

Virginia Department of Social Services OFFICE OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

Voluntary Services Training Module Two



Review

- The voluntary services model is based on the idea that participating in services should be voluntary and not a condition of receiving shelter or other services.
- The focus is on empowerment-based advocacy rather than compliance-driven services.
- A multi-state study revealed areas for improvement including: a need to address some shelter rules related to eligibility, what clients must do while in residence, how long they can stay and a need for more staff training on conflict resolution.

Review

- The voluntary services model is a federal requirement of the Family Violence Prevention Services Act grant (part of your VDSS grant dollars).
- OFV will be requiring all programs funded through the Domestic Violence Prevention and Services Grant to shift to the voluntary services model as of January 1, 2014.

What voluntary services looks like

- The voluntary services model will look differently within each program because all domestic violence programs have unique characteristics and challenges.
- Additionally, some programs have implemented parts of this model, while others have not.
- Some programs may decide to eliminate rules altogether while others eliminate the rules that are unnecessary and reframe them as guidelines or rights and responsibilities.



The key to success

- The key to implementing the voluntary services model at your agency is to keep an open mind, while taking a step back to assess the way things are done, to see if there are better, more empowering alternatives for the clients you serve.
- The primary area to examine is program rules, although rule assessment is just part of this process.



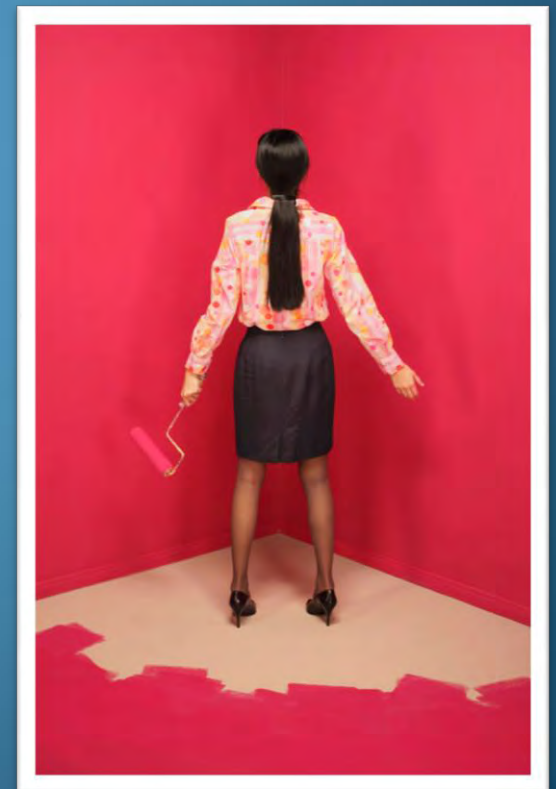
The problem with rules

- Rules are often made to control behavior.
- They are typically created to prevent harmful situations from occurring such as locking up all medications to prevent them from getting into children's hands.
- Having rules does not mean they will be followed.
- Many shelter rules were created based on one situation such as a rule not allowing clients to watch each others children because of a situation where a mother did not return for her children at the time she had agreed.
- Many of these situations are not likely to happen again, or at least not frequently.



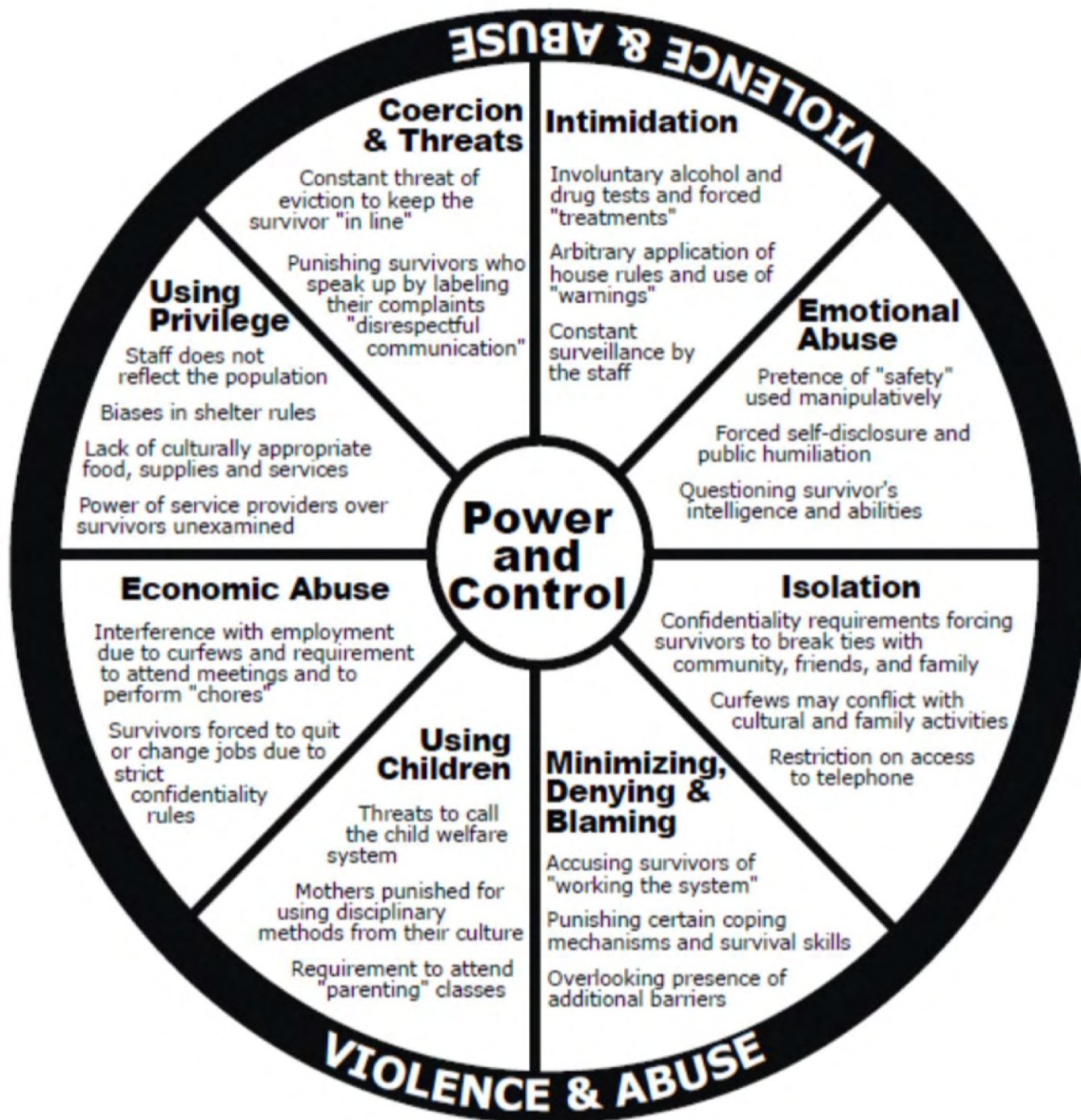
Inherent problem with shelter rules

- For rules to be effective, they must have consequences.
- The only real consequence shelter's can implement is to deny or terminate services.
- This consequence contradicts the very purpose of shelters, which is to provide safety from violence.



Impact of rules

- Sometimes the rules created to help clients live in harmony, instead remind them of the controlling environment they were trying to escape.
- The following slide is a power and control wheel created by Emi Koyama & Lauren Martin to illustrate how domestic violence programs may inadvertently use power and control over clients seeking services.
- It is not intended to discount the work advocates have and continue to do, but rather to spark a conversation about the work we still need to do to move toward empowerment-based advocacy.



Shifting the role of an advocate

- Seeking to do no harm, to be compassionate and to err on the side of generosity toward clients are helpful goals to remember.
- Eliminating or reducing rules, and the time it takes to enforce them, creates more time for connection between advocate and client.
- It throws out the mental classifications such as “the good client” or the “rule-breaker”
- Power and privilege are shifted when the focus is on partnership and support rather than monitoring behaviors.
- Equality happens more easily when less time is spent creating and enforcing rules.

Safety and respect should be viewed as basic human right. Safety is not something that should be contingent upon a certain behavior.



Reading Assignment

- Please read the following documents and complete the questions provided on the next two slides.
- Shelter Rules: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly
- How We Gave Up Curfew (and a lot of other rules, too)

Questions

- Please take time now to fill out the following questions. These questions will help you think about rules in your organization.
- *Why does your program have rules?*
- *How do new rules get added?*
- *What are some of your informal or unwritten rules? What impact do these types of rules have on the atmosphere and culture of the shelter?*
- *What rules do you feel uncomfortable enforcing?*
- *Which rules do you enforce consistently? Which rules do you enforce inconsistently? Why?*
- *If you did not have a rule for _____, what would happen?*

Questions

- *Describe how this rule has or has not done what it was intended to do.*
- *Which rules could you never imagine not having in place?*
- *If you had the power, which rules would you eliminate today?*
- *What do the shelter residents think about the rules and the enforcement of the rules? Have you asked them? How does this affect your ability to build meaningful relationships with residents or advocate on their behalf?*
- *How would your relationship with the shelter residents be different if you did not have the responsibility for monitoring and enforcing the rules?*

THANK YOU

for participating