

MAINE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
SUMMARY OF AND RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chapter Number and Title of Rule: Chapter 15, BATTERER INTERVENTION PROGRAM CERTIFICATION

The Department of Corrections proposed a revision of the above stated rule. There was a remote public hearing via Zoom on December 22, 2020, which no one attended. January 4, 2021 was the written comment deadline, and one comment was received.

The one comment received was from Karen Wyman, Violence Prevention and Intervention Coordinator, on behalf of the Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence (MCEDV).

Comment: The MCEDV supports amending the current rule as proposed to add provisions designed to help Maine's Certified Batterer Intervention Programs (CBIPs) deliver their classes safely during the COVID-19 pandemic and similar emergencies.

While best practices in violence intervention remain in-person classes, and the standards uphold this, the proposed changes to the rule allow Maine's CBIPs, in collaboration with their partnering Domestic Violence Centers, referral sources, and Coordinated Community Response partners, the flexibility to respond to public health and safety concerns that result in a declaration of a state of emergency, like the COVID-19 pandemic.

This amendment affords Maine's CBIPs the ability to shift their program format to use videoconferencing technology to conduct classes when in-person classes are not feasible due to public health and safety. The amendment includes specific guidance for the involvement of referral sources if participants assert an inability to join classes via videoconferencing and additional back-up strategies for them to join by audio-only if that need is confirmed by the referral sources.

The amendment embeds significant supports for victim safety and offender accountability, while also making it clear that this amendment applies only to temporary states of emergency and does not set the stage for permanent changes to CBIP delivery methods.

At the start of the pandemic, international guidance advised the use of individual crisis management calls to CBIP participants, which is what Maine's CBIPs initially did. This labor-intensive approach was a significant departure from standard practice and intended to be a very short-term alternative to get through an immediate crisis. This amendment to the rule provides a more sustainable and effective approach to offender accountability while also attending to the public health and safety needs presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. This rule amendment safeguards the integrity of Maine's violence intervention efforts, the safety of survivors, the accountability of offenders, and

the health and safety of our communities, including CBIP staff and participants to the greatest degree possible in these very challenging times.

Response: Thanks for the support.