



Batterers Intervention Program (BIP)

Placement Description

Psycho-education group program for men who batter their partners as well as groups for females

Intern or Field Placement Responsibilities/Opportunities

- Help facilitate or observe BIP (Batterers Intervention Program)
- Do court observation
- Do initial victim-contact calls as well as follow-up "safety checks"
- Complete research protocols, assist with data collection and ongoing research projects
- Conduct or observe BIP intake assessments
- May participate in other groups if available
- May work with the Council on Domestic Violence/Choices Women's Shelter

Contact Information

- Contact Person: Judith Weaver, BSW, Ed.S, LPC
- Address: 320 S. Main St. Harrisonburg, VA 22801
- Telephone: (540) 433-1291
- E-Mail: jwalpc@aol.com
- Website: <http://judithweavercounseling.org/batterers-intervention-program/>



Read about students' experiences at this site below:

Fall 2021 - Katie Liskey

Throughout the fall 2021 semester, I had the opportunity to intern at Batterer's Intervention Program (BIP). BIP offers psychoeducational and group therapy services to both court-ordered and volunteer participants. The mission of Batterer's Intervention Program is "to aid in the elimination of domestic violence by providing services to batterers, promote safety and justice for victims of domestic violence, and affect social change leading to cultural values that prohibit rather than support abuse within intimate relationships". Batterer's Intervention Program is a 13 to 25-week program with curriculum that stems from the philosophy that domestic violence is a learned behavior, that batterers must take full responsibility for their behavior, and that domestic violence is a conscious decision used to wield power and control over others. Many of the topics covered in BIP groups include identifying types of abuse, impacts of abuse on victims, the dysfunctional value systems that lead to justification and reproduction of domestic violence, the cyclical nature of abuse and how to break these dysfunctional cycles, the ways that domestic abuse impacts mental health and vice versa, communications skills, navigating conflict within healthy relationships, healthy identification and expression of emotions, and skills for taking accountability. BIP serves Harrisonburg/Rockingham, Frederick, Clarke, Page, Warren, and Shenandoah counties and has been operating since 1992 under the supervision of Judith Weaver, who is a licensed professional counselor. In general, participants have an intake interview soon after their referral to BIP that gathers their demographic information and any relevant criminal, mental health, and/or violent history. Following the intake, facilitators contact the victim to gather more information that may be relevant to use in group with participants. Communication with victims and the use of their information is done with consent from the victim to ensure their safety. Following the intake and victim contact, those referred to BIP begin coming to group meetings once a week. Upon completion, participants write a letter of compassion and accountability and then graduate from the class.

Throughout my time with Batterer's Intervention Program, I have had the opportunity to observe Harrisonburg/Rockingham Juvenile & Domestic Court, to observe and perform intake interviews, to plan lessons for and lead BIP groups (both as a co-facilitator and independently), to write monthly reports and submit them to the clerk's office, and to input client data into a demographic report. I have truly enjoyed the experience of getting to work with the participants and hear their stories. I am in awe of the resilience that many of the participants have shown throughout their entire lives and the change that can occur in participants over the course of a few weeks when they have had the space to deconstruct their dysfunctional thought patterns and process their emotions. I was particularly struck by the number of times that I came across an intake form that indicated that the participant themselves had survived some form of domestic violence at some point in their lives before ever becoming a perpetrator of domestic violence. In past psychology classes I have learned about the cyclical nature of abuse, so it was incredibly impactful to see this cycle in action. Additionally, it was interesting to see the ways that mental health diagnoses impact the ways that people perceive domestic violence. Throughout the



semester, I heard mental health issues being cited as justification for domestic abuse. Learning how to promote more inclusive and accurate language is one of the skills that I feel much more confident in through my time with BIP. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to supplement field placement with a 1-credit class on trauma-informed approaches (IPE 490), and from the information I learned in this class, it was fascinating to see the impacts of trauma on both batterers and those around them.

I have grown in many ways during my time with Batterer's Intervention Program this semester. Looking back to my first week with BIP, I remember feeling anxious about the potential for compassion fatigue and about my ability to advocate for myself amidst a full class-schedule and a 150-hour internship. In all honesty, an internship such as this one is very difficult and very time-consuming. I found myself challenged to use my time management skills, as I had to make priorities in different ways than I have before. Furthermore, much of the work for BIP requires self-motivation, the ability to ask questions, and the ability to ask for help. Oftentimes, there is travel time involved in driving to Luray for groups, which does not count toward total hours and does tend to add up. However, the drive is beautiful (especially taking Route 33 & Route 340) and I found it to be a very beneficial time to decompress. Amidst the difficulty of this position, I found that BIP greatly increased my capacity for empathy. Though society often promotes a singular image in our minds when we hear the term "batterer," each individual and each situation are different. Their experiences, their response to group materials, and their success in BIP and beyond vary greatly based on many factors that have contributed to their development as humans. It's been incredible to see the variation amongst participants who, on paper, look incredibly similar. I've learned to ask about participants' stories and to really take the time to listen as they speak about their experiences.

Throughout my time with BIP, I've observed many problems that barely scratch the surface of deep, systemic issues. Using what I've learned from both the psychology and sociology departments at JMU, I was able to help participants as they worked through individual, micro-level issues, while also unearthing issues at the macro-level that impact entire groups and societies. In an example of this, I was able to create supplemental discussion guides for many of the common handouts used in group, allowing for a more individualized and inclusive experience for group members. At a micro level, this allows participants to think about ways that the material pertains to their own lives, whereas at a macro-level, this addresses the heteronormativity that is incredibly common in Batterer's Intervention Programs. Although it is true that male-to-female battering is the most common, Batterer's Intervention Program also serves female populations, so it was helpful to have gender neutral options for handouts and discussion guides to facilitate discussion in a more relevant way.

At the beginning of the semester, I had a definitive plan for where I wanted to go from JMU and exactly how I wanted to go about becoming a licensed professional counselor. As the semester progressed, I encountered more and more issues with our legal and healthcare systems that made me feel very drawn to the idea of doing research that will help restore agency to those who feel like it's been stolen. Though at times this made my career goals seem even more ambiguous, I know with certainty that I want to work to empower those who I work with to



make meaningful changes in their lives. I am certain that I will carry the lessons with me that I've learned through my experience with BIP; both in my career and throughout my life.