

## **Issues Of Power And Control That Lead To Violence In Human Services**

It is in the nature of most organized human services to have a great degree of control over the lives of the people they serve. Due in part to this control imbalance, human service workers often wield a disproportionate amount of power over the people they are paid to serve. Given the social devaluation and vulnerability of people receiving formal human services, this power and control can easily slip into harmdoing and violence being enacted against service recipients, though often in a disguised fashion. Such violence can range from subtle to overt. Besides being harmful to the violated person, such violence cannot help but negatively affect the relationship between service workers and those served. A greater awareness of these dynamics can help service workers to achieve and hold onto a more valid stance vis-à-vis their service role.

***This presentation explores the following topics:***

- definitions of power, control & violence
- roots of human service power & control
- examples of human service power, control & violence
- why it is so hard to see human service violence
- dynamics behind the legitimization of human service control & violence
- the importance of taking a personally coherent stance in the face of human service dynamics of power & control

***Format of the presentation:***

This presentation consists of a series of short talks on specific topics relevant to this issue, each building on the other. After each talk will be time for questions and discussion. Participants will be given questions to reflect on during the presentation and after the workshop is over.

This workshop will focus primarily on a *personal* understanding of a positive response to the human service dynamics of power, control and violence, more than an agency or systemic understanding and response. This focus is not meant to dismiss the possibility or importance of systemic change but reflects the understanding that positive systemic change typically begins with positive change on the individual level.

This is not a how-to workshop, but rather a chance for reflection and exploration of an important issue. The better and more complete an understanding of a problem that an individual or organization has, the better and more complete will be their response to that problem.

Note that this workshop works well as a 2-day series with the SRVIP workshop entitled: "*Examine Fundamental Issues of Restraint as a Human Service Technique.*"

The workshop is taught in *two* formats: the *first* includes two breakout groups which allows for more in-depth discussion (a typical schedule is 9 am to 4 pm); and the *second* is the same content but without the breakout groups (a typical schedule is 9 am to 1 pm). Most organization have found the first format to be more fruitful as it allows greater time for thinking through and discussing these important issues, particularly as they specifically apply to one's own service.

***About the presenter:***

Marc Tumeinski is the Training Coordinator for The SRV Implementation Project in Worcester, Massachusetts USA. He helps teach workshops throughout the US and Canada, all based on the work of Dr. Wolfensberger of Syracuse University. As a service worker, he supports people with physical and intellectual impairments at home, school and work. Marc and his wife Jo Massarelli lived as volunteers in a small homeless shelter, and they now offer hospitality in their home to poor and homeless people. He has written and taught on the topic of power and violence in many different venues.

**To schedule this workshop or for more information, please contact  
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