

Why Are Prosecutors Integral in Preventing Repeat Domestic Violence Incidents?

Prosecutors are responsible for conducting thorough and thoughtful investigations, making accurate charging decisions, aggressively and ethically litigating cases, safeguarding defendants' rights, and advocating for appropriate sentences that hold offenders accountable and keep communities safe.¹

Tennessee prosecutors are an integral component of the coordinated community response to domestic violence, balancing victim safety and offender accountability on a daily basis. By ordering batterers to attend state certified 26 week batterer intervention programs as part of their sentencing requirements, prosecutors can take the stand that domestic violence is intolerable and batterers must change their behavior or face additional consequences.

The Tennessee Domestic Violence State Coordinating Council (Council) adopted rules to insure that state certified Batterers' Intervention Programs meet the required minimum standards as prescribed by Tennessee Code Annotated § 36-3-601.

The standards require that certified programs working with court ordered batterers maintain an open line of communication with the courts, allowing prosecutors to be apprised of the offenders' status throughout their sentence. The Council insures that certified programs have policies in place that delineate how the program will communicate with court officials and hold offenders accountable.

Research supports that effective police responses to domestic violence calls, in conjunction with an eventual arrest of the batterer, followed by court ordered batterer intervention sentencing, “were significantly more likely than other combinations of criminal justice actions to end repeat incidents of violence.”²

The Tennessee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence (Coalition) encourages prosecutors to refer batterers to certified batterers intervention programs. For a complete list of state certified programs, visit the Coalition's website:

<http://www.tcadsv.org/BIPS%20Certified%20Programs.htm>.

The Coalition also encourages prosecutors who do not currently have certified batterers' intervention programs in their district to require certification for court referrals. For more information on how a program can apply for certification, please contact Susan Collins at scollins@tcadsv.org.

¹ Long and Kristiansson, “Taking a Process-Oriented Approach to Domestic Violence Prosecutions,” The Voice: Helping Prosecutors Give Victims a Voice 2007 Vol.1 Number 9, American Prosecutors Research Institute, p. 2.

² Tolman and Edelson, p. 264, citing Syers, M. and J. Edelson, “The Combined Effects of Coordinated Criminal Justice Intervention in Woman Abuse,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 7: 490-502.