



Domestic Violence Offender Treatment and Multidisciplinary Treatment Teams: The Role of “Treatment” Victim Advocates

Research Review and Discussion

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SECTION 1

Purpose

Review the following article:

Richards, T., & Gover, A. (2016). Domestic violence offender treatment and multidisciplinary treatment teams: The role of "treatment" victim advocates. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 1-17.

Background and overview

- Treatment Victim Advocates (TVAs) serve alongside providers and probation/parole officers on multidisciplinary treatment teams (MTTs), which oversee offenders treatment. There have been no studies examining the utility of victim advocates as advisors regarding interventions for domestic violence offenders
- Victim advocacy organizations impact the DV population in two ways: 1. providing direct services (community based) 2. working within the criminal justice system (system based)
- The 2010 Standards for Domestic Violence Offender Treatment (*Standards*) were revised by the Colorado Domestic Violence Management Board (DVOMB). These revisions developed a dual role for treatment victim advocates (TVAs) to include functions of both community and system based TVAs.
- Coordinated community responses to DV
- TVAs provide insights that increase victim and community safety that may otherwise be unidentifiable by other sources

Treatment Victim Advocates (TVAs)

- Provide a range of direct services to victims of DV - tangible and intangible
- Relationship with system based advocates begins when the victim engages with the criminal justice system
- TVAs relationship with representatives of the CJ system
- TVA's role within the Colorado MTT Model

SECTION 2

Current Study

Seeks to identify gaps in the literature around the TVAs advisory role in DV offender treatment. Of particular interest: TVAs ability to provide direct services to victims, TVAs role in MTT decision making regarding offender treatment, and the frequency and quality of communication with other MTT members.

Method

- Sample: n=110 TVAs (n=110) currently working with DV offender treatment providers in Colorado on at least one MTT (n=172*). 37 responses - 36% response rate.
- Education level of sample: 51% held more than a BA/BS, 23% held a BA/BS, 9% held an AA/AS, 14% reported 'some college', 1 advocate reported high school diploma
- Training: TVAs reported receiving between 2 to 100 hours of training
 - 50% reported more than 49 hours of training.
- 74% of TVAs reported working with providers who work with special populations and 66% of TVAs reported receiving specialized DV training with special populations

Method

- Survey focused on services provided to victims, MTT communication issues, and the MTT decision making process.
- Survey was piloted with DVOMB staff and researchers.
- Survey was administered online through Qualtrics. Respondents were compensated for their time with a 10\$ Amazon GC.

SECTION 3

Results, Conclusions and Discussion

Results

- Victim engagement: Varied widely across respondents (1%-95%). 30% do not remain involved after initial contact, 20% of TVAs reported that 80% or more of victims choose not to engage in the advocacy relationship.
- MTT Decision Making: very split responses - only 66% of TVAs reported that decision making was done as a team. Of the remaining respondents 83% indicated that the treatment provider made the decision, and 17% indicated that the probation officer made the decision.
- Communication: TVAs reported low levels of exclusion (31%). 83% reported email, 77% reported phone conversations 63% reported face to face conversations, 26% utilize internal software such as ReliaTrax.
- 86% reported that they were able to successfully advocate for victim safety concerns, 80% reported that they were able to successfully advocate during offender treatment plan reviews.

Results

- Victim engagement - not unique to Colorado
- Transportation issues - suggestion of allocating funds to give TVAs the ability to connect with victims remotely
- Power dynamics in teams may influence decision making
- ‘Model’ teams around the state, cross training all members, team mediation
- Availability of TVAs
- Potential causes for low participation in survey and what this means for results