

Victims often report wanting to stop the cycle of violence or hoping their abuser will change. Victims also worry about what will happen to the offender and their family if they report the abuse or obtain a protective order.

**It is important to remember that the abuse is not your fault. Instead, the offender is responsible.**

Offender services are designed to hold the abuser accountable for their behavior and then provide them with opportunities to change and eliminate future violence.

In Fairfax County, offender services include batterer intervention programs and protective order compliance monitoring.

## Batterer Intervention Programs

A Batterer Intervention Program (BIP) is a psycho-educational group led by trained professional facilitators. While different programs have different philosophies and approaches, generally abusers learn to identify abusive behaviors, to react non-abusively, and to communicate appropriately with their partner.

The goals of BIPs center on victim safety, offender accountability, and community collaboration. BIPs differ from, and are not replaceable by, substance abuse treatments, mental health services, and family/marriage/couples or other counseling and anger management programs.

In Fairfax County, there are three certified BIPs:

- **Fairfax County Anger & Domestic Abuse Prevention & Treatment (ADAPT)**  
Telephone: 703-968-4052  
Website: [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofw/adapt.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ofw/adapt.htm)
- **Opportunities, Alternatives and Resources (OAR) Violence Intervention Program**  
Telephone: 703-246-3033  
Website: [www.oarfairfax.org/services/violence-intervention-program](http://www.oarfairfax.org/services/violence-intervention-program)
- **Northern Virginia Family Service**  
Telephone: 571-748-2818  
Website: [www.nvfs.org/pages/page.asp?page\\_id=91720](http://www.nvfs.org/pages/page.asp?page_id=91720)

## Protective Order Compliance Monitoring

The Protective Order Compliance Officer monitors the enforcement of treatment and intervention provisions of civil protective orders. When the offender is ordered to attend a BIP or participate in substance abuse counseling or mental health treatment, the Compliance Officer ensures

completion of the program. The Officer also coordinates with victims and law enforcement when there are violations of the provisions of a civil protective order. For more information, call **703-246-2757**.

For substance abuse or mental health treatment, call the Community Services Board at **703-383-8500**.

## How do I know if the abuser has really changed?

While it is true that people can and do change, it is more common for the pattern of domestic violence to continue in active and dormant cycles. Usually, real change does not occur without serious consequences and real accountability for those who have been violent. A batterer intervention program may help bring about real change only if the abuser accepts responsibility.

While there is never a guarantee that the abuse has stopped completely, below are some signs that could indicate whether a person has truly changed their behavior.

Abusers Making Real Change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Acknowledge past abuse</li> <li>■ Take responsibility for self</li> <li>■ Cease completely <b>all</b> forms of abuse (not just physical abuse)</li> <li>■ Share power and decision-making (increased equality)</li> <li>■ Regulate their own emotions (not insist on others placating)</li> <li>■ Allow the victim time to heal and regain trust (not insisting on rushed forgiveness)</li> </ul>
Abusers Still in the Cycle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Mix apology with blame</li> <li>■ In subtle ways blame the victim for the violence or for the abuser's behavior</li> <li>■ Self-justify past or present abuse (minimizing, rationalizing, excuses, denial, avoidance, etc.)</li> <li>■ Continue to control, threaten, or otherwise abuse</li> <li>■ Let the victim carry the majority of the burden of creating change</li> </ul>
<p><b>Most importantly, victims should learn to trust their instincts and be cautious about trusting the abuser. Watch for warning signs that the cycle of violence is continuing.</b></p>

