Vermont Domestic Violence Accountability Programs
Values-Based Standards

1. Centering Survivor Voices and Experiences

Survivor voices and experiences must be at the center of domestic violence accountability programming because survivor safety is tied to accountability for persons who cause harm through intimate partner violence. In seeking safety for survivors, they should be listened to, believed, and supported in determining what is best for them and their family. Mechanisms must be developed to ensure that programs collaborate with victim advocates, inform survivors about programming in their communities, allow space for survivors to be involved in the process and provide feedback and insight on their needs, if desired, and develop opportunities for survivors to be leaders in the community.

2. Personal, Community, and System Accountability and Support

Ending domestic violence requires accountability and support on the individual, community, and system level. DVAPs should encourage people who cause harm through intimate partner violence to acknowledge and take active responsibility for the harm they inflicted upon survivors and their children and ultimately change their behavior. DVAPs should also acknowledge that having one’s basic needs met and addressing one’s own trauma is necessary for change. Communities and systems must create opportunities for domestic violence awareness, education around healthy relationships, and voluntary intervention programming unconnected to the legal system. This requires adequate funding and evaluation of programs; effective communication between programs, community members, and multidisciplinary teams of practitioners to support survivors, children, and people who cause harm through intimate partner violence; and efforts to collaboratively create the community conditions needed to prevent violence and remedy barriers to safety, wellbeing, and behavior change.

3. Equity

Though intimate partner violence can impact anyone, women, and particularly, people of color, LGBTQ+ individuals and other underserved groups, experience intimate partner violence in specific ways and face unique challenges and barriers to resources. Vermonters in need of domestic violence accountability programming should be able to access services that are culturally responsive, inclusive, affirming, anti-oppressive, and rooted in their community and cultural values. Programs should work with participants to explore and address the barriers (e.g., transportation, education, finances, technology, implicit bias, lack of basic needs being met) that make it difficult to access or complete programming. Programs must work to promote and partner with services in the community to meet those needs.
4. Flexibility

There should be multiple pathways to accountability, given that people who cause harm through intimate partner violence have different needs, strengths, motivations for the use of violence, and personal goals. Programs are encouraged to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach and can incorporate an array of not only evidence-based practices, but also evidence-informed and practice-based evidence approaches. These strategies can include trauma-informed, healing-centered, and restorative approaches, incorporate peer support, aftercare, or differential length based on risks and needs, and address co-occurring issues like mental health, unemployment, economic instability, and substance use, among other things.

5. Dignity and Respect

Engagement and intervention strategies should be strengths-based, seeing participants as whole people and affirming their capacity to change. Participants should be treated with dignity and respect, informed of expectations for the program, particularly around accountability, and encouraged to share their insight and experiences.

6. Transformation and Hope

Engagement and intervention strategies should help participants develop their own goals around safety, well-being, and healthy relationships and support them in achieving those goals. Programs, in partnership with the broader coordinated community response, must think about the conditions that must exist within communities to prevent violence and support change and advocate for those things.