

Results of an NTV sector snapshot survey

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In late September last year, NTV launched a survey of Victorian men's behaviour change program providers to obtain quantitative data and professional opinion to inform our pitch to state government for additional resources for the sector. Last November's edition of NTV Notes reported preliminary findings based on survey responses that had come in at that stage. In this article we report on some of the final findings, which will be outlined in full in a forthcoming document that will be made available to members and other stakeholders.

Responses were received for 82% of locations in which a men's behaviour change program was operating during the winter / early autumn of 2010. Although not all respondents answered every question, the response rate enabled us to analyse the results with a significant degree of confidence. Rural, regional and metropolitan programs were all well-represented amongst the responses, with the vast majority (or 100%) of programs responding in all but one DHS metropolitan sub-region and one rural region. The survey did not cover the two Family Violence Court Division programs.

Some 45.4% of referrals during the data collection period arose from active referral / mandated sources (courts, police, Child Protection and Community Corrections). This proportion rises to 47.5% if data from East Metropolitan Region programs is excluded (inclusion of this data artificially deflates this proportion as the region had not commenced enhanced men's intake at the time of the survey). Overall, approximately:

- one in six referrals to programs come from courts
- one in eight from enhanced intake responses to police L17s (one in seven when data from EMR is excluded)
- one in twelve from Corrective Services
- one in fourteen from Child Protection
- one in sixteen from relationships or family counselling / mediation services
- one in sixteen from health services
- about two in five from other sources (mostly self-referrals).

Of particular note was the major variability across programs in the volume of referrals from particular sources. For example, 71% of referrals from courts across the whole sample were made to programs in just six locations; just over one-third of referrals from enhanced intake responses to police L17s were made to just two rural programs; and 38% of Corrective Services referrals were made to just one program.

This variability indicates that there is a significant future increase in demand bubbling under the surface, which will be realised once more program providers strengthen relationships with particular key active referral sources. In other words, the trajectory of increasing numbers of active referrals in recent years is likely to continue, placing even more pressure on programs to respond to demand.

Based on survey data concerning the number of men assessed during the data collection period, and taking into consideration that a proportion of men assessed do not go on to participate in a group, NTV estimates that as a statewide average, service targets for men's behavior change programs need to be immediately increased by one-third to keep up with

current demand. This is a statewide average and might be more or less for particular programs. In addition to this increase, NTV advocates for:

- Service targets to be reviewed annually due to the likelihood of a continued increase in demand from active referral sources.
- A minimum or floor level of funding (a greater amount than what is currently received) for smaller, generally rural programs associated with relatively low service targets.
- Changes to the DHS unit-based formula to more properly fund key elements of the work, as outlined in the funding package document we presented to the previous state government and all MPs prior to the state election (this document is available to members and other stakeholders upon request – please contact Rodney Vlasis at rodney@ntv.net.au).

Approximately two in five programs who responded to the survey stopped taking referrals at some point in 2010 due to the lack of capacity to accept any more referrals at that time. A slightly higher proportion of programs reported operating a waiting list at the time of responding to the survey, for men who were assessed as suitable to commence participation in a group. The average projected waiting time across these programs for the men to commence a group was 14 weeks. This included the Christmas / New Year period for many programs, and hence is likely to be a longer wait than for other times of the year.

The survey collected data on current time spent on partner contact, compared to the amount of time that program providers believe should be spent if they had sufficient resources. Based on this data, NTV is advocating for a 75% increase in the amount of funding that programs receive specifically for partner contact.

Program providers gave explanations as to how their partner contact work would be improved if the funding shortfall was plugged. The type of response received was typified by the following example:

“[Additional resources for partner contact] would allow more of the on-going support we currently provide. Would allow development of partner contact integration with specialist women's services including partnering in group work options for women. Would allow more availability for phone contact with women and allow continuing skills training and capacity building of workers and more timely up-dating of information and materials available for support for women and children. Would allow building of interagency connections so that women and children are more supported in transitions through systems and less likely to fall through the cracks.”

A section of the survey focused on programs' existing capacity to engage in one-on-one work to supplement men's participation in groups. While the data collected on this was very rich, overall a need was expressed for increased resources to enable two distinct but overlapping forms of this work: case management, and counselling interventions designed to maintain/increase men's motivation towards change and enhance the work done in the groups (see last November's NTV Notes for a South Australian article on the perceived risks and benefits of their approach of supplementing group work with periodic one-on-one sessions).

Other significant findings from the research include:

- The struggles that many program providers have in recruiting staff, due to the low pay and conditions, costs and time associated for staff to receive the training and professional development support to learn the skills required to conduct male family violence work, and the specific barriers faced by rural and regional providers.
- The top three priorities to direct any increase in program funding towards were expressed as partner contact, community education and prevention activities, and providing men

with greater individual contact (interestingly, increased supervision time was given the least priority, despite the alarming proportion of male family violence workers who do not receive sufficient levels of supervision as per the results of the NTV survey on pay and conditions conducted earlier last year).

- DHS funding appears to be meeting less than 60% of the overall program delivery costs for approximately 60% of locations in which programs were run by survey respondents, and between 60 and 80% of the costs for a further 23% of locations.

An in-depth research monograph will be compiled in the coming months that will report on the survey data in more depth, including findings that have not been reported here in this brief synopsis. No To Violence expresses our deep gratitude to all those who took time out of their hectic schedules in October and November to respond to the survey, and to those who tried their best to get to the survey but were just unable to.

Please direct any questions concerning this survey, or the funding package that NTV is advocating to government based in part on the findings of this survey, to Rodney Vlais, Policy and Practice Co-ordinator, at <mailto:rodney@ntv.net.au>.

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