

WHAT ARE THE PREVENTION ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE?

Spheres of Influence

Consider how you can use your personal and professional sphere of influence to involve young people in advancing prevention efforts.

- Consider your community and gather groups of people (faith, work, civic groups, youth, etc.) to develop strategies that support safe, healthy, and equitable environments.
- Think about your spheres of influence and choose to bring up power and privilege as part of your conversations with the young people, as well as the adults, in your life.

Environmental Change

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

- Youth model their behavior after adults. Choose to interrupt and challenge people in your life who make racist, sexist, or homophobic comments or jokes. Provide young people with opportunities to learn and model equitable behavior.
- Involve young people in developing programming that breaks down rigid gender roles and encourages a gender inclusive environment in their schools, after school groups, etc.

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.

- Policies affect our young people. Contact your state legislator and ask them to support responsible sex education for our schools.
- Gather youth on committees to develop policies and procedures that promote a safe, healthy, and equitable environment in the places where young people spend their time (school, daycare, after school programs, faith, etc.).

Minnesota Resources

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

National Resources

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

REFERENCES AND END NOTES

1) Prevention Institute website. Available at www.preventioninstitute.org (Last visited April 20, 2010) 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) Minnesota Department of Health, *Violence Data Brief: Sexual Violence 2002-2007*, No. 3, May 2009, #2. 7) Id. 8) MNCASA website. Available at: www.mncasa.org (Last visited at April 25, 2010) 9) Office of Justice Programs, *Children's Exposure to Violence*, October 2009 at www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/227744.pdf (Last visited May 3, 2010) 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) MNCASA website. Available at: www.mncasa.org (Last visited April 25, 2010).



Prevention: A Voice for Youth

MNCASA PRISM

May 2010

PRISM - People Responsible for Inspiring Social Change Movements. This program brings together youth and adults to share the responsibility for creating a better world.

Through communication, connection, planning, and action we work side by side to prevent sexual, dating, and family violence and increase safe bystander responsibility.

PRISM strives to prevent sexual violence across Minnesota. We use information, tools and coaching to change what is viewed as the "normal" attitudes and behaviors in our currently sexually toxic culture. PRISM creates healthy webs of supports where youth can come together and make positive social change.

WHAT IS PREVENTION?

Primary prevention involves taking action to prevent problems from occurring before the onset of symptoms.¹ 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 multi-faceted approach involving systematic strategies to change social norms, as well as individual behavior.² 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 this sexually toxic environment to

promote safe, healthy, and equitable relationships.

The collective actions of all involved make the possibilities for change limitless.

WHY INVOLVE YOUTH IN PREVENTION?

Youth are being raised in a toxic environment saturated with sexually toxic messages created by adults. We need young people to work alongside adults to transform this environment into one in which young people can thrive.

Research confirms that youth-facilitated school, family and community efforts foster positive social change, prevent interpersonal violence, and

are significantly more cost-effective than addressing the problem after it occurs.

By awakening our youth through the Integrative Youth Development™ (IYD) story, we engage them in shaping their individual and collective developmental ecologies (environments). IYD's full spectrum approach to youth development is the most comprehensive way to

ensure the safety and well-being of all young people. Supporting the youth in self-activating a personal community around them, and having them model these actions to their peers, is the most powerful way to change long-term youth behavior and their environment(s). This will create a movement that will benefit generations, long into the future.

YOUTH HAVE A VOICE...

Young people are taught how to think, believe and act. They learn from the adults around them, from their peers, and through messages from society. When we teach young people social norms that are rooted in oppression, we are teaching them it is acceptable to treat others differently based on their race, gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. As long as society continues to treat any group of people differently, sexual violence will hold a degree of acceptance within our social norms.

In order to change the social norms that are rooted in dominance and control, we must include all groups of people to assist in identifying, challenging, and changing such norms. Young people hold the power to think critically about the toxic environment around them and transform this environment. They hold the power to join adults in changing societies' current oppressive norms into attitudes, beliefs, and standards rooted in acceptance and equity.

Adults cannot expect young people to think critically or to have the capacity to identify unhealthy or oppressive attitudes and behaviors on their own. Adults, communities, and institutions in which young people spend their time carry the responsibility to provide youth with opportunities to gain knowledge, build skills, and practice their leadership abilities. It is through such opportunities and support that young people can and do transform their environment for the better. MNCASA considers young people's role as pivotal in the prevention of sexual violence.

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.

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.³ 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:⁴

- 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.

WHAT ARE THE LOSSES?

Minnesota:

- Sexual violence injures our citizens, decreases productivity, and costs our state \$8 billion dollars annually.⁵
- The age of patients seeking medical attention after an incident of sexual violence ranged from less than age one to more than 100.⁶
- Since 2002 the rate of hospital care due to sexual violence has climbed 6% every year.⁷
- Sexual violence costs 3.3 times as much as alcohol-impaired driving in Minnesota.⁸

Nationally:

- In 2009, nearly 1 in 5 girls ages 14-17 had been the victim of a sexual assault or attempted sexual assault.⁹
- Sexual, physical and psychological violence causes as much illness and death among women aged 15-44 as cancer.¹⁰
- Child sexual abuse and exploitation are more common than teen pregnancy, childhood obesity or pediatric cancer.¹¹
- 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.¹²

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, educational systems, 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 broader reach.

You cannot operate on any one level to the exclusion of the others. For example, in order to be effective in changing an organizational practice, a school 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

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.