

# Professional Practice Standards

Working with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence



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## Foreword

Welcome to the *Professional Practice Standards — Working with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence*. The purpose of the standards is to ensure safe, respectful and accountable service delivery to those who use abusive behaviour in their relationships, to help provide safety for those adversely affected.

The Department of Communities' vision reflects the fact that for Queensland communities to prosper, there needs to be places where people feel safe, valued, and empowered, regardless of where they live or their circumstances<sup>1</sup>.

Domestic and family violence continues to be one of the most significant issues for Queenslanders and Australians in general. A 2002–03 Australian study estimated that 87 per cent of victims were women, with 99 per cent of men perpetrating domestic and family violence against them<sup>2</sup>.

Furthermore, a 2004 report indicated that 12 per cent of Australians had experienced domestic and family violence from the age of 15. A total of 93 per cent of this group were women. This represented 50 per cent of all male violence in the community<sup>3</sup>.

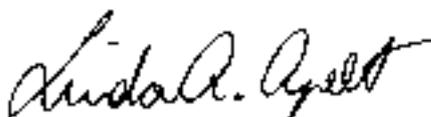
In addition to funding a range of services to support people who experience domestic and family violence, the department funds a number of programs designed to bring about behavioural change in men who perpetrate domestic and family violence. These programs provide primary and preventative interventions.

The safety of those who experience domestic and family violence is paramount. This is particularly relevant to men who perpetrate domestic and family violence. Safeguards, such as standards of professional practice, must be in place to ensure domestic and family violence is addressed in a manner that is safe, responsible and accountable.

Protection from domestic and family violence is codified by the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989* (the Act). The department has administrative responsibility for this Act. In 1997, we developed the *Minimum Practice Standards for Men's Domestic Violence Perpetrator Services*. As a result of the 2003 amendments to the Act and advances in this field of work, these standards have been reviewed and expanded in consultation with service providers and the Ministerial Advisory Council for Domestic and Family Violence. These standards therefore supersede the *1997 Minimum Practice Standards for Men's Domestic Violence Perpetrator Services*.

Compliance with these standards continues to be conditional for departmental funding of men's domestic and family violence services. I strongly encourage services and their staff to read the standards in conjunction with the accompanying *Professional Practice Principles — Working with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence*.

I look forward to supporting the continued and valuable contribution of these services to the Queensland community.



Ms Linda A. Apelt  
Director-General  
Department of Communities

## Introduction

Prevention and early intervention is a vital part of sustainable human service delivery.

Services for men who perpetrate domestic and family violence challenge them to change from abusive to safe and respectful behaviours. Those services aim to intervene in and prevent further abuse.

Domestic and family violence have negative impacts at personal, social, economic and spiritual levels in the lives of people across the community. The trust which is implicit in most relationships includes a belief and a desire that any vulnerability experienced in the relationship will not be imposed by power and control<sup>4</sup>.

Significant instances of domestic and family violence were perpetrated against women and children, although some men also experience this violence. These standards are intended to be read with this demographic reality in mind.

In line with the primary purpose of the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989* (the Act<sup>5</sup>), the safety of those who experience domestic and family violence is paramount in all work that deals with abusive behaviour. Services for men who use abusive behaviour are, therefore, expected to work alongside support services for those who experience domestic and family violence.

*The Professional Practice Standards — Working with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence* provide a series of professional practice standards for safe and accountable service delivery. The standards supersede the *1997 Minimum Practice Standards for Men's Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programs*.

Departmental funding for work with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence requires that the funded service to incorporate advocacy work with those affected by the abuse. When this work is with women, the *Professional Practice Standards — Working with women affected by domestic and family violence*<sup>6</sup> should be considered alongside these standards.

This introduction is followed by:

- a description of the standards' aims, ethical framework, definitions and target groups
- notes on format and language
- a statement on compliance
- the service standards themselves.

The accompanying *Professional Practice Principles — Working with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence* provides a basis to begin and develop professional practices with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence. They have been drawn from the practice, wisdom and experience of departmentally-funded services, as well as academic and professional references from Australia and overseas.

## Additional reading

Readers may also wish to refer to the following related documents which are available free of charge from the Violence Prevention Team, Department of Communities on (07) 3224 4477 or at [www.communities.qld.gov.au/violenceprevention](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/violenceprevention).

- *Professional Practice Principles — Working with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence.*
- Booklets are available which outline the following:
  - *Stopping abuse and violence: Information for people who use abusive and violent behaviour in relationships*
  - *Increasing your safety: Information for people who experience abuse or violence in relationships*
  - *Legislation: The Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989.*
- Help cards are available for
  - people who perpetrate domestic and family violence in non-Indigenous communities
  - people who perpetrate domestic and family violence in Indigenous communities people who experience domestic and family violence
  - young people in relation to healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Posters and other awareness promotional material are also available.

In addition:

The *Standards for Community Services* referred to in this document can be found at the Department of Communities 'Community Door' at [www.communities.qld.gov.au/ngo](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/ngo).

The *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989* is available at [www.legislation.qld.gov.au](http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au).

Additional reading can also be found in the references listed at the end of this document and the *Professional Practice Principles — Working with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence.*

## Aims

The standards aim to:

- provide services for men who perpetrate domestic and family violence that are safe, responsible and accountable in the context of community responses and legal sanctions
- provide clear guidelines to, in conjunction with relevant participating government and non-government services, monitor men participating in the program and the safety of clients, their relatives and associates who experience domestic and family violence by participants of a program, independent of change by the men participating in the program
- inform and develop effective intervention strategies
- provide a tool to evaluate and review service delivery, and implant quality assurance strategies
- ensure Department of Communities funding is used for competent professional practice
- ensure worker safety is a high priority.

## Ethical framework

The standards are framed on the basis that:

- domestic and family violence is never justified, irrespective of the context
- violent or abusive behaviour is the sole responsibility of the person committing the violence
- support and advocacy for those who experience abuse is an essential component of any work with men who perpetrate violence
- domestic and family violence is damaging to all involved — adults and children who experience it, broader family members, associates and the wider community; as well as the men who commit abuse
- domestic and family violence exploits inequalities between the parties concerned
- men who use abuse and violence must be accountable and take responsibility for using abusive behaviour
- work with men who use abusive behaviour occurs within the context of, and not be a substitute for, legal interventions
- the majority of men who use abuse or violence have the capacity to change, to learn safe and respectful alternative behaviours
- while being challenged to be accountable for their behaviour, men who use abuse or violence must be:
  - treated with dignity
  - acknowledged as deserving support
  - encouraged in their efforts to address their abusive behaviour
- the rights and safety of workers will be respected and upheld.

It should be acknowledged that individual, family, community and cultural influences can operate to indirectly sanction domestic and family violence and may combine to restrain perpetrators from acting respectfully and non-violently.

## Format

The format of the standards follows the work of O’Leary, Chung and Zannettino<sup>7</sup>. Many of their categories and specific standards have also been used.

The categories of professional practice in the standards are:

- Unacceptable Standards
- Essential Standards
- Optimal Standards.

## Language

The terms ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ are not used because they are not congruent with either person’s experience of themselves. In this document, women, children and men who have domestic and family violence perpetrated against them by a man are referred to as people who experience domestic and family violence.

The use of inclusive language is critical. However, while the term ‘people who experience domestic and family violence’ is used, the demographic reality is that in the vast majority of cases this will be women and children.

The term ‘perpetrator’ is not used as it describes a type of person rather than a type of behaviour. Since dealing with domestic and family violence involves dealing with abusive behaviour, these standards refer to ‘men’ or ‘participants’ ‘who use domestic and family violence’ or ‘who perpetrate domestic and family violence’<sup>8</sup>.

## Compliance

The standards should be read in conjunction with the *Standards for Community Services*<sup>9</sup> and the funded service’s relevant service agreement<sup>10</sup>, as these three documents form the basis for department funding.

The standards ensure services have clear benchmarks to achieve compliance in terms of:

- practices considered unprofessional and compromise the aims of work with men who perpetrate abuse in their relationships (*Unacceptable Standards*)
- professional practices considered critical to safe and accountable work with men who perpetrate abuse in their relationships (*Essential Standards*)
- further aspirational practices (*Optimal Standards*).

In situations where a service is not meeting essential standards of practice, or is engaging in a level of practice classified as unacceptable within the standards, a timeframe in which this must be rectified may be specified in the service’s Progress and Performance Appraisal by the department.

# Definitions

## Domestic and family violence — legal

In Queensland, domestic and family violence is legally defined by the Act. Significant amendments in 1999 and 2003 brought among other changes, same-sex relationships and broader definitions of 'domestic relationships' respectively into the Act. In addition to spousal relationships, domestic relationships now include intimate personal, family and informal care. A child under the age of 18 can be named as an aggrieved or a respondent only if a spousal, intimate personal or informal care relationship exists between the child and the other party. Therefore, children under the age of 18 cannot be the aggrieved or respondent in a family relationship. An informal care relationship cannot exist between a child (under the age of 18) and a parent of the child<sup>11</sup>.

These relationships are defined under section 11A–12C of the Act.

These standards apply but are not limited in their application to domestic and family violence perpetrated by men in any or all of the relationships described by the Act.

Domestic and family violence is defined within the Act as:

- willful injury to another person such as punching, hitting, slapping or choking
- willful damage to another person's property such as breaking possessions, punching holes in walls or hurting pets
- intimidation or harassment of another person such as following, stalking, repeatedly telephoning or threatening an aged or disabled person with the withdrawal of care
- indecent behaviour towards another person without consent such as forcing them to engage in sexual activity or unwanted sexual contact
- a threat to commit any of these acts towards another person.

Domestic and family violence also includes one person in a domestic relationship asking or getting someone else to injure, intimidate, harass or threaten the other person, or to damage the other person's property.

## Domestic and family violence — human services

Domestic and family violence from a human services perspective<sup>12</sup> is more broadly defined than the legal definition. It covers a range of abusive behaviours that attempt to control or use power over another person. This is recognised as contrary to the human rights of the person experiencing the abuse.

Abusive behaviour attempts to or forces a person to change their actions, opinions, culture or beliefs, including those about themselves as persons of worth, capacity and ability and as persons with human rights. Such abusive behaviour includes degradation, isolation, manipulation, coercion, threats, physical and sexual violence. It includes the use of derision, force and manipulation.

## Other definitions

The terms domestic and family violence, abuse and abusive behaviour are and should be read as interchangeable. Other definitions are detailed below.

### Advocate

- A staff member within or external to the service who specifically provides support and advocacy for the partner.
- Family member or carer who is in a relationship with a participant. The advocate should consider their client's safety and communicate with program staff on behalf of their client. In the majority of cases, the client will be a woman, in which case the advocate should also be female.

### Aggrieved

A legal term used to denote the person for whose benefit a Domestic Violence Order is made<sup>13</sup>.

### Associate

A legal term used in the context of Domestic Violence Order to denote a person associated with someone who has experienced domestic and family violence, including friends, relatives and service providers<sup>14</sup>.

### Client

In the context of these standards, a client is any person who engages with the program. It refers to:

- men as participants
- people who have experienced domestic and family violence by a participant.

### Community

Community responses directly involve the local community responses affected by domestic and family violence. This may be through public meetings to listen to community concerns or by having community members on management boards or committees.

### Coordinated

Coordinated responses to domestic and family violence bring responses together government agencies and non-government services to coordinate service provision for clearer client referral and information pathways.

### Domestic Violence Order and breach of a Domestic Violence Order

- A Domestic Violence Order (DVO) is a civil order made by a magistrates court under the Act, on Order (DVO) and the balance of probabilities that the abuse described by the breach of a DVO aggrieved was carried out by the respondent and is likely to happen again<sup>15</sup>.
- A breach of a DVO occurs when conditions of the DVO are broken. At law, the charge for breaching a DVO must be proven to a court beyond reasonable doubt. A charge, if proven, may result in a conviction being recorded and therefore a criminal record for the respondent.

## Integrated responses

Integrated responses develop the systematic coordination of services to provide clearer client referral and information pathways. They:

- may develop from coordinated responses
- involve documented protocols or agreements between various non-government services and government agencies
- ensure each organisation understands their role and has clearly articulated responses to domestic and family violence in the interests of client safety and of accountability for behaviour change.

Agreements from and by statutory agencies are a critical element in integrated responses.

## Limited confidentiality

Matters will be held in confidence (not shared with others without written permission of the client). This confidence is limited under the provisions of *Standards for Community Services 4* and *5* by the service staff's professional judgment that the client may harm themselves or someone else, or that a child may be at risk. Such a judgement could arise from information directly shared by a client, advocate, service or from a participant's level of engagement in a program. The term 'client' is defined above.

## Participant

A man who has used or is using abusive behaviour and is accessing a program through the service.

## Program facilitator

Paid or unpaid, appropriately qualified and experienced staff working directly in a group setting (and individually where relevant) with men who use abusive behaviour in a relationship.

## Program

A men's domestic and family violence behaviour change program. This typically involves group work in conjunction with some individual work. Unless otherwise specified, programs work with adult men aged 18 or over. They may focus on an age band of 18 to 25 years (young adult) or 25 years and older.

## Program staff

Paid and unpaid workers of the service other than program facilitators.

## Program team

Staff associated with service provision to the program. These include facilitators, advocates, supervisors, appropriately trained reception staff, staff from allied services — all drawing on clearly delineated expertise from each role. Note: program teams and service staff may or may not be the same group.

## Relative

A legal term used in the context of domestic violence orders to denote a person regarded by the aggrieved as a relative and who regards themselves as a relative. This includes extended family and those related through Indigenous cultural ties<sup>16</sup>.

## Respondent

A legal term to denote a person against whom a DVO is made<sup>17</sup>.

## Service

An organisation operating a departmentally-funded program for men who perpetrate domestic and family violence.

## Service management

Staff responsible for the management of the service funded to operate the program.

## Statutory authority

An organisation responsible under legislation to act on complaints or allegations of crime, abuse or neglect (typically the Queensland Police Service, Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) and Queensland Corrective Services, but may include a magistrates court if so ordered by the court). Persons in certain designated professional positions are mandated to report abuse and neglect and do so to a statutory authority. Service policy may also require the reporting of some actions or threats to a statutory authority, such as under a duty of care policy.

# Client demographics

## Men

The standards are directed toward services for men who perpetrate domestic and family violence in relationships. In the broader community, violence, in a vast majority of cases, is committed by men against men, women and children<sup>18</sup>. While some men may claim certain abusive behaviour is culturally or traditionally appropriate, no abusive behaviour can be justified on cultural, traditional or religious grounds.

## Women

Women continue to make up the majority of those who experience domestic and family violence in the community and in this context they come under the ambit of these standards. This has implications for work with those who experience domestic and family violence, providing scope for inter-agency networking, referrals and direct service delivery for example.

While these standards may also apply to work with women who use abusive behaviour However, they relate exclusively to work with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence.

Instances where women use abusive behaviour involve a range of different and significant considerations.

## Children

The standards recognise that a man who uses abusive behaviour is not providing a safe and protective environment for children. Children continue to make up a significant section of the population who experience domestic and family violence in the community. Therefore, they come under the ambit of these standards. The standards should be read in conjunction with child protection legislation. The standards assume a strong child protection framework, including a clear policy for child abuse notifications. The standards do not cover reporting requirements for child abuse notifications<sup>19</sup>.

## People of diverse cultures

Men who use abusive behaviour can be encouraged to acknowledge their own cultural heritage while being challenged to identify and change culturally normative behaviours that are abusive or used in an abusive manner. The processes may be culturally different but the analysis of the dynamics of abuse and its impact remains the same.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

It is crucial for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men who use abusive behaviour in relationships to feel comfortable in approaching and participating in programs.

There are significant differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures<sup>20</sup>, as well as differences within Aboriginal cultures and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Domestic and family violence is defined differently in many Aboriginal cultures, is generally termed 'family violence' and includes a broad range of abusive behaviour such as sexual assault, child sexual assault and male-to-male violence. It occurs across a range of family and kinship ties.

Services working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men who use domestic and family violence should take into account:

- a large number of people from these communities have family histories which have been negatively affected by a range of colonisation issues including, for example — for Aboriginal people, the 'stolen generation' and deaths in custody.
- the impact of this history and its related levels of dislocation, discrimination, poverty, disease, depression, alcoholism, imprisonment and violence
- violence in these communities is disproportionately high in comparison to the rates of the same types of violence amongst the mainstream population.

Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men may claim that certain abusive behaviour is culturally or traditionally appropriate. These men may therefore not be a reliable or definitive reference point for such cultural awareness. The service should engage in alternative consultation with relevant key services, community members or elders. No behaviour that is abusive can be justified on cultural, traditional or religious grounds.

## Culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

It is crucial that men from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds who use abusive behaviour in relationships are ensured appropriate access to men's domestic and family violence perpetrator programs. Service responses must also be culturally appropriate.

Men from CALD backgrounds who use abusive behaviour in their relationships may make claims that certain abusive behaviour is based on their culture or tradition. These men may therefore not be a reliable or definitive reference point for such cultural awareness. The service should engage in alternative consultation with relevant key services, community members or elders. No behaviour that is abusive can be justified on cultural, traditional or religious grounds. Facilitators can and need to be informed as to when such practices are enacted abusively in order to challenge abusive behaviours and examine cultural or religious beliefs, values and attitudes used to justify or minimise violent or abusive behaviour<sup>21</sup>. This should involve the development of staff members' cross-cultural competencies.

### **Lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender people<sup>22</sup>**

Domestic and family violence in same-sex relationships follows many of the power and control dynamics of abuse already described. In addition, the experience of the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender community suggests that the use of homophobic behaviour and threats to 'out' (that is, disclose a person's sexual orientation without that person's consent) is used as a significant tactic of abuse. Discrimination and abuse by the mainstream community, including by some authorities and institutions, adds layers to the work undertaken with those who use abusive behaviour.

Many of the standards set out here apply to work with gay men. However, services should also consider additional issues of safety for gay, bisexual and/or transgender men due to the possibility of homophobic abusive behaviour from other men in the group. As noted above in relation to work with women generally, work with women who use abusive behaviour in lesbian relationships is not covered by these standards.

## **The Professional Practice Standards**

### **1. Coordinated responses and referral pathways**

This section should be read in conjunction with the *Standards for Community Services 1, 2 and 4*<sup>23</sup>.

#### **Standard**

The service will proactively engage with government and non-government services in the community at the local and regional level.

#### **Outcome**

The outcome of this standard will be:

- a contribution to the development of a coordinated and comprehensive approach to domestic and family violence in the community
- appropriate and informed referral pathways to and from the service
- appropriate client safety information exchange within and between services
- accountable and transparent actions by the program, particularly with reference to the impact of any interventions on the safety and wellbeing of those who experience the abuse.

## Unacceptable

Unacceptable practice includes:

- no formal links with advocacy services
- no formal links with statutory, other government and non-government organisations<sup>24</sup>
- use of ad hoc referral processes with no formal follow-up
- no designated program staff member engaged in interagency contact
- program development without consultation with advocacy services, including women's services.

## Essential

Essential professional practice will include the following:

- Regular (at least quarterly) opportunities for staff to participate in the development and maintenance of a collaborative domestic and family violence response<sup>25</sup>.
- Negotiations to formalise agreements with funded support and advocacy services, including women's services, where no internal advocacy service is available for those who have experienced abusive behaviour.
- Approaches to statutory agencies to formalise referral processes to and from the service.
- Record the receipt of and any action taken in relation to feedback from women's services to improve the safety of women and children.
- The development of networks for referral of participants to and from non-statutory agencies.
- Approaches to develop protocols for mandatory notifications, such as those for child protection, and reports of breaches of DVO's to the Queensland Police Service or other statutory authorities.
- Details of the program will be made available to relevant services in the catchment area of the service.
- Make the man's progress and level of engagement in the program available in line with the limited confidentiality agreement signed by the man.
- Service management participation in a coordinated response to domestic and family violence.

## Optimal

Optimal professional practice could include:

- a full-time program coordinator who is an integral part of the service's management structure
- the specifics of intake and assessment procedures, such as entry into groups and ongoing assessment methods, are made available to referring services
- the development of Memoranda of Understanding or Agreement with key advocacy services for those who have experienced domestic and family violence, as well as statutory authorities

- regular meetings with Queensland Police Service Domestic Violence Liaison Officers (DVLOs), including an officer of detective rank or above
- formalised processes of referral, follow-up, monitoring and evaluation with all services (statutory and non-statutory)
- senior management participation in a coordinated response to domestic and family violence.

## 2. Program staff

### Standard

The service will employ appropriately skilled, qualified and trained staff and provide supervision and professional development.

### Outcome

The outcome of this standard will be the professional conduct of the program in conjunction with any coordinated response to domestic and family violence. It will ensure staff are:

- qualified and professional
- supported in the interests of staff retention
- professionally accountable.

### 2.1 Processes for staff recruitment and selection

This section should be read in conjunction with *Community Service Standard 7*<sup>26</sup>. The recruitment and selection of staff relates directly to the quality of service delivery. In the context of work with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence, the consequent quality of service delivery focuses on the man's behavioural change, the safety of those who have experienced the man's abuse and the professional development and care for staff.

A series of progressively experienced and qualified facilitator skill sets are provided to establish benchmarks and guide facilitators' professional development. These criteria are based on the Victorian *No-To-Violence Men's Behaviour Change Group Work Minimum Standards*<sup>27</sup> (Refer to *Compliance*, page 6).

There are three levels for men's behaviour change group facilitators.

All three levels of facilitator must have:

- a demonstrated understanding of the men's behaviour change process in relation to domestic and family violence
- a demonstrated understanding of the predominantly gendered nature of men's family violence
- an understanding of the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989* and in particular the domestic relationships under which a DVO application can be made.

Additional criteria apply for each facilitator, as defined below. A Level 1 facilitator will have:

- observed a minimum of 32 hours (typically one 16-week program) of men's behaviour change group work.

A Level 2 facilitator will have:

- observed a minimum of 32 hours of men's behaviour change group work
- a Workplace Training and Assessment Certificate
- one year of supervised voluntary or paid direct service delivery with a service required to comply with either:
  - Practice Standards — working with women affected by domestic and family violence
  - Professional Practice Standards — Working with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence (these standards)
- one of the following:
  - At least 80 hours of experience facilitating relevant group work
  - At least 50 hours of experience facilitating relevant group work and 32 hours of supervised experience facilitating men's behaviour change groups
  - At least 64 hours of supervised experience facilitating men's behaviour change groups.

A Level 3 facilitator will have:

- at least a three-year tertiary qualification in a relevant discipline and two years of professional experience in generalist counselling
- the equivalent of a Graduate Certificate of Social Science (Male Family Violence Group Facilitation)<sup>28</sup> for example, as developed by the Swinburne Institute of TAFE in Victoria
- either 80 hours of experience facilitating relevant group work and 64 hours of supervised experience facilitating men's behaviour change groups, or 100 hours of supervised experience facilitating men's behaviour change groups.

If exceptional problems exist in recruitment, a Level 3 facilitator may be considered only when they possess:

- at least a three-year tertiary qualification in a relevant discipline and two years professional experience in generalist counselling
- a commitment to obtain the equivalent of a Graduate Certificate of Social Science. (Male Family Violence – Group Facilitation)<sup>29</sup> as soon as possible upon commencement with the service (refer to *Compliance* page 6).

The required qualifications and experience for a supervisor, an advocate and a staff member undertaking assessments for men to enter a group program are set out under *Community Service Standards 2.4, 3.1.3 and 3.2.1* respectively.

## Unacceptable

Unacceptable practice includes:

- the recruitment of facilitators such that a Level 3 and a Level 2 facilitator are unavailable to undertake the program
- the recruitment of current or ex-participants as leaders, mentors or 'successful graduates'.

## Essential

Essential professional practice will include the following:

- Each program will have at least one Level 3 facilitator as set out above.
- The second facilitator will at least meet the Level 2 criteria as set out above.
- Recruitment of male and female facilitators for the group program.
- Staff selection processes which include an external experienced domestic and family violence practitioner who works with those who experience a man's abusive behaviour<sup>30</sup>.
- Prior to appointment, domestic and family violence history and criminal history checks are undertaken.
- Recruitment processes must ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and those of CALD backgrounds, have equal opportunity in accessing positions within the program.

## Optimal

Optimal professional practice could include:

- group programs facilitated by a male and a female co-facilitator without exception
- staff recruitment assistance and review shared across services in a coordinated response to domestic and family violence.

## 2.2 Staff roles and responsibilities

This section should be read in conjunction with the *Standards for Community Services 7, 8 and 9*<sup>31</sup>.

In the context of work with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence, staff roles and responsibilities must be clear and documented to ensure accountable and safe service delivery.

## Unacceptable

Unacceptable practice includes:

- group facilitation by facilitators of the same gender except in certain defined situations (refer to Essential section on page 17)
- the use of volunteers or paid staff as facilitators who are untrained, unqualified at a tertiary level or have no prior experience in domestic and family violence work and the specifics of working with men who perpetrate abusive behaviour

- the use of current or ex-participants as leaders, mentors or ‘successful graduates’ at any stage of the program
- no structured contact with the advocate in relation to safety and risk assessments of those who have experienced abusive behaviour by a participant.

## Essential

Essential professional practice will include the following:

- Male and female facilitators conduct group programs<sup>32</sup>.
- For reasons of safety, accountability and modelling of respectful gender relations.
- Facilitators of the same gender will be used only in specific circumstances<sup>33</sup>.

These circumstances are:

- both program facilitators are female, only:
  - after a risk assessment in relation to that particular group’s response to two women as facilitators has been assessed as low risk
  - after the program manager has ascertained that the level of professional group facilitation skills of the individuals and the two women combined is sufficient
  - when in any 32 hours of group work, two female facilitators would co-facilitate:
    - no more than three sessions, and
    - no more than two consecutive sessions.
- both program facilitators are male<sup>34</sup>, only when:
  - a female observer or supervisor who has expertise in domestic and family violence and accountability-related issues will be included at least monthly
  - every effort will be made to recruit (contract or employ) or train a suitably qualified female co-facilitator.

If the above conditions cannot be met, the group session can be cancelled and protocols developed for planned or sudden cancellation followed.

- One facilitator has a sound working knowledge of the service policies, protocols and procedures.
- One member of staff at the service, preferably employed full-time, will be designated the coordinator of the program.
- Program facilitators have a good working knowledge of the Act and other relevant Legislation such as the *Child Protection Act 1999* and domestic and family violence definitions and provisions in the *Family Law Act 1975*.
- Where both program facilitators are sessional or casual employees, the service will ensure time is available for the exchange of information with advocacy, program development and supervisory staff.
- Program staff must inform advocates of any concerns regarding threats to safety arising in the program. This could include varying, especially low, levels of the man’s attendance and engagement in the program.

## Optimal

Optimal professional practice could include decisions that ensure both facilitators have multi-faceted roles within the service.

## 2.3 Staff safety

This section should be read in conjunction with *Standards for Community Services 8* and *9*<sup>35</sup>.

## Unacceptable

Unacceptable practice includes:

- lack of documented workplace safety audit and procedures available for staff working with potentially abusive clients
- lack of documented procedures for staff detailing what to do during or following critical incidents or emergencies
- requiring staff to work alone as program facilitators or after hours with participants.

## Essential

Essential professional practice will include the following:

- Worker safety must be a part of a service's documented occupational health and safety policy.
- The service must have policies and procedures for, and brief staff in relation to, critical incident reporting and debriefing.
- Staff home numbers are made 'silent' and addresses are removed from Queensland Transport registration databases.
- Staff must work in pairs for group work and leave premises in pairs after dark.
- Staff must work in lockable and well lit premises, especially after dark.
- Keys, security alarms, static (room) panic buttons or personal alarm pendants (linked to an emergency number if the button is pressed) are available as required.
- Land lines and mobile phones are available and where possible numbers are stored in phone memories for 000 or the closest 24-hour police station, or a police officer's after-hours contact number.
- The program must have options clearly understood by program staff for the exclusion of men on the basis of risk to staff or other participants.
- The service must employ sufficiently qualified and trained staff who can make accurate assessments of a man's risk of aggressive behaviour (see the *Standard 3.2.1, the Standards for Community Services*, page 30).
- One facilitator or supervisor must conduct or review assessments made as to the inclusion or exclusion of group participants.
- Staff will be given the opportunity for broad program and individual session preparation. Note: Levels of confidence between co-workers impacts positively or negatively on the confidence of men in the program and their sense of personal or emotional security, which in turn could mitigate against or work towards a man's potentially aggressive reactions to challenging session material.

## Optimal

Optimal professional practice could include the following:

- Personal pendant alarms made available to all staff as required.
- Vehicles purchased by the service including locking and personal alarm remotes for safest access and protection.
- Staff are oriented to the work through the opportunity to observe intake assessment and group sessions.
- Air-conditioned and comfortable premises to provide an environment in which mood changes and aggressive behaviour are less likely because temperature and body comfort are stable.

## 2.4 Supervision

This section should be read in conjunction with *Standards for Community Services 8 and 9*<sup>36</sup>.

Supervision involves the performance, line management and skill development of staff in the context of:

- group facilitation
- knowledge of domestic and family violence and its impacts
- risk assessment
- the accountability of the man for
  - his abusive behaviour and
  - the safety of those who have experienced his abuse.

## Unacceptable

Unacceptable practice includes the service having no regular documented supervision.

## Essential

Essential professional practice will include the following:

- Staff supervision being provided by a senior practitioner or supervisor with the following qualifications and experience (see *Compliance*, page 6):
  - a three-year degree in a relevant discipline from a recognised tertiary institution
  - the equivalent of a Graduate Certificate in Social Science (Male Family Violence Group Facilitation)
  - relevant and diverse skills in counselling and group work
  - at least three years professional experience in the domestic and family violence field
  - at least 100 hours experience facilitating men's behaviour change groups
  - a current knowledge of issues in male family violence and the men's behaviour change field<sup>37</sup>.
- Supervision of facilitators at a minimum of one hour per fortnight or equivalent, during

the operation of programs.

- Observation of the group program (direct observation or video) by a supervisor at least once in the group work curriculum, to identify sound and/or or incompetent practice.
- When a senior practitioner is not available to conduct fortnightly supervision, for example in rural or remote areas, provision of monthly supervision with an external senior practitioner.
- Standing agenda items in supervision sessions will include safety issues and liaison with advocacy work and worker self-care.

## Optimal

Optimal professional practice could include:

- weekly supervision sessions with a specialist senior practitioner
- regular independent group observers with specialist domestic and family violence knowledge to consult in relation to accountability, supervision and risk assessment.

## 2.5 Professional development

This section should be read in conjunction with *Community Service Standard 8*<sup>38</sup>. Professional development will increase staff competencies in their work with men who perpetrate and with clients who experience domestic and family violence.

## Unacceptable

Unacceptable practice includes no provision for professional development for program staff.

## Essential

Essential professional practice will include the following:

- Professional development opportunities are made available for full-time staff and pro-rata for part-time staff, across the range of skills and interventions involved in work with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence.
- At least one facilitator and at least one other staff member engaged in professional development specific to domestic violence at least on an annual basis<sup>39</sup>.

## Optimal

Optimal professional practice could include the following:

- Planned upgrades (see *Compliance*, page 6) of staff qualifications and skills through the criteria listed under *Standards 2.1, 2.4, 3.1.3 and 3.2.1*. For example:
  - To enhance staff skills and experience using qualified and experienced supervision, a service may:
    - undertake a group program with two Level 2 facilitators in order that one facilitator (and only one in any 32-hour program) can obtain the required hours of experience to fulfil Level 3 criteria
    - undertake a group program with one Level 3 and one Level 1 facilitator (in any one 32-hour program) in order that the Level 1 facilitator can obtain the required hours of experience to fulfil Level 2 criteria.

- Annual domestic and family violence professional development activities for all staff <sup>40</sup>.
- The rotation of staff through the various roles and responsibilities of the program.
- Provision of the opportunity for staff to review or be seconded to roles in other relevant services.

### 3. Overall program structure and operation

#### Standard

The service will ensure the program is appropriately planned and accountable in accordance with current best practice interventions with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence. Accountability refers to:

- the role the service plays in holding men to account for their abusive behaviour
- being accountable for professional practice according to the three departmental reference points:
  - the Service Agreement
  - the *Standards for Community Services*
  - the standards set out here.

#### Outcome

The outcome of this standard will be integrated service delivery based on a planned, structured program and safe, accountable and professional practice.

#### 3.1 Program accountability

This section should be read in conjunction with *Standards for Community Services 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11*<sup>41</sup>.

In relation to domestic and family violence, services are accountable for:

- service delivery to participants through performance management provisions and through the governance provisions of the *Standards for Community Services*
- assessment and service delivery that challenge men to change their abusive behaviour
- service delivery to those clients who experience domestic and family violence by men through:
  - internal advocacy services funded as a part of the program
  - formal protocols with external advocacy services.

##### 3.1.1 Clients' rights

This section should be read in conjunction with *Standards for Community Services 3, 4 and 5*<sup>42</sup>.

In this section, 'clients' include men who perpetrate domestic and family violence and participate in a program as well as those who experience domestic and family violence perpetrated by a man.

Client's rights are covered by *Standards for Community Services 4 and 5*. These include limited confidentiality circumstances where the right to confidentiality may be overridden

by other considerations, such as the safety of those who have experienced domestic and family violence. These two *Standards for Community Services* require services to have, for example:

- a choice and participation policy
- a confidentiality policy
- an access policy for confidential information
- a privacy policy
- a complaints policy.

## Unacceptable

Unacceptable practice includes no policy specifically written for domestic and family violence work, in particular outlining limited confidentiality provisions (see *Definitions*, page 7).

## Essential

Essential professional practice will include:

- a policy specifically addressing limited confidentiality
- clients being notified of the above policies and encouraged to exercise their rights in the use of the policies
- advocates being informed about the policies to assist their clients to access the policies' procedures
- all participants being informed that signing the waiver limiting confidentiality enables disclosure of information to relevant services and professionals:
  - this information will include any threat or act of violence or abuse and may include information in relation to a participant's attendance and engagement in the program
  - this facilitates action to protect those against whom participants have perpetrated domestic and family violence.

### 3.1.2 Safety and risk assessment

This section should be read in conjunction with *Standards for Community Services*<sup>43</sup>. In this section, the term 'clients' is used to describe men who are participants in a program and also people (predominantly women and children) who are affected by the domestic and family violence perpetrated by those men.

In the context of work with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence, safety and risk assessment involves engaging clients in identifying levels of safety and risk and actions that can be taken to enhance awareness and decision-making.

The safety of those impacted by abusive behaviour must be held as a priority. Levels of risk and of safety may change quickly depending on a range of issues within and external to the man's lived experience. For example, changes in the amount, the type or the frequency of use of alcohol or other drugs; or in employment or in mental health can directly impact on higher or lower levels of risk for further abuse. Ongoing risk assessments, contact and support therefore play a significant role in assessing levels of safety<sup>44</sup>.

Work with participants in relation to safety and risk assessment also involves a comprehensive and ongoing assessment of their abusive behaviour and of any changes in behaviour for which the man can take responsibility in order to enhance the safety of those impacted by his abusive behaviour. A man's self report of changes to behaviour and his attitude as a result of participating in the program should not be confused with his level of risk. As mentioned above, a number of other factors unrelated to the program itself may be responsible for an escalation or de-escalation of the risk of further abuse.

## Unacceptable

Unacceptable practice includes the following:

- no documented initial or ongoing risk assessment processes with clients
- no agreed process of contact with the advocate in relation to any negative risk assessments resulting from contact with the participant.

## Essential

Essential professional practice will include the following:

- At the initial contact with clients (or as soon as practicable thereafter) staff will:
  - assess lethality
  - assess the extent and history of abuse
  - assess the extent and history of other violence including attitudes to and respect for the law
  - advise that, as a matter of best practice, the safety of those who experience abusive behaviour is a critical aspect of work
  - advise of limitations of the program:
    - for those who experience domestic and family violence — this especially includes the fact that attending the program in and of itself is not an indication or guarantee of change to the participant's behaviour toward respectful and safe behaviour
    - for participants — this includes that merely attending is neither acceptable nor sufficient to bring about change
  - conduct and explain safety planning
  - provide details of various relevant resources and services
  - obtain from those who experience the abuse (and keep confidential from participants) an emergency contact number
  - encourage contact with the service at any time in office hours
  - encourage contact with relevant 24-hour or after hours services (such as 1800 or 13 call services)
  - advise about the program's grievance procedures.
- In addition, work with clients will:
  - caution against couples-related work until after the man has clearly taken responsibility for his abusive behaviour. Note: where couples-related work is a

required intervention, such as mediation for family law matters, a safety and risk assessment should be done specifically to assist with each intervention

- undertake ongoing risk assessments throughout the program including assessments from:
  - the advocate
  - the facilitator
  - other service providers where available
  - the participant's partner or ex-partner
  - the participant (self-assessment).
- Identify a participant's medium or high levels or risk of further domestic and family violence while in the program; the higher the level of risk, the stronger the action.
- Include the development of protocols to ensure that, when medium or high levels of risk are identified, action at a management level is taken and documented.

This includes, for example:

- contact with those likely to be impacted by the abuse, preferably through the advocate, in order to:
  - assess the implications of the service reporting to police any breach of a DVO or other criminal matter
  - reassess safety plans and offer further support
- contact with the relevant police station to flag the residential address of those potentially impacted by further abuse
- the development and implementation of a group session/s or individual session/s which deal with the nature of a participant's identified at-risk behaviour (making sure those impacted by a potential abuse are not implicated in any such intervention)
- a specific discussion with the whole group of participants about self assessment of risk and about relapse prevention
- utilising a risk assessment tool which enables comparisons between early group and end-of-group assessments of risk and safety.

## Optimal

Optimal professional practice could include the following:

- Formalised risk assessments including input from various services involved in a coordinated response to domestic and family violence and also working with the client.

### 3.1.3 Advocacy work (where funded)

This section should be read in conjunction with *Standards for Community Services* 3<sup>45</sup>.

In the context of work with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence, advocacy involves attempts to contact and act with or on behalf of clients who have experienced abuse by men in the program.

Advocacy work is critical to:

- provide opportunities for those who experience abuse to receive support and an ongoing assessment of their safety throughout the men's program
- enable a comprehensive assessment of the likelihood of reassault and/or other controlling behaviour by the men during and after a program through information that balances a participant's self report as part of the facilitators' ongoing assessment of risk and change.

Services will be established only where there is funding to the service for internal advocacy services or pre-existing funded programs to support and advocate on behalf of those who experience domestic and family violence by men participating in a program.

In this section, those with whom an advocate works are referred to here as 'their clients' (see *Other Definitions*, page 8).

Such advocacy services may be:

- internal to the funded service
- a non-government organisation external to the service.

## **Unacceptable**

In relation to funded advocacy work internal to the program, unacceptable practice includes the following:

- No negotiated contact with those who have been abused by the participant.
- No attempted phone or face-to-face contact in addition to the initial written contact with their clients.
- No information given to their clients as to the value and purpose of ongoing contact with the service.
- No risk assessment of and safety planning with clients who are willing to engage in contact with the service.
- No agreed range of questions or list of referrals used by the advocate during contact with their clients.
- No formal liaison or information sharing between the advocate and staff or facilitators.
- No established protocol of confidentiality concerning information shared by the advocate with staff or facilitators.
- No check as to whether a limited confidentiality waiver was signed by the man prior to contact with their client.
- The use of an advocate with no professional domestic and family violence experience or training in relation to work with those who experience domestic and family violence.
- In relation to advocacy work external to the program, unacceptable practice includes no negotiations towards a formal agreement with an external service working with those who experience domestic and family violence. This applies to sharing information between the advocacy service and program staff in particular.

## Essential

In relation to funded advocacy work internal to the program, essential professional practice will include the following:

- Advocates will at least have:
  - a demonstrated understanding of the men’s behavioural change process in relation to domestic and family violence
  - knowledge of the processes and content of group sessions
  - observed a minimum of six men’s behaviour change group sessions
  - experience in direct service delivery with a service complying with either of the following:
    - the Professional Practice Standards — Working with women affected by domestic and family violence, or
    - a service working with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence (and therefore complies with these standards)<sup>46</sup>.
- Advocates are required to:
  - contact their clients fortnightly during the program, most critically before the program commences and after the first few sessions, and monthly following the program for a period of six months
  - document any contact and attempted contact.
- Advocates will:
  - respect the rights of their clients, in particular their right to accept limited or no contact
  - prioritise those clients who may be at potentially greater risk, such as those who:
    - live with a participant at the commencement of the program
    - plan to remain in the relationship
    - are recently separated
    - in any of the above events have children as a part of a relationship.
- In relation to spousal abuse, advocates will also attempt contact with any ex-partner/s with whom the participant has had children and where there are ongoing parenting arrangements or orders.
- Advocates will assess with their client and discuss with program staff any issues of safety and risk. In particular, they will ascertain their client’s assessment of and discuss with program staff:
  - the likelihood of re-assault
  - any likely consequences for their client, especially where their client advises against
    - confronting a man about his abusive behaviour
    - contact with police or other services about, for example, a breach of a DVO by the man.

- Advocates will inform their clients that the client may contact and meet with program facilitators, with the advocate present if requested.
- An advocate:
  - is not a program facilitator
  - will be a female practitioner, where their client is a woman
  - will, prior to making contact, check that an ‘acknowledgment of contact’ statement has been signed by a participant, explaining that an advocate will speak with those impacted by their abuse.
- Information obtained from these contacts is not to be passed onto participants as it may jeopardise the safety of those who have been abused by the participant.
- In relation to children, where an advocate is working with and on behalf of a child under the age of 18 years the advocate will:
  - either have the requisite professional training or experience, or
  - work in consultation with relevant professionals, including officers of the Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) as required by the service’s child abuse notification policy, and
  - any contact with children under the age of 18 will be with the consent of the nonoffending parent or guardian.

In relation to advocacy work external to the program, essential professional practice will include the following:

- The service will enter into negotiations toward a formal agreement with an external service working with those who experience domestic and family violence in relation to sharing information between the advocacy service and program staff.
- Advocates are required to:
  - contact their clients fortnightly during the program, most critically before the program commences and after the first few sessions, and monthly following the program for a period of six months
  - document any contact and attempted contact.
- Advocates will:
  - demonstrate an understanding of the men’s behaviour change process in relation to domestic and family violence
  - have knowledge of the processes and content of group sessions
  - have observed a minimum of six men’s behaviour changes group sessions
  - have experience in direct service delivery with a service complying with either:
    - the Professional Practice Standards — Working with women affected by domestic and family violence
    - these standards, in relation to working with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence<sup>47</sup>.

## Optimal

Optimal professional practice could include the following:

- the service could, in conjunction with other relevant government and non-government services:
  - conduct follow-up with those who have experienced abuse, at six and 12 months following the end of the program
  - establish professional protocols with other advocacy-related domestic and family violence services, including Queensland Police Service DVLO's, officers of the Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) and Queensland Corrective Services and staff of other government and non-government services.

### 3.1.4 Reporting

This section should be read in conjunction with *Standards for Community Services 3, 4 and 6*<sup>48</sup>.

In the context of work with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence, reporting requirements ensure the program operates in an ethical manner in relation to information relevant to a participant's abusive behaviour.

## Unacceptable

Unacceptable practice includes no documented reporting procedures.

## Essential

Essential professional practice will include the following:

- Service reporting protocols will include:
  - the reporting of crimes associated with domestic and family violence to statutory and other relevant authorities
  - a requirement that program facilitators report to service management any threats or acts of violence by the man or his associates communicated
    - by the man himself
    - by the person who has experienced the man's abusive behaviour
    - by other relevant services
  - a requirement that management assess whether or not such threats or acts of violence will be reported for their information or action to:
    - the Queensland Police Service in relation to any breach of a DVO or other criminal matter, and/or
    - other statutory authorities.
- All decisions or actions to report to statutory and other relevant authorities should, where possible, be done in consultation with the person who has experienced the participant's abusive behaviour.
- All such decisions to act should be taken only at a service management level.

- Protocols or agreed processes between relevant services, including negotiated limited confidentiality provisions must be sought and, where possible, established to ensure effective reporting. These agreements would provide a coordinated response to domestic and family violence and ideally would be with services in a coordinated response to domestic and family violence who:
  - may have information for the program in relation to a participant’s threats or incidents
  - could receive material from service management in relation to reportable incidents or other information that may be relevant to a participant’s risk of committing further abuse.
- When a man leaves the program before completion, facilitators, preferably through the relevant advocate, are required to:
  - contact those who have been abused by the participant
  - advise them of the situation and circumstances of the man leaving the program
  - make a safety and risk assessment and offer further options or resources.
- When a man leaves the program before completion, facilitators are required to contact statutory referrers to advise them of the situation and circumstances of the man leaving the program.
- Feedback to referral services including statutory bodies will include specific behaviour change identified by preferably both the participant and those impacted by his abuse. Such feedback should include caveats and conditions that may, for example, recommend that a man:
  - repeat the program
  - seek further assistance with related issues such as alcohol or other drug use
  - where a statutory agency is involved, regular and frequent contact with that agency to check-in about his behaviour, with options for recommencing the program as required.

## Optimal

Optimal professional practice could include formal protocols for transferring relevant client related information to and from other services through, for example, the development and application of Memoranda of Agreement, and in particular limited confidentiality provisions.

### 3.2 Individual and group program practice

Professional practices in a program for men who perpetrate domestic and family violence must ensure the program:

- challenges the attitude and behaviour that constitutes abuse
- does not compromise the safety of those who experience a participant’s abusive behaviour.

Programs which work with men who perpetrate abusive behaviour will at times work with participants individually and at times in groups. It is important to ascertain when individual work is essential and appropriate and when it is counterproductive.

### 3.2.1 Intake and assessment

This section should be read in conjunction with *Standards for Community Services 1, 2, 3 and 4*<sup>49</sup>.

In the context of work with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence, entry into a program requires an initial assessment or intake session/s to clarify a possible match between the program and the potential participant. This includes but is not limited to information in relation to contact details, demographics, relationships and family members, criminal history, the history, type, extent, frequency and severity of abuse and his motivation to change. An initial safety and risk assessment of the man's behaviour and where possible his self assessment will form part of this intake assessment.

#### Unacceptable

Unacceptable practice includes no documented intake and assessment procedures.

#### Essential

Essential professional practice will include the following:

- Staff who undertake assessments of men will:
  - be a Level 3 facilitator (see *Standard 2.1* page 14), or
  - have the equivalent of a Graduate Certificate in Social Science (Male Family Violence Group Facilitation), and
  - have at least 100 hours of experience facilitating men's behaviour change groups<sup>50</sup>.
- Individual assessments that identify, acknowledge and address the participant's use of violence and abuse
- An individual or small group orientation process prior to the man joining the group to introduce a basic understanding of core concepts such as accountability, empathy, definitions of domestic and family violence and group rules, time, date, duration and location of further sessions.
- An explanation of program policies relating to advocacy, limited confidentiality, fee for service, attendance, self or third-party disclosures of abusive behaviour, and consequences of non-compliance. While a service may charge a fee for the program, the service will also ensure such a fee neither:
  - financially impacts those who experience abuse by the participant
  - prevents an otherwise suitable participant from entering a program.
- Written agreement detailing program requirements signed by the participant (see *Standard 3.1.1 Client's rights*, page 21).

#### Optimal

Optimal professional practice could include liaison with the advocate to identify ways in which the person experiencing the abuse could assist in identifying any levels and circumstances of higher risk<sup>51</sup>.

### 3.2.2 Post-intake individual practice

This section should be read in conjunction with *Standards for Community Services 3* and *6*<sup>52</sup>.

Professional practice after intake and initial assessment will include options for individual work with participants within a program and through referral to other services.

#### Unacceptable

Unacceptable practice includes the following:

- Relationship counselling between the person who experiences the abuse and the person perpetrating the abuse as the primary intervention for men who use abusive behaviour in relationships<sup>53</sup>.
- Individual work which does not engage in a strategic intervention to challenge abusive behaviour but rather focuses primarily on a participant's personal needs such as:
  - the participant's current circumstances
  - his childhood
  - his personal development
  - blame and responsibility placed outside of the choices faced by the participant, in particular blame of those who experienced the abusive behaviour rather than identifying and finding alternatives to abusive behaviour.
- Ongoing individual work as a substitute for group work where group work is available.

#### Essential

Essential professional practice will include the following:

- Where group work is not available, individual work will also be done under accountability and reporting conditions.
- Matters such as personal development as listed above will, if addressed, be focussed on in order to find alternatives to abusive behaviour and not primarily for therapeutic purposes, although this may be a secondary benefit.
- Incidents of abuse re-presented as denial, blame, minimisation or justification will be utilised as opportunities to invite personal accountability and responsibility.
- External services doing individual work with the participant, such as general practitioners who may have prescribed medications, mental health or substance misuse workers, will be informed of the participant's involvement with the program so as to:
  - identify and support the man to take personal responsibility
  - invite other service workers to assist in maintaining a position of non-violence
  - offer informed support to those who experience the abuse and identify any (including medical) side-effects and other interventions which might work against the practice of non-abusive behaviour.

## Optimal

Individual work with and the referral of participants should be conducted in the context of an integrated response to domestic and family violence. A service can optimally be engaged in the development of clearly articulated and documented client pathways that are committed to the safety of those who have experienced domestic and family violence and an opportunity for behaviour change for men who perpetrate abusive behaviour.

### 3.2.3 Group practice

A critical component and the modality of best practice for service delivery to men who use domestic and family violence is group work. This provides a peer-based, professionally facilitated intervention to challenge abusive behaviour through:

- structured, didactic and experiential sessions
- professional and peer-based confrontations.

## Unacceptable

Unacceptable practice includes the following:

- Unstructured or loosely structured safety considerations such as starting and finishing times.
- Extended and unfocused group discussion not directly related to the participants' use of abuse or violence.
- No documented group program plan.
- Less than 32 hours of group work.
- Program content focused on anger management.
- Program content which overtly or covertly emphasises the following solely for therapeutic rather than behaviour change purposes:
  - 'relationship issues'
  - reconciliation with those who have experienced the abusive behaviour
  - blaming the violence on the those against whom abusive behaviour is perpetrated.
- No documented structure, content, debriefing, planning or reflection.

## Essential

Essential professional practice will include:

- the use of violence and the abuse of power as the primary theme in all session topics
- structured group processes, including:
  - recording participants' attendance
  - compliance issues for statutory mandated participants
  - risk assessment
  - check-in round
  - follow-up requirements

- the cessation of violence and the establishment of safe and respectful alternatives is prioritised over other potential outcomes, such as personal development
- active engagement through challenging and questioning of the participant's use of language and expression that is pro-violent, sexist, racist or homophobic
- group programs with a limit of up to 16 participants
- sessions which at least cover but are not limited to the following:
  - Definitions of domestic and family violence.
  - Understanding and assessing build-up and the risk of using abusive behaviour.
  - Legal consequences and issues such as the implications of DVO conditions and breaches.
  - Alternatives to aggressive behaviour such as time-out.
  - Empathy and consequences for those impacted by their abuse.
  - Attitudes and beliefs which support abusive behaviour.
  - Relapse prevention plans for the maintenance of changed behaviour.

### **Optimal**

The development of group programs which assist men who have completed a behaviour change program to maintain their changed behaviour.

## **4. Internal – external review and evaluation**

This section should be read in conjunction with the *Standards for Community Services 5, 10 and 11*.

### **Standard**

The service will ensure evaluation is an integral part of service delivery through ongoing practices of planning, monitoring and review.

### **Outcome**

The outcome of this standard will be:

- service planning that incorporates the monitoring and review of service delivery
- evaluation of the service by external service providers connected to the program
- the implementation of relevant evaluation outcomes into the program.

### **Unacceptable**

Unacceptable practice includes:

- no formal written monitoring or evaluation
- no formalised system of data collection
- no regular review of the information gathered through data collection
- reliance solely on a participant's self disclosures and evaluations of change.

## Essential

Essential professional practice will include the following<sup>54</sup>:

- Planning, monitoring and evaluation to measure program performance.
- Evaluation of each group will focus on the outcomes of the program's objectives.
- Performance measures include:
  - effectiveness — the extent to which service activities deliver sustainable benefits
  - access — the extent to which relevant services are being provided to the target group, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other CALD populations
    - implement methods to measure and evaluate the development of cross-cultural competencies through cross-cultural training of staff and access to interpreters as required
  - quality — compliance with practice standards including client rights are achieved
  - accountability — the extent to which services comply with accountability requirements, in particular in relation to issues of safety for those experiencing abuse.
- Program facilitators will make an assessment of participants' behaviour and attitudes before and after each program to measure changes.
- Information from pre and post-program assessment of participants should include monitoring changes in attitude and behaviour towards their partner.
- The results of these pre and post-program assessments should inform the overall evaluation of the program.
- Information relating to safety concerns and any related decisions or actions must be recorded for inclusion in supervision and evaluation of the program.
- Evaluation findings will be utilised to inform and enhance future program development.
- Internal evaluation of program effectiveness should include advocacy interventions intended to enhance the safety of those (predominantly women and children) who experience domestic and family violence.
- Planning and evaluation processes will occur developmentally, with each new program being informed by an evaluation of the preceding program.
- Feedback provided by those who experience domestic and family violence and by advocates will be incorporated into the processes for evaluating the program.
- Evaluation of program effectiveness in consultation with:
  - advocacy (including women's) services
  - other external stakeholders
  - clients.

## Optimal

Optimal professional practice could include:

- research and evaluation partnerships with tertiary institutions with established expertise in the area of domestic and family violence to evaluate behavioural change outcomes for men in the program, including levels of
  - re-assault
  - non-physical abuse
  - (any) changes to quality of life for those who experience their abusive behaviour
- external evaluation of program effectiveness.

## References

The Department of Communities wishes to acknowledge the following authors, researchers, publishers and publications for helping inform the content of the Professional Practice Standards for working with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence publication.

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4. McMaster, K., 1998, Feeling Angry Playing Fair, Breaking the Cycle of Abuse, Reed Publishing.
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7. O'Leary, P., Chung, D., and Zannettino, L., A Comparative Assessment of Good Practice in Programs for Men who use Violence Against Female Partner, 2004, Research and Education unit on Gendered Violence, School of Social Work and Social Policy, University of South Australia.
8. Men's Behaviour Change Group Work, Minimum Standards and Quality Practice, 2006, No To Violence (NTV) Male Family Violence Prevention Association, Inc., (NTV).
9. The Standards for Community Services accompany the Community Services Bill 2007 which was enacted in August 2007 and replaces the Family Services Act 1987. From 1 July 2006 all new service agreements that non-government organisations in Queensland signed with the Department of Communities required implementation of the Standards for Community Services. There are 11 standards that set foundational requirements for services provided by funded organisations to Queenslanders. The Professional Practice Standards build the specifics of service delivery with men who perpetrate domestic and family violence onto the platform of the Standards for Community Services. See [www.qld.gov.au/ngo](http://www.qld.gov.au/ngo)
10. Service agreements outline the terms and conditions under which the Minister has approved the funding to an NGO. They outline the organisation's obligations in relation to its funded services such as confidential and personal information, assets, financial and performance reporting and the outputs required to be delivered by the organisation.
11. Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act, 1989, Queensland Government.
12. [www.communities.qld.gov.au/violenceprevention](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/violenceprevention); also [www.un.org/overview](http://www.un.org/overview); see also the Power and Control Wheel (Minnesota Program Development, Inc., at [duluth\\_model.org](http://duluth_model.org) or the Power and Control Wall (McMaster, 1999,) for

diagrammatic descriptions of abusive behaviour.) Except when a legal definition is required, this is the definition used in the Standards.

13. *ibid*, p5
14. *ibid*, p9
15. *ibid*, p6
16. *ibid*, p9
17. *ibid*, p5
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19. 'Increasing your safety, Information for people who experience abuse and/or violence in relationships' at [www.communities.qld.gov.au/violenceprevention](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/violenceprevention); Child Protection Act 1999 at [www.legislation.qld.gov.au](http://www.legislation.qld.gov.au); see also [www.endabuse.org/children](http://www.endabuse.org/children)
20. Memmot, Stacey, Keys and Chambers, 2001, *Violence in Aboriginal Communities*, Report to Crime Prevention Branch, Attorney-General's Department.
21. *A Study in Hope: A report of the family violence research and intervention project, Vietnamese Pilot Project*, Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, June 1999, at [www.facsia.gov.au](http://www.facsia.gov.au)
22. '... it happens', an information guide for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in abusive relationships, 2004, YFS and Department of Communities, see also [www.metrobatteredwomen.com/lesbians](http://www.metrobatteredwomen.com/lesbians)
23. [www.qld.gov.au/ngo](http://www.qld.gov.au/ngo)
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26. [www.qld.gov.au/ngo](http://www.qld.gov.au/ngo)
27. *Men's Behaviour Change Group Work, Minimum Standards and Quality Practice*, 2006, No To Violence (NTV) Male Family Violence Prevention Association, Inc., (NTV), concepts used by permission.
28. Currently available through the Swinburne Institute of TAFE, a qualification in men's domestic and family violence prevention group work with No to Violence Inc in Victoria.
29. Currently available through the Swinburne Institute of TAFE, a qualification in men's domestic and family violence prevention group work with No to Violence Inc in Victoria.
30. including e.g. reviewing selection criteria, participation on selection or interview panel.
31. [www.qld.gov.au/ngo](http://www.qld.gov.au/ngo)
32. *Men's Behaviour Change Group Work, Minimum Standards and Quality Practice*, 2006, No To Violence (NTV) Male Family Violence Prevention Association, Inc., (NTV).

33. ibid
34. ibid
35. [www.qld.gov.au/ngo](http://www.qld.gov.au/ngo)
36. ibid
37. Men's Behaviour Change Group Work, Minimum Standards and Quality Practice, 2006, No To Violence (NTV) Male Family Violence Prevention Association, Inc., (NTV), used by permission.
38. ibid
39. Simons, M, Colley, D, ,Edwards G, Harris R and Edwards, A, 2004, 'Development of Competency based Standards, at an advanced level, for Practitioners Working with Men who use Domestic Violence and Abuse', Centre for Research in Education, Equity and Work, University of South Australia.
40. For example: program development, advocacy integration into the program, Participant assessment, adult education principles, 'expressive therapies' training and strengths-based approaches, group dynamics.
41. [www.qld.gov.au/ngo](http://www.qld.gov.au/ngo)
42. ibid
43. ibid
44. Gondolf, E., 2002, Batterer intervention Systems, Issues, Outcomes and Recommendations, Sage.
45. ibid
46. Based on MS4 from the Men's Behaviour Change Group Work, Minimum Standards and Quality Practice, 2006, No To Violence (NTV) Male Family Violence Prevention Association, Inc., (NTV), used by permission.
47. ibid
48. [www.qld.gov.au/ngo](http://www.qld.gov.au/ngo)
49. ibid
50. Based on MS3 from the Men's Behaviour Change Group Work, Minimum Standards and Quality Practice, 2006, No To Violence (NTV) Male Family Violence Prevention Association, Inc., (NTV), used by permission.
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52. [www.qld.gov.au/ngo](http://www.qld.gov.au/ngo)
53. Bograd M. , Mederos F., Battering and couples therapy: Universal screening and selection of treatment modality, Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, Jul 1999
54. Chung, D., O'Leary, P., Zannettino, L., 2003, 'A National review of Integrated Programs for perpetrators of Domestic Violence', Centre for Research in Education, Equity and Work, University of South Australia, PADV, Commonwealth Government; available at [www.nationalmailing.com.au/nationalmailing/ofw](http://www.nationalmailing.com.au/nationalmailing/ofw)
55. ibid, p36



