

Engaging communities to prevent sexual violence

NOTES

What is community engagement, and why is it a promising strategy for prevention?

A community is defined by a shared interest or investment (E.g. Geography, identity, values, beliefs, experiences, goals)

- Narrowing our definition of “community” ensures that community members share this common interest, and strengthens our community engagement efforts
- Community engagement is based on the understanding that community members, themselves, best understand the needs of their community.

Public health professionals, anti-violence advocates and social justice activists share similar definitions of community engagement, including:

- “..the process of working collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people...” (CDC Committee for Community Engagement, 1997)
- “...the process of building relationships with community members who will work side-by-side with you as an ongoing partner, to make the community a better place to live.” (Hildy Gottlieb, co-founder of Creating the Future blog and author of “Community Engagement Action Kit”)

This strategy has been demonstrated effective for social norms change & prevention of a variety of other health and social justice issues: HIV, IPV, substance abuse, youth pregnancy.

- Challenges harmful social norms and promotes positive norms:
 - Understanding that SV affects everyone
 - Promote healthy group dynamics to model throughout the community
 - Connect SV to other issues important to the community
 - Promote community cohesion
 - Build “ownership” of prevention efforts, sustainability

Assessing a community’s readiness for prevention

Strategies for prevention must be appropriate for the community’s stage of readiness.

- The Tri-ethnic Center’s Community Readiness Model includes 9 stages...:

- 1) No awareness
- 2) Denial/resistance
- 3) Vague awareness
- 4) Preplanning
- 5) Preparation
- 6) Initiation
- 7) Stabilization
- 8) Confirmation/Expansion
- 9) High Level of Community Ownership

- ...and readiness can be assessed in 6 key factors:

- Community Efforts
- Community Knowledge of the Efforts
- Leadership
- Community Climate
- Community Knowledge of the Issue
- Resources related to the issue

Readiness assessment tools include: Key informant interviews (see the resource list for Tri-Ethnic Center and Community Toolbox for interview instruments & other readiness assessment tools); secondary data; community asset mapping (see the Community Toolbox).

Building a community coalition for prevention

CDC recognizes these factors for successful community engagement:

*Membership

*Process/structure

*Communication

*Purpose

An effective community coalition balances outwardly-focused & inwardly-focused activities

- Outward-focus: recruitment, outreach, awareness-raising, partnerships, collaborations
- Inward-focus: strengthen group process, build consensus, share decision-making

Tuckman's Stages of Group Development:

Forming → Storming → Norming → Performing

- Awareness of where the group is in this process can help to address underlying dynamics, develop group cohesion, and strengthen group work towards objectives.

Community-based needs assessment

The social norms that cause sexual violence to occur manifest differently in different communities.

- In order to target relevant norms and beliefs, we must understand more about the community
- A needs assessment will help us to create prevention strategies that “fit” community context
- A community-based needs assessment gathers data AND engages the community

Participatory Action Research (PAR) honors community wisdom and involves community members in every phase of the assessment, rather than treating them as passive subjects.

Similar methodologies:

- Popular Education
- Community Based Participatory Research
- Cooperative Inquiry
- Participatory Rural Appraisal

Developing a community-specific prevention strategy

Sharing needs assessment findings with the community is an extension of PAR process:

- The community “owns” the knowledge
- Engage the community in the process of making meaning from the findings, e.g.:
 - Policymakers
 - Media
 - Service providers
 - Research participants
- Develop buy-in from community stakeholders who can contribute resources to your program
- Including community in program design process ensures accountability to the community
 - For more on “accountability” see: *Getting to Outcomes* (2004). Promoting Accountability Through Methods and Tools for Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation. www.rand.org

Measuring community engagement

Indicators of a successful campaign to engage a community for prevention can be difficult to quantify but are important to evaluate, e.g.:

- Improved understanding of community needs & assets
- Greater community collaboration
- Broader community investment in prevention
- Increased understanding of the costs of SV and the benefits of prevention

As in every other phase of your community engagement strategy, community members must be included in the process of establishing indicators of effectiveness.

Additional Resources

Principles of Community Engagement. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC/ATSDR Committee for Community Engagement. (1997). Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/phppo/pce/>

Hildy Gottlieb: "Community Engagement Action Kit": Available at: <http://hildygottlieb.com/2011/04/18/community-engagement-planning-in-3-steps/>

Preventing Family Violence: Community Engagement Makes the Difference. P. Catlin Fullwood for the Family Violence Prevention Fund. (2002).

Synergies: Strategies for enhancing the capacity of organizations, communities and individuals to prevent sexual violence in Washington State. Prepared by Lydia Guy Ortiz for Washington State Department of Health, 2009. Available at: http://www.nsvrc.org/sites/default/files/file/Projects_RPE_WA_State2009Plan.pdf

Community readiness: research to practice. Edwards, R.W., Thurman, P.J., Plested, B.A., et al. (2000). *Journal of Community Psychology*, 28, 291–307.

Assessing community readiness for prevention. Oetting, E.R., Donnermeyer, J.F., Plested, B.A., Edwards, R.W., Kelly, K., Beauvais, F. (1995). *The International Journal of Addictions*, 30(6), 659-683.

Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research, Colorado State University. Available at: http://triethniccenter.colostate.edu/communityReadiness_home.htm.

The Community Toolbox, a project of the Work Group for Community Health and Development at the University of Kansas. Available at: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/default.aspx>.

Promising Practices in Sexual Violence Prevention and Community Mobilization for Prevention: A Report to the City of Seattle. Erin Casey (2007).

Community Development and Sexual Violence Prevention. By Gayle M. Stringer. (1999). For the Washington State Sexual Assault Prevention Resource Center. Available at: http://svfreenyc.org/programs_prevention_resources.html

Engaging Community in Sexual Violence Prevention: A guide book for individuals and organizations engaging in collaborative prevention work. By Morgan J. Curtis. A publication of the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault. Available at: http://svfreenyc.org/programs_prevention_resources.html

Toward a Multi-Level, Ecological Approach to the Primary Prevention of Sexual Assault: Prevention in Peer and Community Contexts. Erin A. Casey and Taryn P. Lindhorst. (2009). *Trauma Violence Abuse*.

Mobilizing Communities to Prevent Domestic Violence. Melanie Sheppard. (2008). VAWnet: The National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women. Available at: http://svfreenyc.org/programs_prevention_resources.html.

Center for Community Based Research. <http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca/>