

## WHAT ARE THE PREVENTION ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE?

### Spheres of Influence

Consider how you can use your personal and professional spheres of influence to advance prevention efforts.

- Think about your sphere of influence, and choose to bring up power and privilege as part of your conversations at work and in public, as well as with family and friends.
- Think about your community and gather groups of people (faith, work, civic groups, etc.) to developing strategies that support safe, healthy, and equitable environments.

### Environmental Change

Start looking at your environment through a different lens and work toward making it safe, healthy, and equitable for all people.

- Choose to interrupt and challenge people in your life who make racist, sexist, or homophobic comments or jokes.
- Work with groups that serve children (schools, daycares, after school groups, etc.) to ensure that programming breaks down rigid gender roles and encourages a gender inclusive environment.

### Policy

We all have a role in policy. By changing policy and laws, we are making the necessary steps for significant, long-term environmental change.

- At your place of employment suggest a policy or procedure that would create a safe, healthy, and equitable work environment for all employees.
- Contact your state legislator and ask them to support and advance sexual violence prevention efforts and agendas brought forward by MNCASA and our partners.

### Minnesota Resources

- Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault: [www.mncasa.org](http://www.mncasa.org)
- Minnesota Department of Health, Sexual Violence Prevention Program: [www.health.state.mn.us/svp/](http://www.health.state.mn.us/svp/)
- Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition: [www.miwsac.org](http://www.miwsac.org)
- Minnesota Men's Action Network: [www.menaspeacemakers.org](http://www.menaspeacemakers.org)
- Search Institute: [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)

### National Resources

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Sexual Violence Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/sexualviolence/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/sexualviolence/index.html)
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center: [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)
- Prevention Institute: [www.preventioninstitute.org](http://www.preventioninstitute.org)

## REFERENCES AND END NOTES

1) Prevention Institute website. Available at [www.preventioninstitute.org](http://www.preventioninstitute.org) (last visited December 1, 2009). 2) Id. 3) *Sexual Violence and the Spectrum of Prevention: Towards A Community Solution*, Rachel Davis, Lisa Fujie Parks, and Larry Cohen. Distributed by The National Sexual Violence Resource Center. 4) Id. 5) Minnesota Department of Health, July 2007, *Cost of Sexual Violence in Minnesota*, Tables 7, 10. 6) Id. 7) Minnesota Department of Health, *Violence Data Brief: Sexual Violence 2002-2007*, No.3, May 2009, #2. 8) Id. 9) MNCASA website. Available at: [www.mncasa.org](http://www.mncasa.org) (Last visited at November 30, 2009). 10) *Beyond Victims and Villains: Addressing Sexual Violence in the Education Sector*, Women's International Network News, Vol 29, No 3., 37-38 (Summer, 2003). 11) Extrapolated from: Newlin, Chris. *Keynote Address - Putting Child Abuse Into Social Context: How Does it Relate to Other Issues Affecting Children?* 9th Current Thinking/New Directions Conference; Hyannis, MA; September 25 -26, 2008. 12) Joan C. Chrisler and Sheila Ferguson, *Violence Against Women as a Public Health Issue*, Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci. 1087, 234-249 (2006). 13) Alexei Oreskovic and Margaret Fisk, *The High Cost of Harassment*, 6 Corp. Counsel 95 (2002). 14) MNCASA website. Available at: [www.mncasa.org](http://www.mncasa.org) (Last visited November 30, 2009).



# PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

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## WHAT IS PREVENTION?

Primary prevention involves taking action to prevent problems from occurring before the onset of symptoms.<sup>1</sup> How do we prevent something that has not even happened yet? According to the Prevention Institute, primary prevention is a proven and effective strategy that can address a wide range of health and social issues. The prevention of violence that uses sex means addressing the root factors and societal causes that foster sexual violence in the first place. Thus, prevention is moving beyond individual or community awareness toward a multifaceted approach involving systematic strategies to change social norms, as well as individual behavior.<sup>2</sup>

In order to prevent the action and harm from occurring, we must identify, challenge, and change the attitudes and behaviors that foster an environment that allows such acts to occur.

To prevent sexual violence we must change the sexually toxic environment to promote safe, healthy, and equitable relationships.

## THE ROOT CAUSES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Our society accepts and condones sexual violence by creating and supporting norms that reinforce a rape culture. Norms are attitudes, beliefs and standards that are often based in culture and traditions.<sup>3</sup> According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, there are at least five kinds of damaging norms that contribute to an environment in which sexual violence can occur. The five damaging norms include:<sup>4</sup>

- Gender: limited roles, objectification, and oppression of women;
- Power: value placed on claiming and maintaining power (exerting power over another);
- Violence: tolerance of aggression and attribution of the blame on victims;
- Masculinity: traditional constructs of manhood, including domination, control, and risk-taking; and
- Privacy: notions of individual and family privacy that foster secrecy and silence.

## WHY PREVENTION?

We know that it is not possible to treat, prosecute, incarcerate or educate our way out of this problem. Minnesota is poised to become a leader in preventing the individual and public health impact of sexual violence. Minnesota has a proven record of creating community-based social change in areas such as infant car seat legislation, indoor smoking regulations, and recycling programs.

*"No mass disorder afflicting mankind is ever brought under control or eliminated by attempts at treating the individual."*

~Dr. George Albee,

*"The Argument for Primary Prevention"*

## HOW IS A PREVENTION FOCUS DIFFERENT?

Over the past thirty years, there have been tremendous strides in building awareness and educating individuals on the wide range of issues surrounding sexual violence. Service providers have worked to build community response teams and the criminal justice system works to define a victim centered approach. While all of these efforts are needed and must continue, they are strategies which focus on intervention after the harm has occurred. Primary prevention shifts the focus to strategies aimed at changing the environment.

We have commonly invested in helping people beat the odds. Now we recognize we must invest our time, energy, and money into changing the odds. By changing the odds, we are creating an environment in which the right choice is the easy choice and all people have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

## What is The Spectrum of Prevention?

The Spectrum of Prevention is a tool developed by the Prevention Institute to help identify and organize a range of prevention strategies. The Spectrum helps to strategically organize such efforts. The Spectrum can also inspire new ideas for how policy makers, industry leaders, and communities can work together.

Each level of the Spectrum of Prevention is vitally important, and each level works in tandem with the others. Activities in the top level feed into and inform activities in the bottom level, as well as all the levels in between. In addition, as you work up The Spectrum, each level has a broader impact on the entire community. Efforts on the two lower levels will have a reach at the individual or community level. Meanwhile, similar efforts on the upper levels will have a statewide reach.

You cannot operate on any one level and not on the others. For example, in order to be effective in changing an organizational practice, a company may have to work on new policies and educate providers, as well as individuals, in order to achieve long-term systematic change.

### The Spectrum of Prevention



From: *The Prevention Institute*, [www.preventioninstitute.org](http://www.preventioninstitute.org)

## What are the levels of The Spectrum of Prevention?

**Influencing Policy and Legislation:** Enacting laws and policies that support healthy community norms and a violence-free society.

**Changing Organizational Practices:** Adopting regulations and shaping norms to prevent violence and improve safety.

**Fostering Coalitions and Networks:** Bringing together groups and individuals for broader goals and greater impact.

**Educating Providers:** Informing providers who will transmit skills and knowledge to others and model positive norms.

**Promoting Community Education:** Reaching groups of people with information and resources to prevent violence and promote safety.

**Strengthening Individual Knowledge and Skills:** Enhancing an individual's capability of preventing violence and promoting safety.

the bottom line is prevention

## IT IS OUR BUSINESS...

The prevention of sexual violence in Minnesota *IS* our business. The losses that result from sexual violence affect us all, and they are preventable. Primary prevention is not only the responsibility of those working within advocacy programs, but also must be grounded in the response of the entire community. Sexual violence affects all of us, so together we must all identify and carry the solutions.

When we make it our business we shift social norms and change the current sexually toxic environment that fosters sexual violence. By combining the tools and resources we have:

- The Spectrum of Prevention;
- Prevention Institute and other prevention experts; and
- Your local advocacy program

with emerging community leaders, we have the capacity to change the odds and build a better future. The cost of not doing this is too high. It drains our energy, creativity, resources, and prevents everyone from reaching their full potential. The collective action of all involved make the possibilities for change limitless.

Leaders must come forward from business, industry, government, media, health care, education, and the faith community to identify ways they can support healthy personal growth and development. By adopting policies and adapting organizational practices that promote a safe, healthy, and equitable environment we can shift attitudes and behaviors to prevent harm.

## WHAT ARE THE LOSSES?

Minnesota:

- Sexual violence injures our citizens, decreases productivity, and costs our state \$8 billion dollars annually.<sup>5</sup>
- Lost work in Minnesota in 2005 due to sexual violence: \$162,795,000 or \$3,300 per victimization.<sup>6</sup>
- The age of patients seeking medical attention after an incident of sexual violence ranged from less than age one to more than 100.<sup>7</sup>
- Since 2002 the rate of hospital care due to sexual violence has climbed 6% every year.<sup>8</sup>
- Sexual violence costs 3.3 times as much as alcohol-impaired driving in Minnesota.<sup>9</sup>

Nationally:

- Sexual, physical and psychological violence causes as much illness and death among women aged 15-44 as cancer.<sup>10</sup>
- Child sexual abuse and exploitation are more common than teen pregnancy, childhood obesity or pediatric cancer.<sup>11</sup>
- 64,446 victims of rape by an intimate partner lose time from work as a result of the assaults. Loss in earnings is \$4,446,774 per day.<sup>12</sup>
- Juries have awarded sexual harassment plaintiffs up to \$90 million in damages.<sup>13</sup>
- Child sexual abuse impacts health care costs across a lifespan. Healthcare costs are 16% higher for women who experienced child sexual abuse and 36% higher if they experienced both sexual and physical abuse.<sup>14</sup>

*"As a policy leader, as a father, as a man, I realized that I have a responsibility to champion prevention. I can, and I need to, make a difference."*

~ Jim McDonough,  
Ramsey County Commissioner

The existing statistics begin to tell the story, but the high cost of sexual violence is ultimately our business because we can prevent it. We want people of all ages to live up to their full potential. We can change the odds by changing the environment.