

Treatment Option

If you have been charged with a domestic violence offence you should know about the Domestic Violence Court (DVC) Treatment Option.

Participation in the treatment program is voluntary. If you choose this option you will not be sentenced until you have *successfully* completed a treatment program. Successful completion of a treatment program will be looked at favorably by the Judge at the time of sentencing and will result in a lighter sentence.

If you are interested in the treatment program you will have to meet with Probation Services to make sure that the treatment option is suitable for you.

What are some of the benefits?

- Getting early treatment is a positive step towards ending the cycle of violence.
- Getting help now may lead to a better relationship with your partner and other family members.
- Attending a treatment program may make it easier for you to have some continued contact with family members.

- Successfully completing the treatment program is something the Judge will consider when he/she sentences you and will result in a lighter sentence than without treatment.
- You will have an opportunity to take advantage of professional help to deal with other issues, such as substance abuse.

Can anyone choose this option?

The treatment option is available to both men and women who;

- Plead guilty
- Accept responsibility for the offence and agree to the statement of facts.
- Agree to attend a DVC approved treatment program and obey the conditions of their release.
- Agree to be sentenced after treatment.
- Agree that the victim can receive information about their progress in the program.
- Do not have any new charges during the time they are in programming.

What does the Treatment Option involve?

During the program you will need to go to a weekly group meeting. The meetings are about 2 - 2½ hours. The meetings are usually held weekday evenings, although some programs offer a daytime group. Treatment programs can last up to 32 weeks. While there is no cost to participate in the programming option there is currently a Saturday group available to men for a fee. Probation Services can explain the various options available for you.

Different programs use different ways to help you recognize and change controlling behavior while gaining valuable tools to maintain healthy relationships. Men and women do not attend the same groups. Cultural differences, sexual orientation, and other individual needs are taken into consideration.

Mandatory attendance and a willingness to participate positively are essential elements to completing programming successfully. While you are in the treatment program you will go back to court regularly, about every 4-6 weeks, so the court can keep track of your progress.

I am interested.
What do I do now?

Just tell your lawyer or the court that you want to take part in the treatment option. Someone from Probation Services will help you after that. You can also ask to speak with an Aboriginal Court Worker who can help you and your family to understand how the court process works.

If you want to change a no-contact order you must talk to your lawyer or a DVC Case Worker. The worker will gather information to give to the court before the judge decides about changing the order. **Only the Judge can make decisions about changes to conditions, and only after the DVC Case Worker can gather the appropriate information for the court.**

Participation in the treatment program is voluntary. You can also choose to deal with your charges using the regular criminal court process.

You should talk to a lawyer before you choose how to deal with your charges. You can contact a private lawyer or Legal Aid. CLASSIC and PLEA are organizations that provide free legal information but do not represent individuals in court.