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Domestic Violence Study Finds Which Batterers Are Least Likely to Be Re-arrested

Courts and Probation Departments Should Assess the Needs of Individual Offenders

SAN FRANCISCO—A new domestic violence study has found that the strongest predictors of success in treating offenders convicted of a criminal domestic violence offense were the individual characteristics of the offenders, not the features of batterer intervention programs (BIPs) or the attributes of the court jurisdiction.

The study, conducted by researchers at the Administrative Office of the Courts' Office of Court Research, found that offenders who are more educated, are fully employed, have short criminal histories, and show no clear signs of drug or alcohol dependence are more likely to successfully complete batterer intervention programs and are least likely to be re-arrested.

The results of the study indicate how the justice system can increase the likelihood that batterers will complete court-ordered education and training programs and not commit new acts of domestic violence either during or after attendance in the programs.

“Screening mechanisms should seek, to the extent possible, to include needs assessment to assist in directing offenders to resources that might improve their chances of successfully completing the BIP and remaining violence free during and following their attendance in the program,” concluded the study, which is entitled *Batterer Intervention Systems in California – An Evaluation* and can be found online at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/reference/batintsys.htm

The federally funded study, the largest of its kind ever conducted, examined data on nearly 1,500 offenders enrolled in 53 different batterer intervention programs in Los Angeles, Riverside, San Joaquin, Santa Clara, and Solano Counties. The study sought to identify variations in policies and practices across courts, probation departments, and batterer intervention programs that affect the likelihood of an offender completing the program and the probability of being re-arrested.

However, the data revealed that the strongest predictors of outcomes were the individual characteristics of the offenders, not the programs in which they were enrolled or the characteristics of each court jurisdiction. The study has been submitted to the National Institute of Justice, which provided \$250,000 in funding for the three-year study.

Under California law, persons convicted of a criminal domestic violence offense must attend a 52-week batterer intervention program as a condition of probation. The programs are structured

courses designed to stop the use of physical, psychological, or sexual abuse to gain or maintain control over a person such as a spouse or cohabitant.

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