- Raises awareness of what you do.

d) *What areas of your practice would you like to concentrate on developing further in 2008? How might you do this?*

- Case notes
- Family Law information/training
- SAAP training; eg. Mental health, medications
- Drug and alcohol training
- Supervision
- Peer support
- External supervision

4. Next Practice Development Network meeting dates:

I am currently confirming dates and venues and will e-mail these details to you all shortly.

An agenda will be circulated prior to the next Practice Development Network meeting. **Feel free to contact me on 9921 0821 or debwestern@dvvic.org.au to contribute items for discussion.**

Deb Western

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