Nashville SAVE Program Addresses Violent Behavior

LONG BEFORE THE WORLD watched the O.J. trial-which seemed to bring the issue of domestic violence to the forefront-Paul Mulloy, Director of Treatment Programs at the Davidson County Sheriff's Office (DCSO) in Nashville, Tennessee, had begun to make a difference with domestic violence perpetrators in jail.

"In 1993, I started noticing that individuals who were coming through our drug treatment program, New Avenues, also had many domestic violence assault charges. After analyzing offender rap sheets, we decided something should be done. We began structuring a class on issues of violence," Mulloy said. "By 1994, we had our first domestic violence class for individuals who had completed New Avenues and wanted to take control of their anger. That first class had two participants; to my knowledge, those two have never been back in jail."

Four years later the Sheriff's Anti-Violence Effort (SAVE) program graduates 15 to 20 inmates every 6 weeks. Sixty-eight percent of those offenders stay out of jail a year after graduation. In addition, inmates who successfully complete the SAVE program may qualify for reduced jail time, which saves taxpayers' money.

SAVE's mission is to help inmates become aware, responsible, and accountable for their violence. Participants are aided in learning how to end violent behavior toward others by replacing it with responsible actions based on self-control. All graduates are referred to a community-based domestic violence program for aftercare. All victims of SAVE clients are referred to community resources where safety, autonomy, and restoration are promoted.

The program, conducted at the minimum-security Correctional Work Center, is based on power and control issues. SAVE consists of didactic lectures and group sessions. Inmates selected for the program are involved in a rigorous schedule that begins with breakfast at 4:30 a.m. and continues with activities throughout the day until 10:30 p.m. Participants attend closed therapeutic sessions, participate in housing unit activities, work in the facility kitchen, complete individual assignments, and may attend computer-aided educational training.

"We always keep the groups closed after the session starts. In our substance abuse program we have new people joining group all the time. But when guys start saying, 'Yeah, I beat my wife,' the trust level has to be very high. That would not be possible if new people were coming in every week. If we start with 20 and lose two for some reason, we will only graduate 18," Mulloy said.

MAKING THE INDIVIDUAL aware, accountable, and responsible for his behavior is achieved through various methods. Instructors use the power/control wheel and the equality wheel, which are both standards in domestic violence treatment. These tools teach inmates to look at learned violent behaviors and to change those behaviors-how to treat others with respect and, more importantly, how to stop the violence.

Jail officials also use the Violence Interruption Process (VIP). Mulloy and another instructor earned their VIP training certification at Chicago's Cook County Jail.

The VIP program addresses both male and female socialization. It also teaches a learned process as well as a

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way for participants to begin to recognize their violent actions, immediately stop themselves, and then react differently. Through group sessions, lectures, and role-playing, VIP shows individuals how to deal with their pasts and look to the future.

"So many times you hear these guys say, 'I promised not to do what my dad did when I was younger. Now look at me; I'm in the same place he was.' When they become cognizant of this issue, that's movement for them. Becoming emotional for these participants is difficult because they are used to dealing with emotions on an anger level," Mulloy added.

According to Mulloy, during therapeutic sessions, he will write ANGER on the chalkboard, then draw a line under that and write what feelings come along with anger. He says no matter what part of the country a man is from, he is generally socialized in the same manner. For men to deal with emotional issues on an anger level is more accepted in today's society. The men Mulloy deals with on a day-to-day basis have taken that anger to the extreme.

"One thing I believe helps make our program successful is that we have co-facilitators-one man, one woman. A woman can pick up on things that I might not see and vice versa. While teaching the issues of power and control, we role play using control planning where participants talk about what's going to happen when they get angry again-because that will happen. The program is more about being comfortable with your feelings, good or bad, and learning not to get drunk, get high, or get violent."

INMATES MAY REFER themselves to SAVE or get recommendations from judges, the district attorney, family, correctional staff, case managers, and community agencies. Because jail officials have found that substance abuse and domestic violence often go hand-in-hand, instructors prefer for inmates to deal with their drug abuse issues through New Avenues before they begin to focus on their violence issues.

According to Mulloy, the perpetrators who come through SAVE were at one time victims themselves. Most indicate that they were victimized by parents, on the streets by other criminals, at school by a bully, by fellow gang members, or by others.

SAVE looks at various types of abuse-physical, psychological, emotional, and sexual. Inmates analyze how their past experiences make them react to certain people, and they think about the different types of abuse they inflict. As facilitators see from participants' self-assessments, many initially come into sessions believing that physically striking someone constitutes abuse, but emotional abuse is something different.

"Emotional scars tend to run deeper than a bruise that will heal in a few days. That is not to say that hitting is a better form of violence, because we are talking about stopping all violence completely, not slowly tapering off. If you ask a victim what she likes better, a black eye or a broken arm, she'll reply, 'I don't like either,"' Mulloy said.

Inmates participating in SAVE use the *Men's Work Workbook* series by Paul Kivel as an educational tool. The series of workbooks asks individuals extremely personal questions about their past violent behavior and tries to address the reasons behind their anger. Daily workbook assignments coincide with lectures and group therapy. Issues addressed in the workbooks include "Growing Up Male-Identifying Violence in My Life," "Anger, Power, Violence and Drugs-Breaking the Connection," and "Becoming Whole-Learning New Roles, Making New Choices."

Each inmate entering SAVE receives information about the course and exactly what will be expected of him. He is required to sign a client contract that explains guidelines that must be followed during the 6-week course and defines the grounds for dismissal.

Some requirements of the SAVE program include remaining totally abstinent from all mood-altering chemicals and from all violent behavior, being honest about matters that relate to them as SAVE clients, being respectful of the rights of both fellow clients and staff, taking an active part in the therapy program, and obeying all rules of the correctional facility.

LAST SUMMER, MULLOY attended a focus group in Washington, D.C. The group, assembled by the Center for Effective Public Policy, recognized Davidson County's SAVE

program as one of few jail-based programs in the country for batterers.

SAVE was supported by a federal grant until last year. Davidson County Sheriff Gayle Ray felt that the program deserved to continue and now includes it in her yearly budget. The DCSO earmarked $273,985 in the FY 1998 budget to fund both New Avenues and SAVE treatment programs. This figure includes staffing for eight individuals.

"Rehabilitation is an important component of incarceration, especially with our convicted misdemeanants who are serving 11 months, 29 days or less. We have an opportunity to turn them around before they become serious criminals," Ray said. "The majority of our programmatic resources go toward this population because they have a good chance of getting a job, becoming stable, and becoming productive, taxpaying citizens if they can rid themselves of the propensity to take drugs or become violent."

Ray understands that not all jail managers have the resources to employ an extensive staff for a program such as SAVE, but she does offer some alternatives.

"Any sheriff or jail administrator interested in starting a program similar to SAVE should start out small if the resources aren't immediately available. Our program started out small, and then we applied for and received a federal grant. Because of SAVE's years of success, our local government was willing to pick up the cost after our grant ran out," Ray said. "It also might be possible to set up a volunteer program using community treatment professionals who would be willing to donate their time."

Ray has emphasized treatment programs because solid research shows they work. The National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study evaluated 4,411 individuals who participated in federal treatment programs. Before treatment, almost half of the respondents reported "beating someone up." Following treatment, that number declined to 11 percent-a 78 percent decrease.

"I recently participated in a local crime commission whose mandate was to discover ways to lower the levels of violent crime. When we looked at Nashville's homicide statistics for 1997, the first cause was drug activity, and the second cause was domestic violence-even though our police department has a nationally recognized domestic violence unit and we have an extremely efficient system for delivering orders of protection," Ray added.

"These statistics are more than enough reason for us to continue our battle against domestic violence and drug abuse. Through the jail, we are doing our part to attack this problem." ■