## Healthy Relationships Education Program

**Program Policies**

#### Philosophy of the Program

This intervention program has been developed based on the psycho-educational model for batterer’s intervention services from the Duluth Abuse Intervention Program. It is based on an educational group curriculum that focuses on challenging abusive beliefs held by batterer’s that contribute to violence, control and abuse in their families. Domestic violence is defined as a pattern of socially learned and culturally condoned behaviors that includes physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse. Domestic violence is not viewed as a pathology or mental illness, but rather tactics designed to control and maintain power over an intimate partner. Central to this philosophy is the assumption that batterer must learn to be accountable for their behaviors in order to commit to non-violence in the future. Additionally, violence will be shown to be a choice taken by the batterer to control the victim(s), not a reaction to situations, stress, substance use or provocation.

The classroom format for this intervention has been selected with purpose. Other methods of interventions, such as, individual therapy, couples counseling and family counseling have potential risks to the victim and are discouraged when violence has been present in the relationship. This program is an educational program and is not mental health or addictions treatment in any way. Participants will be encouraged to engage in community based treatment for mental health or addictions issues if needed by contacting their probation officer for a referral. This program will utilize only specially trained instructors who have completed the training sessions from the Duluth Abuse Intervention Program and who commit to involvement in community integration activities and advocacy.

**Mission Statement**

To decrease incidents of domestic violence and increase victim safety.

This mission statement is based upon:

* increased recognition of abusive behaviors
* challenging beliefs which support the use of violence
* holding batterers accountable for their choice to be violent
* encouraging zero tolerance for domestic violence in our communities.

### Commitment to Accountability

In order to move toward decreasing domestic violence and increasing the safety of victims in our community, this program will encourage accountability of the batterers, discourage victim blaming and work toward educating the community about the causes of domestic violence and its consequences on the victims, children and community at large. This program works with the Court system to hold batterers accountable for their violence. This program is not designed to take the place of appropriate legal sanctions for batterers. Participants are held accountable to the program policies and contract. Program workers participate actively in community coordination programs working toward increasing victim safety and batterer accountability. Admission into Healthy Relationships Educational program is based on the conviction or arrest for domestic violence, assault against an intimate or previous intimate partner, or family member. No claims of progress or success will be made for any participant that may result in a false sense of security and safety for the victim or the community. This is based on recognition that accurate and reliable prediction of future violence is impossible. Additionally, efforts are made to access lethality factors for each batterer throughout the program. This program meets the guidelines developed by the State of Michigan Governor’s Task Force for Batterer’s Intervention Programs.

1. **Participant Rights**

Participants have the right to not be discriminated against on the basis of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, nor age or for any other reason.

Participants have the right to request information from their record and to discuss this information with their class instructor.

Participants have the right to know what information is being collected and for what purpose.

1. **Waivers**

A waiver of confidentiality is required by all participants in order to participate in this program. This waiver releases this agency of confidentiality concerns listed above. This waiver will be used for, but not limited to, contact with the victim in this case, contact with probation and/or parole officers, reports made to the Court(s), contact with arresting parties or other police agencies, contact with family members, contact with employers, contact with present or new partner(s) and contact with other service agencies interested in this case.

Information provided will be released as it pertains to the following:

1. Attendance and progress in the program including absences,

compliance with treatment objectives, attitude, interactions with

others, commitment to change, and acts of violence and/or abuse.

1. Discharge information
2. Payment information
3. Attendance record
4. Assessment of safety and risk factors of emotional, physical and sexual abuse
5. Any threats made toward self and/or others

Electronic recording devices are not permitted in the group under any circumstances. This is a breech of confidentiality.

1. **Fees and Payment**

Fees for orientation and class sessions are due at or prior the time of the event. Non-payment of the fee not paid at the time of the class will result in a participant being unable to stay for that class and will be marked as absent. The charge for the initial class orientation is $35.00. The orientation session is required prior to beginning to attend classes. Each weekly class is $25.00. Proof of payment will be provided via email or if classes are in person, on your signed attendance log. Please bring your log with you to each class. If any participant is absent for a class which has already been paid for, the credit will remain in their account for use on the next class or classes. Any pre-payments which are not used by class attendance will be returned to the participant via the payment method used, if the participant withdraws from the program entirely. Credits returned to the participant’s payment method my take 7 to 10 business days to reach your account.

1. **Attendance**

The partnership skills educational program is designed to be a minimum of 26 weeks in duration and a maximum of 52 weeks based on individual needs and issues. The duration of the program will be determined by an individual’s progress in each class. A total of 3 absences in that period are allowed. Charges will not be made for those absences. Missing a 4th class will result in failure in the program and will require a participant to begin the class over or result in further Court action. If a participant is in the 52 week program, 6 absences will be allowed, with the 7th absences resulting in a restart requirement.

We make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. All absences from the class count toward the total allotment of absences. Late arrivals will be counted as an absence for that week due to the disruption it creates in the class and the disrespect contained in that behavior.

An initial orientation is required for all class members. This orientation is designed to help provide the new participant with information on the program. No cell phones, tablets or electronic devices are allowed to be used during the classes for any purpose. Photos and/or video recordings during the class are prohibited. Anyone arriving more than 5 minutes late for the class, will be marked absent.

1. **Program Rules**

**These program expectations are explained in the program policies and reviewed with the participant at the time of the orientation and any violation of these expectations will result in immediate removal from the program.**

Assignments and paperwork are required to be completed at times in the class. Assignments must be completed and brought to the class when due in order to receive credit for that session. If the homework is not completed, it will count as an absence.

If a participant has difficulty with reading and/or writing, they must notify one of the facilitators so that accommodations can be made in this area.

During video online classes:

During video classes, the participant will remain in front of the camera, with their camera on. They will mute themselves when not speaking in order to reduce back ground noise.

Participants will be appropriately fully dressed and seated, and not laying down.

Participants will be no more than 5 minutes late past the scheduled start time of the class or they will be marked absent for that session.

Participants will be alone in a private setting during the class to protect the confidentiality of the other classmates.

Participants will not drive during the class or be in a vehicle with another person during the class.

Participants must remain in the class for the full time of the class and will not receive credit for their attendance if they chose to leave prior to the end of the class.

Participants will not reveal the identity of, or provide any information that may lead to the identification of another class participants. Breach of this confidentiality expectation will result in immediate removal from the program.

Participants will not be under the influence of alcohol or any elicit substance during the class.

1. **Reporting**

A report of each member’s progress and attendance will be forwarded in writing to the appropriate probation/parole officer weekly. This report will include information about attendance record and progress on goals in the class. Telephone contact with probation/parole officers about each member’s progress is not uncommon and may be expected. Review reports on attendance and participation may be completed bi-monthly and forwarded to probation/parole or to the Court. These progress reports will include recommendations regarding the number of sessions recommended. This recommendation may change at any time based on the progress in the program.

1. **Victim Reports**

The victim of the domestic violence will be contacted, when possible, to obtain a history of abuse and violence. The victim is not required, in any way, to participate in this process. The victim report is confidential and will not be released to any party, outside of this program, without the express written permission of the victim. No information will be released to the batterer under any circumstances. This information is obtained to provide a history of abuse and to offer assistance and resources to the victim if requested. Information about the contents, procedures and policies of this program will be made available to all victims.

The victim is encouraged to contact the program instructors with any continuing concerns or questions at any time during your participation in the course. Victims are informed that participation or completion of this program in no way guarantees their safety. Victims are told that violence is a choice and that their safety may continue to be an issue even when the batterer is participating or has completed the program. Victims are given information and referral to the local shelter for advocacy, shelter, counseling or other assistance.

An immediate attempt to contact the victim, probation, public safety and/or the Court will be made if there is reason to believe that there is evidence of any potential danger. The victim will be allowed access to information regarding the participant’s attendance, commitment to non-violence, level of participation and termination status from the program.

1. **Non-Compliance/Failure**

Non-compliance with intervention recommendations/expectations may result in termination from the program. Failure in this program may be a result of, but not limited to:

* 1. Continued domestic abuse; particularly physical violence.
  2. Failure to make appropriate use of intervention services.
  3. Failure to comply with other intervention conditions of provisions which are a part of the contract
  4. Disruptive behaviors in the class
  5. Violation of the program rules and/or policies including breach of confidentiality
  6. Violation of any of the provision of the Court order
  7. Criminal behavior(s) including new charges
  8. Failure to pay fees due at the time of service.

Failure in this program will result in an immediate referral to probation, parole and/or the Courts. This program will encourage a response from the Court that reflects an understanding of non-compliance with intervention goals that have been designed to increase accountability and victim safety.

Participants who are discharged from the program due to excessive absences, may re-start the program without an additional orientation within 60 days. A new orientation will be required if a re-start request is longer than 60 days from the last class attended.

1. **Discharge**

Discharge from the program will be based on an assessment of several factors including:

* 1. A belief that battering and abuse is a choice.
  2. Having an understanding of the power and control wheel and its use in each member’s life.
  3. Accepting responsibility and being accountable for the violence and abuse.
  4. Having demonstrated an understanding and having implemented alternative strategies to the use of abuse and violence.
  5. Having demonstrated a commitment to ending abuse and control.
  6. Following successful completion and discharge in the program, you will be allowed to continue, free of charge, as long as no additional legal charges or incidents of violence have occurred.

1. **Alcohol/Drug Use**

Anyone who is under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of the class will be asked to leave the session.

Substance abuse issues and their relationship to violence and domestic abuse will be presented in the program and treatment may be required by probation and/or the Court.

Substantial substance abuse or dependence issues will be referred for a substance abuse assessment and/or treatment by a community agency.

1. **Weapons**

No weapons are permitted in the classes or on the grounds under any circumstances. Any violation of this protocol will result in the immediate dismissal from the program.

1. **Non-Court Ordered Participants**

Non-court-ordered participants are welcome to join the program. These members will be required to follow all of the policies and the rules of this program, as would court-ordered individuals. No exceptions can be made to any of the rules or policies in any case as this would result in unfair treatment practices.

1. **Evaluation**

Ongoing evaluation will be made of the program to insure the highest level of accountability possible. Follow-up interviews will be made with batterers and/or their partners at least 6 months after completion from the program whenever possible. The opportunity to evaluate the program will be offered to all participants at the end of their program, as well as, at anytime to any participant or victim. Confidentiality of all participants will be maintained and no identifying information will be released from any evaluation process. The information obtained through evaluations, as well as statistical information collected will be used to improve the program toward the goal of program accountability to the batterers, victims and the public.

1. **Revisions To The Program Policies**

Revisions to these policies may need to be made at times to insure improved services and accountability of the program and its participants. When such policy changes are made, the changes will be presented to each participant currently in the program and new policies copies will be made available. We reserve the right to refuse program services to anyone who does not comply with these policies or presents evidence of potential danger to class members or the staff.

1. A copy of these program polices is available on our website for download at [www.healthyrelationshipnow.com](http://www.healthyrelationshipnow.com).