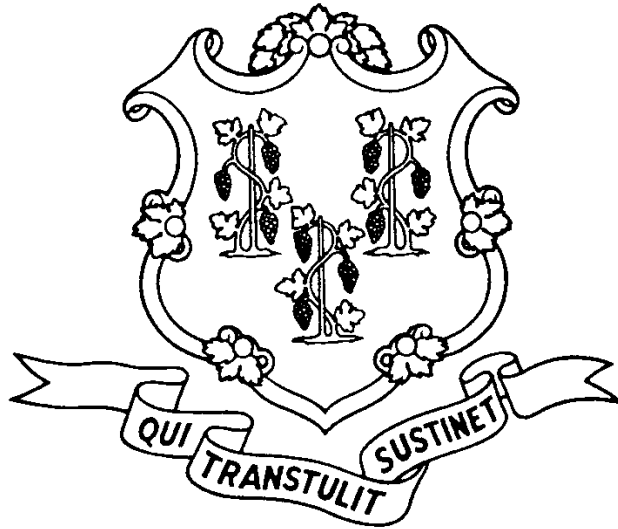


**Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards
Advisory Council**



**An Update to the Connecticut General
Assembly**

**Submitted to the Judiciary Committee and
Committee on Children pursuant to
Public Act 15-211**

February 2022

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

Section 19 of Public Act 15-211 established a Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards Advisory Council. This Advisory Council was charged with promulgating, reviewing, and updating/amending (as necessary), the standards that were presented to the Criminal Justice Policy Advisory Committee in 2014.

The legislative Advisory Council was established to formalize the process of determining the standards necessary to ensure quality interventions that hold offenders accountable for their violence and to implement the standards in current practice.

The Domestic Violence Offender Program Standards are to be applied in criminal court domestic violence cases when a defendant is not referred to a Judicial Branch contracted service. The Judicial Branch oversees two Batterer Intervention Programs (EXPLORE and EVOLVE) that currently meet or exceed the standards. There are also community-based interventions (individual and group formats) utilized by defendants to address domestic violence criminal charges. It is for these types of programs, accessed by numerous defendants not referred to the Family Violence Intervention Unit (CGS 46b-38), that standards are required to ensure effective service and consistent delivery statewide.

Like many entities during the COVID pandemic, the Advisory Council was not able to meet as frequently given the roles and responsibilities of the members as well as their need to focus on operations within their given agencies. One major event was the resignation of our Co-Chair for many years. Karen Jarmoc, the CEO of the Connecticut Coalition against Domestic Violence, took a different job in the private sector and subsequently left the Advisory Council. Her role has been filled by Geralyn O'Neil-Wild from the Connecticut Coalition against Domestic Violence.

The Advisory Council is focused on several significant tasks, the most important of which occurred over six months in 2021. This major endeavor was to conduct a comprehensive review of all the Domestic Violence Batterer Intervention Standards across the United States. This type of complete overview had not been undertaken since 2013-2014 as the precursor to developing the Standards for Connecticut. It is important for Connecticut that our Standards are 1) updated to reflect the most current research and trends in the field, and 2) are equal to or surpass the Standards found in other states. This review of the Standards within the United States was completed by a staff member of the Court Support Services Division. The PowerPoint shared with the Advisory Council is attached for review. The overview contains several recommendations for the Advisory Council to consider in 2022.

In 2022, the Advisory Council will also complete the following:

- 1) Update the Council membership and fill existing vacancies (several individuals retired or otherwise left the job attached to representation)

- 2) Review the current Domestic Violence Program Standards Provider List (both group and individual) to begin a quality assurance component
- 3) Determine by way of a Subcommittee which recommendations from the comprehensive Standards Review will be brought to the larger Advisory Committee for approval and implementation
- 4) Conduct another review of the States with the most robust Standards and determine what entity is tasked with overseeing implementation of the Standards and how those entities implement Standards in practice. Specifically, how are providers recruited and how do offenders get referred to the agencies from the court and probation/parole.

The Advisory Council will report in early 2023 regarding progress in all these subject areas as well as to identify new initiatives. If the standards are updated in 2022 based on our current work, the Advisory Council will provide a new report to the Legislature outlining the changes and rationale.