

Prevention: Ending Violence through Social Change

Domestic and sexual violence prevention can take many forms, but at the heart of prevention is social change. Prevention is about changing the social norms that allow and condone violence against women. Preventing violence means changing our society—addressing attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, environments and policies. Prevention means eliminating all of these that contribute to violence and promoting those that prevent the violence.

The early violence against women movement focused on social change through education about the dynamics of domestic and sexual violence, through legislative changes to make women safer, by finding and building resources to assist women, by making alliances with law enforcement and through increasing perpetrator accountability. Prevention has grown out of this social change movement.

Prevention can sometimes seem overwhelming since oppression of women is deeply rooted in our society. Prevention also can seem like a luxury—how can programs work on prevention when there aren't sufficient resources to help victims?

Advocates' work will always be centered on serving victims, but it poses the question, "Can advocates do their jobs if they don't also address the larger issues of oppression of women?" The violence against women movement teaches young men and women that everyone deserves respect. It is essential as a movement to advocate for laws and policies that recognize women as equals of men. By advocating for social change that elevates the status of women, advocates are addressing the root causes of violence against women.

In recent years, advocates throughout the country have expanded efforts to prevent violence against women. Prevention generally falls into two categories: efforts that are designed to affect women's behavior and efforts to affect men's behavior. In the beginning, most sexual assault prevention efforts were focused on changing women's behavior. Advocates employed educational strategies that encouraged women to travel in groups, take self-defense classes and/or avoid drinking. While well-meaning, these

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For a list of references and Web sites, see pages 11-12.

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initial prevention strategies shifted blame for sexual assault from the perpetrator to the victim and her behavior. They gave the impression that a woman has the power to prevent a sexual assault if she had only made the “right” decisions or took the “right” actions. These strategies are still used, reinforcing the idea that when an assault occurs, the victim did something wrong. This is not to say that all prevention activities that focus on women are victim-blaming. Helpful and appropriate strategies can empower women to gain confidence in their abilities, identify healthy relationship patterns and/or develop social bonds in their communities. These strategies are generally called “risk reduction.”

More and more, violence prevention efforts have refocused on changing men’s behavior and the deeply ingrained social attitudes that contribute to an environment in which violence can occur. In Missouri, a number of advocates work in middle and high schools to teach youth about the importance of respect, consent, healthy relationships and non-violence. Some agencies include men in their outreach programs to educate boys about the issues of violence against women. Other efforts include advertising or social marketing campaigns that promote respectful attitudes towards women. Still others strive to organize their community around violence prevention, working with a variety of audiences to communicate directly and indirectly that domestic and sexual violence are not acceptable. One of the exciting elements of prevention is that effective strategies can be diverse and creative. What one community is doing could be completely different from what another community is doing. In essence, advocates and communities are working on social change—changing how our society views women, masculinity, sexuality and violence.

PRIMARY, SECONDARY AND TERTIARY PREVENTION

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention use the following definitions for the three levels of violence prevention:

Primary Prevention: Activities that take place before violence has occurred to prevent initial perpetration or victimization.

Secondary Prevention: These are the immediate responses after violence has occurred to address the short-term consequences of violence.

Tertiary Prevention: These are the long-term responses after violence has occurred to deal with the lasting consequences of violence. Tertiary prevention also includes the work of batterer intervention programs and sex offender treatment interventions (CDC, 2004).

In this document, prevention refers to primary prevention activities.

PREVENTION: LANGUAGE

Much of today’s prevention language, models and research comes from the public health community. Public health is an appropriate perspective

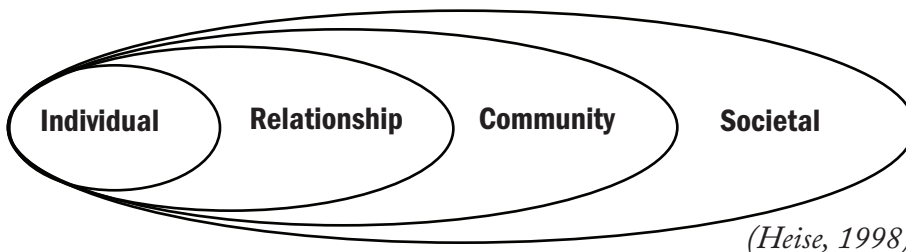
with which to approach violence prevention as it focuses on the health and well-being of the community rather than an individual. It is grounded in social justice and looks at how to *prevent* disease or injury rather than *treat* disease or injury. Public health also has placed an emphasis on research and evidence to develop policies and programs.

The public health community has created the following frameworks that are useful in determining what type of work a program is doing or what type of work a program hopes to do. It also has created a shared language for communicating about prevention work; this is the terminology used by most of the funders who support violence prevention efforts.

SOCIAL ECOLOGICAL MODEL

The diagram below was developed to show multiple factors that contribute to domestic and sexual violence at four levels: individual; relationship; community; and societal. This is useful to picture how individuals are affected by relationships and friendships, the communities they live in and society as a whole. Everything in society affects a person's beliefs and behaviors. No one lives in a vacuum.

The model also is useful when thinking about prevention. An intervention at any level in the model has an effect on each of the other levels. For example, changing an individual's behavior will have an effect on the relationship, community and societal levels. Likewise, changing society can change the individual.



At the individual level are the attitudes and beliefs that support violence. These are influenced by a person's background and experiences. An example would be an attitude, held by some men, that women's primary value is their ability to sexually gratify men.

The relationship level looks at an individual's peer group and family. These relationships help to shape an individual's behavior and actions. For instance, if a young boy grows up seeing his father being disrespectful to his mother he may believe that treating women with disrespect is normal behavior.

At the community level are the schools, workplaces, neighborhoods and churches in an individual's community and/or social environment. If violence is a part of daily life in a certain neighborhood, individuals in that neighborhood may be more likely to use violence.

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Finally, the societal level includes the larger influences of national media, laws and culture. An example of a societal factor contributing to violence against women would be the concentration of men in positions of power and the absence of women in those positions.

As stated above, an intervention at any level in the model has an effect on each of the other levels. A billboard campaign along a busy highway not only has an effect on the individual who passes by and takes a moment to read the sign, but also on those with whom that individual speaks about that message, the community that the billboard is in and, eventually, the society at large that adopts the message on the billboard.

SPECTRUM OF PREVENTION

The spectrum of prevention breaks down the social ecological model for practical use. The spectrum of violence prevention allows advocates to take prevention out of the theoretical and apply it to local programs and activities. Each level of prevention by itself is important, but in order for a program to have the greatest impact and affect the most people, all six levels must work together.

Level of Prevention		Definition of Level
Level 6	Influencing Policies and Legislation	Enacting laws and policies that support healthy community norms and a violence-free society. <i>Example: Laws that prevent anyone who is subject to an Order of Protection from purchasing a firearm.</i>
Level 5	Changing Organizational Practices	Adopting regulations and shaping norms to prevent violence and improve safety. <i>Example: An advertising company adopts a policy that prohibits developing work that portrays women as sex objects.</i>
Level 4	Fostering Coalitions and Networks	Bringing together groups and individuals for broader goals and greater impact. <i>Example: DELTA (Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancements and Leadership Through Alliances). This project develops community groups that focus on primary prevention of intimate partner violence at the community level.</i>

Level of Prevention		Definition of Level
Level 3	Educating Providers	Informing providers who will transmit skills and knowledge to others and model positive norms. <i>Example: Training coaches to teach young men how to respect women.</i>
Level 2	Promoting Community Education	Reaching groups of people with information and resources to prevent violence and promote safety. <i>Example: California Coalition Against Sexual Assault's (CALCASA) "MyStrength" campaign—a social marketing campaign depicting strong men who are not violent.</i>
Level 1	Strengthening Individual Knowledge and Skills	Enhancing an individual's capability of preventing violence and promoting safety. <i>Example: Advocates in middle and high schools teaching students about respect, healthy relationships and violence prevention.</i>
<i>Adapted from Davis, Parks & Cohen (2006)</i>		

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TIPS AND TACTICS

There is no single “right way” to do prevention work, but the following tips and tactics have been shown to increase the chances of success:

- ▶ Narrow down the target audience to a specific group. The prevention message will be more effective when tailored to a specific audience;
- ▶ Enhance cultural competency. Be aware of church teachings, traditions, norms, etc., in the community. Consult the MCADSV publication *The Basics: Working Towards Cultural Competency*;
- ▶ Start early. Adolescents are just beginning to figure out how society works. An intervention will be more effective if messages reach them while they are still young and learning what behaviors are appropriate;
- ▶ Think about developing programs that have multiple settings. For instance, creating a school-based program that has educational sessions not only for the students, but for the parents and teachers who also can serve as behavior models;

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- ▶ Be interactive. Engage people. Get them thinking;
- ▶ Use resources wisely so that a prevention program will be sustainable for an extended period of time. Change will only take place through multiple sessions where the message is reinforced repeatedly through various methods and then becomes ingrained in culture;
- ▶ Promote positive relationships. These include peer-to-peer, adults and youth relationships, healthy dating relationships and information on healthy sexual behavior. Focusing too much on the negative can unintentionally deter change;
- ▶ Train the entire staff on prevention, not just those facilitating prevention programs. With everyone involved, a consistent message will be ensured within the organization and in the community; and
- ▶ Evaluate the prevention program. Evaluation allows an organization to identify gaps in prevention efforts and to share its successes with others.

SUCCESSFUL PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

Programs throughout the state and country are doing innovative prevention work. Most of these programs, however, have not been scientifically evaluated to the degree where researchers and practitioners can be certain that they are preventing violence. Most of the limited research about prevention programs is taking place in university and college environments because of the easily accessible population of 18- to 24-year-olds and the research expertise available on a college campus. Advocates can rely on this emerging research to guide them, while at the same time realizing there is still much that remains unknown.

The following strategies and programs are supported by research that suggests there are positive outcomes in changing attitudes and behaviors associated with preventing rape and domestic violence.

COMMUNITY AND COALITION BUILDING

Community and coalition building is an important component of domestic and sexual violence prevention through social change. In order for change to occur, communities must be engaged, educated on the dynamics of domestic and sexual violence, and be willing to change. Community and coalition building fosters collaboration between agencies, systems and individuals who are stakeholders in the community. It encourages ownership of the prevention efforts that work in their community, whether it is urban or rural, large or small. Through this collaboration, participation, and leadership, communities will be mobilized toward taking action against domestic and sexual violence.

► ***Domestic Violence Prevention Enhancement and Leadership Through Alliances (DELTA) Program***

In 2002, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) developed the DELTA Program. The CDC distributes federal funding to Coordinated Community Responses (CCRs) that address intimate partner violence. This program funds 14 state-level domestic violence coalitions to provide prevention training, technical assistance and financial support to local CCRs. It is the local CCRs that plan and implement prevention strategies at the community level. As a result, each community's prevention strategies are unique. Kansas is one of the DELTA-funded states. The Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, partnering with the Kansas Department of Health and the Environment, was one of the founding DELTA project participants and uses the CDC's Choose Respect campaign to encourage healthy relationships for youth. In Wichita, Kan., the local CCR uses an empowered bystander approach in schools and encourages high school students to be leaders of social change.

In addition to the 14 state coalitions in the DELTA project, 19 were selected in 2009 to participate in a second phase of DELTA called DELTA PREP. The Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence was selected to participate in DELTA PREP and will begin to strengthen its capacity to implement primary prevention of domestic violence.

EDUCATIONAL AND SCHOOL-BASED PROGRAMS

Educational and school-based programs generally include a mixture of the following: definitions of domestic and sexual violence and coercion; statistics; and information on gender stereotypes, rape myths, effects on victims, healthy dating, healthy sexuality and victim resources. In the past these programs have been carried out in a single session with a mixed gender group. Research shows that although these programs are effective in the short term, for a sustained behavior change to take place there needs to be multiple sessions over a period of time and the groups need to be separated by gender.

► ***Men Can Stop Rape (MCSR)***

MCSR is a community-based program out of Washington, D.C., with males in middle school, high school and college as its audience. This is a national multi-level, multi-faceted campaign serving students from diverse backgrounds. MCSR provides primary prevention

“Men of Strength” clubs are year-long, multi-session clubs that teach men about healthy masculinity and strength without violence. These young men have gone on to be leaders in their schools, in their communities and in the violence against women movement.

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programming through three distinct areas: youth development; public education; and technical assistance and training. This program uses several strategies to mobilize men to prevent rape and other forms of men's violence against women. Activities include role plays, exercises, discussions and social marketing that explore men's role in preventing men's violence against women.

MCSR developed Men of Strength Clubs (MOST) to mobilize young men to prevent dating and sexual violence. More than 2,000 high school and college-aged men have joined MOST clubs across the country. MOST are year-long, multi-session clubs that teach men about healthy masculinity and strength without violence. These young men have gone on to be leaders in their schools, in their communities and in the violence against women movement.

► *Safe Dates*

Safe Dates incorporates a school-based program that uses theater productions and education, as well as community activities to target 12- to 18-year-olds. It follows a comprehensive nine-session curriculum where students learn definitions of healthy relationships, dating abuse and sexual assault, causes of violence, gender stereotypes, effective communication and how to help a friend in an abusive relationship. The program also includes a poster contest and materials for parents and teachers. Safe Dates is well-documented and has produced results showing a reduction in sexual assault as well as physical and emotional abuse incidents. Both males and females benefitted from the prevention program.

POLICIES

Policy change can involve federal, state or municipal legislation or organizational procedure. Because policies or laws have an effect on a large number of people (i.e. all residents of a state, all students in a school), they can be powerful tools for social change. Policies can eliminate environmental risks, increase accountability or intolerance for violence and be tailored to what each community or setting needs.

► *Dry Campus Policies*

When a college or university enacts a dry campus policy, it can decrease opportunities for alcohol-facilitated rape. Dry campuses prohibit alcohol to be sold and consumed at sporting events, on-campus property and school-sponsored events. Rapists often strategically use alcohol to make their victims less able to fend off their attacks. Events or parties with large

amounts of easily accessible alcohol can create an environment where sexual violence is more likely to occur.

Alcohol consumption by a victim or a perpetrator does not cause sexual assault. However, a chaotic, drunken environment gives a rapist more opportunities to select victims who have a decreased ability to resist an attack. By enacting a dry campus policy, and therefore making it more difficult for events with large amounts of alcohol to occur on campus, there are fewer opportunities for alcohol-facilitated sexual assault to occur. Of course, these environments will still exist off campus, but the total number of assaults will likely decrease.

SOCIAL MARKETING

Social marketing applies the lessons learned from commercial marketing and advertising to promote behavior change in a population or community. Social marketing can be used for a target population—a group of people identified to adopt the behavior change, to promote “acceptance, rejection, modification, abandonment, or maintenance of particular behaviors” (*Grier & Bryant, p. 321*). It is important to consider the “4 P’s” of marketing when doing social marketing: Product, Price, Place and Promotion. The social marketing “product” is the desired behavior change. Advertising or marketing sells a product; social marketing “sells” behavior change. The “Price” refers to what the consumer may view as costs and benefits associated with the behavior change. “Place” includes the physical place where the behavior change would occur, as well as the people and resources that could help facilitate change. “Promotion” refers to the communication about the campaign. Posters, messaging, signs, events and displays are all a part of social marketing promotion.

► California’s “MyStrength” Campaign

MyStrength is a social marketing campaign developed by CALCASA to prevent sexual violence. Drawn from the MCSR efforts, “MyStrength” uses peer-to-peer contact to create new social norms which are supported by schools and promoted through advertising and media. Using both paid and donated communication, “MyStrength” uses the theme “My Strength Is Not for Hurting.” This message reinforces the idea that men can be strong without using violence. Radio advertising, public appearances, Web sites, billboards, ads in movie theaters, ads in high schools, the message imprinted on t-shirts and mini-footballs, among other things, are used to market the campaign to young men. The idea is to encourage young men to stand up, prevent violence and break down stereotypes about men.

“MyStrength” uses Men of Strength (MOST) Clubs to complement the media campaign.

The bystander intervention approach encourages changing social norms about abusive behavior and teaching men and women to be proactive in intervening when witnessing abuse.

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BYSTANDER INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

The domestic and sexual violence prevention movement is moving toward a bystander intervention approach. This approach encourages changing social norms about abusive behavior and teaching men and women to be proactive in intervening when witnessing abuse. Bystander intervention programs identify men and women as a community who are empowered to intervene instead of only approaching men as potential perpetrators and women as potential victims.

► *Green Dot Kentucky*

The Green Dot Kentucky program is currently the model for violence prevention in the state and was developed by Dorothy J. Edwards, Ph.D., the director of the Violence Intervention and Prevention Center at the University of Kentucky. Every act of violence against women—every incidence of rape, stalking, assault, or sexist joke, advertisement and music video—is represented by a symbolic red dot. The green dots stand in opposition to the red dots—everyone doing “his/her own little green dot” to make the state safer. A green dot represents “any behavior, choice, word, or attitude that promotes safety for women and communicates utter intolerance for violence.”

This bystander model of primary prevention identifies not only student leaders, but also influential people in a community, educating and encouraging them to be responsible for promoting healthy behavior, affecting social change and recognizing and responding to situations at high risk for violence. Individuals involved in the program act as peer educators to influence others in their community. On the University of Kentucky campus, students attend a one-day, intensive training to become peer educators. Shorter, supplemental trainings are offered throughout the semester.

► *Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Program*

MVP is located in the Northeastern University’s Center for the Study of Sport in Society in Boston, Mass., and was created by Jackson Katz in 1993. The goal of this program is to affect knowledge, attitudes and people’s willingness to intervene. The MVP program focuses on positive responses and building a healthy and positive environment. The key to this activity is peer leaders modeling positive behavior and empowering others to speak up when they see violence or behavior that promotes or condones violence. The program uses a school-based curriculum with multiple sessions for male and female participants. Participants learn through a “playbook” which has role-plays for differ-

ent gender groups to see that there are multiple ways to confront violence. With more than one choice of how to intervene, bystanders can choose what they are most comfortable doing and will be more likely to intervene.

Not only does MVP treat men and women as empowered bystanders when confronting violence, it also teaches them how to support those who are abused. There are usually six or seven, two-hour sessions that take place over the course of two or three months. The curriculum can be used in a university, high school or middle school setting. Students who graduate from MVP can go on to a Train-the-Trainer program to learn public speaking and group facilitation skills to conduct their own one-time workshop with younger students in their schools. At the high school level, the Train-the Trainers program involves a 15-hour training course. College and professional-level programs involve three, eight-hour days.

CONCLUSION

To begin or enhance prevention work, programs need to think creatively and strategically about what can be done to change attitudes, beliefs, social norms and environments of domestic and sexual violence. Whether it is a long-term, sustained school program or a community-wide initiative on policy change, advocacy organizations *can* do prevention. Each community will have different strengths to build on and different obstacles to overcome. Social change will not come quickly but, in time, we all have the potential to create a world where violence is less likely to occur and less likely to be tolerated.

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To begin or enhance prevention work, programs need to think creatively and strategically about what can be done to change attitudes, beliefs, social norms and environments concerning the prevention of domestic and sexual violence.

SUGGESTED WEB SITES

- ▶ Choose Respect. (Centers for Disease Control)
www.chooserespect.org/scripts/index.asp
- ▶ Green Dot. (University of Kentucky, Dorothy Edwards.)
www.greendotkentucky.com
- ▶ DELTA. (Centers for Disease Control) www.cdc.gov/ncipc/DELTA/
- ▶ Men Can Stop Rape. www.mencanstoprape.org
- ▶ Mentors in Violence Prevention. www.mvpng.org
- ▶ My Strength. (California Coalition Against Sexual Assault)
www.mystrength.org
- ▶ Safe Dates.
www.hazelden.org/OA_HTML/ibeCCtpItmDspRte.jsp?item=2770
- ▶ That's Not Cool. (Family Violence Prevention Fund)
www.thatsnotcool.com