

2015 Achievement Awards Virginia Association of Counties

APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2015.** Please include this application form with electronic entry.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Locality: Fairfax County
Program Title: ADAPT: Anger and Domestic Abuse Prevention and Treatment
Program Category: Health & Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Title: Director, Fairfax County Department of Family Services
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2015 VACo Award Submission



Fairfax County Department of
Family Services

ADAPT: Anger and Domestic Abuse Prevention and Treatment

Included with Entry:

- Application Form
- Program Write-Up
- Short Program Overview
- Press Summary

Fairfax County - Department of Family Services

ADAPT: Anger and Domestic Abuse Prevention and Treatment

The Problem

It is a challenge to stop the cycle of violence in a family if only one part of the family, usually the victim, receives help. The majority of domestic violence programs offer services only to victims. We know that often offenders wish to change their abusive behaviors but they don't know how. There is anger and shame associated with abusive behavior, which makes it hard to change without having guidance and tools. Offenders need to be held accountable for their behaviors, while being offered alternatives to these behaviors to use in the future. Most programs separate out pieces of a family, so that one program is working with victims, perhaps children are receiving services someplace else, and offenders are sent to jail or offered a program from yet another organization. The result is that the family's issues are never truly addressed in a holistic, integrated way. Without looking at each piece of the family and providing comprehensive, professional services, the violent cycle can be perpetuated affecting not just the victim and aggressor but others within the family, such as children and extended family members.

The Solution

In the Anger and Domestic Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) program, which is part of a full-service domestic violence program, we know that by working with offenders, as well as victims, we can help all of the family members recover from the violence in their homes and their lives and respond to one another in ways that are compassionate and violence-free. Even if a couple does not stay together, they often have children in common. If we can help offenders diminish the use of violence in their relationships and respond in a more compassionate, positive way to the mothers of their children, we can

go a long way in supporting stronger and healthier families and a safer community. Additionally, we can help the offender stop the use of violence in future relationships.

The ADAPT program was started in 1983. Staff in the domestic violence shelter realized that the success of their work with victims would be enhanced greatly if the offending partner could also receive help in ending the violent behavior. ADAPT is a state certified batterer intervention program, one of the first to be certified in Virginia and is an integrated part of the Fairfax County Office for Women & Domestic and Sexual Violence Services unit. Potential clients learn about ADAPT from local courts, community service programs as well as other county community and human service agencies. Approximately 85% are court referred from local Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court for first time domestic violence offenders. The ADAPT Program is seen as an alternative to incarceration and other criminal justice system sanctions.

Prior to enrolling in the ADAPT Program, clients are invited to come to an orientation and registration session. Clients complete initial documentation online and are seen for intake shortly after that. During this intake session, a comprehensive psychosocial assessment using a motivational interviewing approach is given, which prepares clients to enter the program.

The program is an 18-week skills focused group program that is co-ed, competency based and highly educational. Clients complete homework, practice and demonstrate emotional regulation skill mastery, participate in treatment and ultimately address the impact of their abuse on close family members or intimates. The primary goal of our work is to help participants build internal core values and emotional regulation skills so that they can return to their lives accountable for their actions and compassionate with themselves and others. The groups are offered in both Spanish and English.

The program is staffed by one supervisor, three full time clinicians, and one half time clinician. Additionally, the program relies on trained volunteers who work with staff to provide the 18 sessions. The program budget is about \$300,000/year and is funded by the Fairfax County general Fund. Clients also pay an intake fee and a program fee. About \$60,000 of the annual budget is offset by charging client fees.

The ADAPT Program partners with:

- Fairfax Co. Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court
- Office for Women & Domestic and Sexual Violence Services Victim Services programs
- Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board

Results

The program sees about 350 clients each year. The program has an 83% completion among group program starters.

In follow up surveys, 99% program participants report significant positive change in at least eleven (11) of fifteen (15) targeted areas of change and well-being. Additionally, 99% of program participants are judged by staff at program termination to demonstrate self-responsibility for previous abuse. In taking responsibility for the effects of their previous abuse, offenders recognize their behaviors have had serious consequences. The ADAPT model is unique, in that it teaches compassion while also demanding accountability. In completing the program, participants know they have developed skills and alternate responses that are healthier and safer.

In 2008-2009, a follow-up study of participants who completed the ADAPT program was conducted. At that time, it was found 6.6% of ADAPT program participants were arrested in Fairfax County for some

crime against a person within 18 months of completing the program. This recidivism rate is significantly lower than national studies show on batterer intervention programs. We feel the unique philosophy and structure of our program, which holds clients accountable for their abusive behaviors, while also providing the skills to develop compassion for self and others and to receive the training in a supportive and compassionate environment leads to more positive and sustainable outcomes.

In addition, the Fairfax County community, Fairfax County is a safer because of the work we do in ADAPT. Not only do we assist our clients in leading post treatment lives with dramatically lower levels of violence and abuse, we assist their families and extended families as well. For example, approximately 70% of program clients are also parents and we know that when children are exposed to violence there are lifelong effects on multiple levels. Children whose parents negotiate and cooperate instead of fighting will be positively impacted and that impact will extend to adulthood. By looking at the total needs of the family, we are able to create safer, stronger families and help develop safer communities.

The following to case studies provide testimony to the success of the ADAPT program:

1. Case Study #1: 37 YO Caucasian male who was transferred by the military to Virginia after several deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. Client had been arrested a few years prior in California on a domestic violence charge against his mother-in-law and was unable to see his son with the exception of supervised visits. Client admitted to grabbing his mother-in-law by the arm and forcing her out of the house they shared, along with his wife and son. Even with this admission, however, Client felt justified in his actions after years of frustration and arguing with his wife and mother-in-law over time management, finances, and parenting decisions. Client began group in the spring of 2012 and immediately connected with the design of the program. Coming from a military background, Client said he appreciated the structure and building upon topics week-to-week with the expectation of weekly homework assignments to further solidify

ideas and concepts. Client excelled not only in an intellectual sense, but also grew emotionally over the 18 weeks. He began to see how his actions created a hostile and unsafe environment for everyone in the house, most significantly, his young son, and contributed to the erosion of his marriage. Client began to feel compassion for his wife as well as his mother-in-law and on the last night of group, presented a thoughtful reflection letter to both of them acknowledging his past abusive behaviors and took full responsibility for his actions without blame or justification. Client is now able to see his son on a regular basis and the skills he learned in group have helped him re-establish a new relationship with his now ex-wife; one that is rooted in respect and compassion and one that will surely model adaptive problem-solving skills, cooperation, negotiation and resilience for the son they share.

2. Case Study #2 - 51 YO Caucasian female who came to the ADAPT Program for assaulting her husband after a vicious verbal argument turned physical. Client arrived for the intake in shock and denial at her current state. Firmly set on the idea that she was not a violent person and the arrest had been rash and unwarranted, she was not admitted at first as it seemed she wasn't ready for self-examination and taking responsibility for her role in the incident, regardless of what triggers or stressors contributed. Client returned a few weeks later with a different attitude. In the interim, Client stated she had a discussion with her daughter, who had plans to leave for college in a year, and realized the arguing and resentment was not only impacting her marriage to her husband of 24 years, it was also impacting her teenage children who revealed they worked hard to avoid being home and avoid having their parents in the same room together for fear of what might happen. Client started the ADAPT Program in the fall of 2011 and within five or six weeks, began opening up to fellow group members about her experiences. Through open dialogue and difficult self-examination, Client was able to admit that a childhood riddled with abuse had left her a broken person, unable to separate her own desires and goals from the hurtful, spiteful fiery language that erupted from her lips upon every discussion-turned-argument with her

husband. Client took a step back and saw how their relationship meant their children celebrated birthdays away from home, she was frequently the last to know about basketball games and soccer matches and was able to acknowledge in group that it had been more than a year since she and her husband had been intimate or even slept in the same room. Client continued working for the entire eighteen weeks and began participating in marriage counseling at the same time. By the end of group, Client and her husband were on their way to repairing their relationship and were both looking forward to the last summer with their daughter at home.

The following client testimonials also help shed light on the success of the program:

1. **Hispanic female- 36 years old.** I am more compassionate now and can understand things better and express myself without offending. It was helpful to have men and women in the same group and to see that I am not the only one with problems, and that their problems are different. This program helped me a lot with my adolescent children and the rest of my family. I would recommend the ADAPT program to others in my family.
2. **Hispanic male-35 years old.** I feel more compassionate and communicative. I can regulate my emotions and control my anger. I have better communication with my partner, we spend more time together, I am more patient with them, and my aspiration is to be a good role model for my son. I think it was very good to have men and women in the same group and to exchange ideas and information. I learned that we both make mistakes and have the same possibility of change. This program has helped me in my personal and family life as well as at work. I have learned to be more sociable, to speak up in group, and to discuss ideas. It was very difficult to speak about personal issues, but I learned many stories similar to mine. We are all human and make mistakes, but we also can change with the help of the ADAPT program.

Fairfax County - Department of Family Services

ADAPT: Anger and Domestic Abuse Prevention and Treatment

Short Program Overview

The Anger and Domestic Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) program was started in 1983. Staff in the domestic violence shelter realized that the success of their work with victims would be enhanced greatly if the offending partner could also receive help in ending the violent behavior. ADAPT is a state certified batterer intervention program, one of the first to be certified in Virginia and is an integrated part of the Fairfax County Office for Women & Domestic and Sexual Violence Services unit.

Participants in ADAPT take part in an 18-week skills focused group program that is co-ed, competency based and highly educational. Participants complete homework, practice and demonstrate emotional regulation skill mastery, participate in treatment and ultimately address the impact of their abuse on close family members or intimates. The primary goal of the program is to help participants build internal core values and emotional regulation skills so that they can return to their lives accountable for their actions and compassionate with themselves and others. Studies have found that the recidivism rate for participants in the ADAPT program is significantly lower than national studies show on batterer intervention programs.

Fairfax County - Department of Family Services

ADAPT: Anger and Domestic Abuse Prevention and Treatment

Press Summary

The Anger and Domestic Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) program, helps all of the family members who are victims of violence in their homes recover and learn to respond to one another in ways that are compassionate and violence-free. The program is competency based and highly educational. It's primary goal is to help participants build internal core values and emotional regulation skills so that they can return to their lives accountable for their actions and compassionate with themselves and others. By looking at the total needs of the family the ADAPT program creates safer, stronger families and helps to develop safer communities.