

**Standards and recommendations for work with male perpetrators within an institutional cooperative alliance against domestic violence
(“Perpetrator work DV”)**

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1 Introduction

1.1 Definition of domestic violence

In this document, domestic violence will be understood as, „violence from men against their (Ex-) Partners“. We are well aware that this definition only covers a small amount of the violence perpetrated in society. As required, concepts and standards must be developed for other target groups (violence in same-sex relationships, violence against children, violence from children against parents, violence from women against their (Ex-) Partners).

Violence will be understood here as every form of purposive harm against the mental and physical integrity of another person. Domestic violence contains a pattern of controlling behaviour that harms the physical and mental integrity of another person. This can cause serious and long-term negative effects to the well-being, self-esteem, autonomy, physical and mental health of the aggrieved person. Domestic violence includes physical, mental, sexual, social, emotional and financial violence. Also Isolation, stalking, harassment and intimidation.

1.2 Basic understanding of perpetrator work DV

Domestic violence is not a private issue – it is a breach against a human’s right of physical and mental inviolability. Domestic violence is widespread throughout society, the perpetrators are predominantly men. The violence is predominantly directed towards women. Children are generally affected by domestic violence. The definition of perpetrator work DV is the counselling of the male offenders and their involvement with the networking partners. The practical outworking of perpetrator work DV is within a group setting. The main aim/goal of perpetrator work DV is the lasting termination of violent behaviour.

Perpetrator work DV has the following understanding of violence:

- Violent behaviour is learned. Therefore socially agreeable behaviour can also be learned.
- Perpetrators are 100% responsible for their violent behaviour.
- Violent behaviour is purposive and intended.
- Violent behaviour underlies a decision.
- Violent behaviour is always integrated into historical and social circumstances and is predominately used to stabilise and preserve power.
- Violent behaviour is not an inevitable destiny, but changeable.
- Violent behaviour aims to ensure control and to (re-)establish power.
- Domestic violence is not restricted to any particular class in society.

When the minimal standards formulated in this document are observed, then Perpetrator work DV is a part of an intervention chain against domestic violence and can administrate an important contribution to victim protection.

Perpetrator work DV must occur in the context of regional networking (e.g. interventional projects, interventional centres, networking of regional victim support

organisations). Due to the networking approach of interventional- and co-ordination centres, woman's services, perpetrator groups, police, courts and prosecution services, probation offices and courts assistants, other information centres, health care centres and law courts, direct help and support can be guaranteed for the victim of domestic violence. The perpetrator can be made accountable for his actions. If necessary, this can be done by external pressure, institutional and/or judicial sanctions and directives.

In conjunction with the co-operation of the other networking groups both regionally and nationally following the minimum standards as stated in this document, quality safe guards and transparency of perpetrator work DV will improve the victim protection. The sole punishment of perpetrators with fines and imprisonment does not automatically cause him to critically examine and to terminate his violent behaviour. Judicial sanctions are also important, because without them violent behaviour could be trivialised and therefore be intensified.

Standard for perpetrator work DV is group work. Group work can be replaced by one-on-one work in special circumstances. One-on-one and marriage counselling can be a supportive measure in special circumstances. The financing of perpetrator work DV may not be made at the cost of woman's help services.

The transfer of information between the co-operative organisations and/or the victims is necessary for safety of the victims and their children (see point 2).

1.3 Guidelines for perpetrator work DV

Perpetrator work DV is there to offer support to violent men to change their behaviour. Victim protection is the essential part of perpetrator work DV, therefore every form of action must increase the safety of the (Ex-) Partners and their children and therefore be checkable. The basic principle of the work is a positive concept of human being. The violent behaviour, and not the person, is not approved of. Next to respecting the perpetrator as a person in his own right, the following principles are also applied:

- Conflict- and violent behaviour is to be differentiated
- Domestic violence is not acceptable and must be prohibited
- The perpetrators must be made responsible for their behaviour
- Within the setting of perpetrator work DV change can be made when the perpetrators intensively examine their own behaviour
- An efficient approach against domestic violence is ensured when politics, justice, police, social- and health centres, society and every individual work together.
- Perpetrator work DV should encourage a positive social relationship with a foundation of acceptance and equality.

Perpetrator work DV must conceptionally accept educational differences, cultural and social backgrounds and also regional conditions. The following standards are also to be maintained when being conducted in special perpetrator programs, for example for men with migrational backgrounds.

2 Networking and co-operation

Perpetrator work DV should not be in isolation, it should take place within the already existing, or the to be developed, intervention structures against domestic violence. Research results from America show that the efficiency of perpetrator work DV depends upon how good the perpetrator programme institutions, the police, courts, social offices, woman's help institutions and other municipal and regional institutions and help centres work together (Gondolf 2002).

Networking should not only take place on the precise case related level, but also, on a higher institutional level. Thereby all networking partners must be informed about the concept, contents and terms and conditions of perpetrator work DV. The perpetrator program organisations should actively strive towards a consensus of network agreements, reporting and response procedures, control and evaluation procedures. This especially concerns the networking between the perpetrator program organisations and the woman's help services, child- and youth care services, judiciary and the police.

2.1 Co-operation with the Police

The police are often the first state institution that intervenes by domestic violence. The regional perpetrator programme institutions should inform the local police so that they can recommend the relevant programmes to the offenders

In order to get the offender, as quickly as possible after a violent act, into such a programme it is advisable that special arrangements are made with the police.

2.2 Co-operation with Judiciary

The prosecution authorities (also including judges from the criminal- and family courts) have to be well informed about perpetrator work DV as they have to make decisions about sanctions and about issuing directives for the participation in a perpetrator program.

The admission to perpetrator programs through judiciary recommendation, instruction and obligation has been proved nationally and internationally successful (Gondolf 2002; Debonnaire 2004, WIBIG 2004 C, Barz/Helfferich 2006). Perpetrator work DV is a meaningful extension to the existing sanctional options. The existing options of the judiciary system of instructing offenders into perpetrators programs should therefore be utilised. If a perpetrator is judicially instructed to take part in such a program, the perpetrator programme institutions is obligated to inform the prosecution authorities about the begin, break off, elimination and completion of the scheme. The offender must therefore allow the release of confidential information between the various institutions. If possible then perpetrator programme institutions should work together with the probation offices and court assistants as they can also recommend the participation in a group. These organisations also monitor the compliance and fulfilment of sanctions enforced.

Perpetrator programme institutions do not make evaluations or social prognosis about the perpetrator.

2.3 Contact with the (Ex-)Partners

The perpetrator programme institutions should contact the (Ex-) Partners because violent men can use their participation in perpetrator work DV to continue to manipulate their (Ex-) Partners (i.e. false information about the contents and agreements of the perpetrator work DV).

The women should be informed about:

- contents, goals and limits of perpetrator work DV
- their ongoing endangerment
- need and possibility for their own safety arrangements
- special institutions and advisory services for women and their children
- the possibility to contact the perpetrator program organisation at any time
- the begin, break off, elimination and completion of agreed terms taken with their (Ex-) Partner.

By any indication of acute endangerment, the (Ex-) Partner will be immediately informed. The contact to the (Ex-) Partner also gives them the opportunity to describe the violent acts and the physical and mental consequences for them and their children. The perpetrator programme institution therefore gets a greater understanding of the extent of the violence. The perpetrator programme institution should once again contact the (Ex-) Partner, at the latest, before completion of the programme.

2.4 Co-operation with associated women's services

Formulation of common procedures against domestic violence and continued development of the networking with associated women's services is recommended to enable further protection of the victims.

2.5 Co-operation with child and youth services

Children are generally affected by domestic violence. The youth office staff should be informed about the work and contents of perpetrator work DV. The youth office can also appeal to the offenders to participate in the programme. A Regular exchange of information between institutions is of great importance when assessing the endangerment of the affected child/children (see "protection assignment" according to § 1666 BGB and §8a SGB VIII). The participation of the man in a programme can also be a part of a guidance plan arrangement/supervision order. In such cases the perpetrator programme institution should be directly involved in the guidance plan conference/child protection meeting.

Furthermore examination of contact arrangements and the resumption of the offenders contact to his children, for example after the completion in a programme,

should be in accordance with these standards. The sole participation in a programme, for example by decisions of accompanied contact, is insufficient according to these standards.

The extent and conceptual implementation of a programme for fathers goes beyond the defined standards in this document and additional program points must be considered. Among other things there must be a determined focus on the damage of domestic violence to children. The men should be questioned more closely and encouraged in their role as a father. In terms of child protection, it makes sense to work closely together with child protection institutions. Therefore the offender must release the institution from data protection to allow for further co-operation within the network. Furthermore child protection is a central aspect in the practical implementation of perpetrator work DV.

2.6 Co-operation with further help services

A networking with all existing support services that deal with domestic violence is generally aspired. These include:

- marriage and family counselling authorities
- addiction counselling authorities
- psychotherapists
- health services
- culprit and restorative justice

3 Standards for the practise of perpetrator work DV

As well as the above described networking and co-operation, perpetrator work DV includes a violence centralised and confronting support and counselling proposition for behavioural change for the violent men (Perpetrator programme).

3.1. Target group

The target group are adult male perpetrators who have been violent towards their (ex-) partners (see the definition of domestic violence point 1.1). Men who register voluntarily and those who are sent, e.g.: from the youth service and law courts, will be counselled. Perpetrator work DV is not an alternative to the existing programmes for the treatment of sexual offenders.

3.2 Objectives and Focus

Perpetrator work DV also includes examination of mental, physical and sexual violence, social, emotional and economical violence, isolation, stalking, harassment and intimidation, violent demanding attitude and doctrines.

Perpetrator work DV follows following core goals:

- **No new violence:** the spiral of violence must be quickly and sustainably broken. Violent men should recognise their risk to repeat offence and be able to take precautionary actions.

In terms of this goal settlement the following goals exist:

- **Accepting the responsibility:** the perpetrators should accept the responsibility for their violent actions: denials, justification, excuse, accusations and blame will be consequently exposed, rejected and confronted.
- **Self-perception and – control:** the perpetrator should recognise and learn to accept their own and the boundaries of others.
- **Empathy:** the perpetrator should learn to put themselves in the place of their (Ex-) Partners and children.
- **Alternative conflict remedy solutions:** the men should learn to resolve future conflicts non-violently. They should develop their own strategies and options so that they can deal with future (conflict-) situations without breaching their own boundaries or those of others.
- **Ability to have a and/or maintain a relationship:** the men should improve their perception and their communicative abilities in their relationships. They can therefore sustainably improve their own quality of life and the quality from their social relationships.

3.3 Setting and scope

Perpetrator work DV should fundamentally take place in a group setting. The interaction and the group dynamics assist social learning. In the group there are the optimal requirements for the men to learn from other participants who have had similar experiences. They will be confronted with their wrongdoings, and their denials and justifications will be questioned. They can examine their own behaviour with that of the other participants and therefore critically question their own violent actions. The groups should be facilitated by at least two qualified staff.

The duration and process-oriented character of perpetrator programmes is important in order to achieve a sustained behavioural change. Therefore a perpetrator programme should take place over at least six months, plus admission procedure and follow-up. The appointments should take place once a week. In exceptional cases another scheduling is possible, as long as they are in line with the drafted standards. The group should consist of 5-10 participants.

During the current programme additional counselling resources, i.e. crisis intervention should be available. If indicated a counselling offer should be made for the (Ex-) Partner and/or the couple (if applicable in co-operation with the woman's help services, see point 2.4). After completion of the perpetrator programme the men should get the possibility to contact the institution again, and each participant should have at least one follow-up appointment. If, in exceptional cases, group work is not possible, then a structured one-to-one counselling process can be done. This should then be done according to the drafted standards.

3.4 Contractual agreements

Foundation for the participation in a perpetrator programme is the written agreements between the perpetrator programme institution and the participating man. Necessary components of this are:

- contents of the perpetrator programme
- binding and regular participation
- adherence of the rules and agreements
- break-up and disqualification policy
- policy by new violent actions during group participation
- release from data protection towards
 - (Ex-) Partner
 - Institutions that make injunctions
 - Case involved woman's Help Services
 - Existing intervention services
- consent to contact the (Ex-) Partner
- commitment of a financial contribution

3.5 Admittance criteria

Only men who fulfil the following criteria can be admitted to a perpetrator programme:

- (1) sufficient knowledge of the language spoken in the course
- (2) sufficient cognitive skills
- (3) confession of their offence
- (4) willingness to co-operate
- (5) the ability to work within a group

The perpetrator will not be admitted to the programme if he does not fulfil one or more of the named criteria. This can be, for example, an alcohol- or drug addiction, consumption of psychotropic substances and a mental disorder.

3.6 Selection policy of the participants

Before the admittance to a perpetrator programme the participants should be told about the general conditions. The participants' motives should be clarified. Furthermore, at least one face-to-face conversation with the perpetrator should take place. The following general conditions and contents should be clarified/achieved during the selection process:

- clarification of admission
- clarification of the accusation and the circumstances of the offence
- reading of the documents (i.e. judiciary files) that are connected with the violent behaviour
- case history (with emphasis on the violence development)
- clarification of the admittance- and disqualification criteria
- signature of the written contractual obligations

The staff of the perpetrator programme institutions makes the final decision of who is to be admitted.

3.7 Re-offending during programme policy

The participants sign a pledge to voluntarily tell if they commit new violent acts. This act will be processed within the group. An extension of the programme is recommended for these perpetrators.

The perpetrator group institutions develop individual measures with the participant to prevent new violent acts and also control the compliance of these measures. In these cases the (Ex-) Partner should again be contacted.

The participant will be disqualified from the current programme if he breaks the arrangement and/or not take responsibility for his actions (for further procedure: see point 3.8). In such cases the safety of the (Ex-) Partner and the children is of top priority.

3.8 Disqualification policy

A participant is to be disqualified from the current programme when one or more of the following points exist:

- **Absence of assumption of responsibility:** denegation, innocence assertion and blame regarding the committed violence are being maintained.
- **New violent act:** the participant does not want to critically examine the action after being once again violent towards his (Ex-) Partner and/or children, and is not willing to realise measures which will prevent a repetition.
- **Insufficient collaboration and co-operation:** repeated absence of co-operativeness and collaboration. The group events are actively or passively being boycotted.
- **Breach of the rules:** the participant repeatedly breaches rules and agreements.
- **Absenteeism:** the participant breaches the requirement of obligatory attendance.
- **Group capability:** the lack of willingness and/or ability to cope sufficiently with such a programme.

When the participant is disqualified the (Ex-) Partner and networking partners will be informed immediately.

3.9 Core contents of the perpetrator programme

A manifold of educational-therapeutic approaches, concepts and methods are necessary in order to achieve the described goals of the programme. Despite these differences, the following core contents are a compulsory component of the perpetrator programme:

- **Examination of the perception of violence and the violent actions:** Violent men should be sensitised towards the different forms and characteristic of violence. They should recognise and name their violent behaviour within the partnership. The goal is that they develop a clear

understanding of violence and that they adequately distance their conflict behaviour from this.

- **Reconstruction of the offence (Violence description):** The central and essential part in a perpetrator program is the detailed description of the perpetrators violent situations/-actions and the confrontation with his violent behaviour. The goal is that the perpetrator recognises his own responsibility and the underlying motives involved in his behaviour. He should realise he has many opportunities to alternative behaviour during an escalating conflict situation. The description of his actions also includes a change in perspective to the related women and children with the goal of empathy development.
- **The effect of violence:** The perpetrator programme focuses on the short- and long-term affects for the related women and children, for example (mental and physical) damage and injury.
- **The balance of violence:** In the perpetrator programme the men should analyse the pros and cons of their violent behaviour. They should recognise that the violence brought them short-term advantages (they were able to enforce their interests or the conflict was terminated), but there are more severe and long-term disadvantages and damage associated with it.
- **Violent free strategies for courses of action:** A part of the perpetrator programme is the acquirement and the practise of concrete violent free alternative courses of action. The social and communicative competence should be strengthened. This also includes the ability to recognise and verbalise their own feelings and personal needs.
- **Emergency plans:** In order to prevent relapses in violence it is important to devise, reflect and apply emergency plans. Every participant establishes individual, and if possible concrete and suitable for everyday use exit possibilities for future critical conflict situations. He reflects these possibilities within the group and applies them in his everyday life.
- **Communication patterns:** In the perpetrator programme the men get the possibility to bring in and reflect current conflicts and themes from their relationship. The participant's communication structure in their relationships should be clearly defined and scrutinised for patterns that encourage the escalation in conflict situations.
- **Male- and female images:** Men should learn to look into their own construction of masculinity, violence, power and powerlessness. The participants should realise that they have through their past historical experience, internalised images of patriarchal role models. Also they should scrutinise their relationships to women and change to an appropriate egalitarian partnership understanding.
- **Role as a father:** The participants should learn to look at their responsibility and the boundaries in their own role as a father. They should particularly recognise the consequences of the violent actions for their children and their relationship to their children. They should enhance their attitude towards the child's mother.
- **Their experience as a victim:** Within the group, every man should get the possibility to reflect his own experiences as a victim. The goal here is to allow admittance to his own feelings and to enhance the empathy ability. In this process it should be put across to the men that their own experiences as a victim are no justification for their violent behaviour.

4 Data Protection policy

The data protection policy laws must be adhered to (see: Bundesdatenschutzgesetz - German federation protection of data privacy law). A transfer of data is only valid with a written release of data protection.

5 Staff Qualifications

The staff must fulfil following requirements and bring along following acquirements in order to do qualified perpetrator work:

- an educational or a psychological or similar qualification from a college of higher education or university of applied sciences,
- a violence specialist/supplementary training according to the recommendation of the Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Täterarbeit HG (BAG TäHG) (German federal work association perpetrator work domestic violence DV),
- Examination of themselves,
- Extensive knowledge of the dynamics of violent relationships,
- Reflection of their own gender role and sensitivity for gender hierarchy and sexism,
- Regular advanced training, further education and supervision,
- Experience of directing groups.

6 Basic requirements of the Institution

Perpetrator work must be done in an institution from the youth services, or the welfare work or a public organisation so that a professional surveillance can be guaranteed. The following requirements must be guaranteed in order to ensure the professional and institutional quality of the perpetrator group organisations:

- at least two members of staff,
- appropriate premises and equipment (i.e. counselling room, group room),
- regular advanced training and further education,
- supervision,
- Structure in administration.

7 Documentation of Data

Perpetrator work institutions must collect social statistic and personal related data by means of institution internal standardised instruments (e.g.: questionnaire) and document their work. The organisation publicises an annual statistic and accountability report with at least the following accounts: admittance data, dispersion of age, number of first counselling, admittance, disqualification, group participation, break-off and completion. The BAG TäHG aspires a standardised minimum norm for the data census and documentation.

8 Evaluation

Perpetrator work institutions should develop and install effective methods to control the quality of their work. They should be open to external evaluation. The evaluating institutions should obtain statements about the effect of the perpetrator programme from the participants and, if possible also from the related partners. Existing evaluation instruments should be applied and advanced. A standardised evaluation instrument and its implementation in the practise over the whole country are aspired (see point 7). A long-term evaluation is to be worked towards.

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