

What is Primary Prevention?

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A **systematic** process that promotes healthy **environments** and **behaviors** and reduces the likelihood or frequency of sexual violence **before** occurring.

Adapted from: Davis, R., Fudge Parks, L., & Cohen, L. (2006). *Sexual violence and the Spectrum of Prevention: Towards a community solution*. Enola, PA: National Sexual Violence Resource Center, Prevention Institute.



How is it different than awareness building and risk reduction?

- With awareness building and risk reduction work alone, the potential victim has the responsibility of protecting themselves.
- The likelihood that a sexual assault will occur does not change



Awareness building and risk reduction, continued...

- Can contribute to victim-blaming language and mentality
- Do not fully address the root causes of sexual violence
- Don't always provide an action step unless audience members identify as a potential perpetrator or a potential victim



How is primary prevention different?

Primary Prevention

- Approaches that take place BEFORE sexual violence has occurred to prevent initial perpetration or victimization

Secondary Prevention

- Immediate responses AFTER sexual violence has occurred to deal with the short-term consequences of violence

Tertiary Prevention

- Long-term responses AFTER sexual violence has occurred to deal with the lasting consequences of violence and sex offender treatment interventions



Through primary prevention, we want to...

- improve our understanding of the underlying conditions in our society that perpetuate sexual violence; AND
- develop and enhance our ability to change those conditions; ultimately, eliminating sexual violence.



- **Change social norms** by changing knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, behavior, and skills that support sexual violence
- **Promoting behaviors** that define and support gender equity, healthy relationships, and conflict resolution (inc. safe and effective bystander intervention)



- The influence of these factors beyond the individual [i.e. the pre-existing cultural norms] can be so powerful that, as the Institute of Medicine concluded in its study on health promotion,
- **“It is unreasonable to expect that people will change their behavior easily when so many forces in the social, cultural, and physical environment conspire against such change.”**



Public Health



“Identifying violence as a public health issue is a relatively new idea. Traditionally, when confronted by the circumstances of violence, the health professions have deferred to the criminal justice system. . . . [Today] the professions of medicine, nursing, and the health related social services must come forward and recognize violence as their issue.”

- C. Everett Koop, 1985



Social-Ecological Model

- Guiding model when designing and implementing public health programs.



Social-Ecological Model

- Primary prevention addresses each level of the social ecological model.



Level of Spectrum	Definition of Level
1 LEVEL Strengthening Individual Knowledge and Skills	Enhancing an individual's capability of preventing violence and promoting safety
2 LEVEL Promoting Community Education	Reaching groups of people with information and resources to prevent violence and promote safety
3 LEVEL Educating Providers	Informing providers who will transmit skills and knowledge to others and model positive norms
4 LEVEL Fostering Coalitions and Networks	Bringing together groups and individuals for broader goals and greater impact
5 LEVEL Changing Organizational Practices	Adopting regulations and shaping norms to prevent violence and improve safety
6 LEVEL Influencing Policies and Legislation	Enacting laws and policies that support healthy community norms and a violence-free society

- Spectrum of Prevention



Spectrum of Prevention Framework

- The six different levels of the Spectrum of Prevention are interrelated and work in synergy to maximize the impact of any one activity occurring on any given level.
- To effectively create a cultural paradigm shift supportive primary prevention efforts, change must occur on both the macro and micro levels of the Spectrum.
- Traditional sexual assault prevention efforts have focused on the micro levels (levels 1 through 3), targeting individuals, communities, and direct service providers.
- While direct service work is crucial to educating and empowering individuals to prevent sexual assault and support survivors, macro level efforts (levels 4 through 6) institutionalize and sustain social norms change.



What primary prevention is...

- Health promotion based.
- Based on skill and knowledge building.
- An on-going process, which requires leadership & commitment.
- Community owned and integrated into the fabric of the community.
- <http://www.fcadv.org/projects-programs/primary-prevention-toolkit>



- Emphasizes developing skills and changing behaviors, social norms, and/or systems in ways that prevent sexual violence and change rape culture.

- <http://www.fcadv.org/projects-programs/primary-prevention-toolkit>



What primary prevention is not...

- A one-time educational program or event.
- One skill-building session.
- Community education
 - Raising awareness about sexual violence and available services and decreasing the acceptance of rape myths and victim blaming.

- <http://www.fcadv.org/projects-programs/primary-prevention-toolkit>



Organizations with thriving primary prevention programs...

- “... recognized the necessity of education and outreach as it contributes to survivors accessing services and the reduction of victimization. However, they were clear that education and outreach are not a replacement for prevention”

- <http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-prevention-assessment-year-2-report-innovations-prevention>



Principles of Effective Prevention Programs

- **Comprehensive**
 - Multi-component interventions that address critical domains (e.g., family, peers, community) that influence the development and perpetuation of the behaviors to be prevented
- **Varied Teaching Methods**
 - Programs involve diverse teaching methods that focus on increasing awareness and understanding of the problem behaviors and on acquiring or enhancing skills
- **Sufficient Dosage**
 - Programs provide enough intervention to produce the desired effects and provide follow-up as necessary to maintain effects.



Nation, M., Crusto, C., Wandersman, A., Kumpfer, K. L., Seybolt, D., Morrissey-Kane, E., et al. (2003). What works in prevention. *American Psychologist*, 58(6/7), 449.

Principles of Effective Prevention Programs

- **Theory Driven**
 - Programs have a theoretical justification, are based on accurate information, and are supported by empirical research
- **Positive Relationships**
 - Programs provide exposure to adults and peers in a way that promotes strong relationships and supports positive outcomes
- **Appropriately Timed**
 - Programs are initiated early enough to have an impact on the development of the problem behavior and are sensitive to the developmental needs of participants



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Principles of Effective Prevention Programs

- **Socio-Culturally Relevant**
 - Programs are tailored to the community and cultural norms of the participants and make efforts to include the target group in program planning and implementation
- **Outcome Evaluation**
 - Programs have clear goals and objectives and make an effort to systematically document their results relative to the goals
- **Well-Trained Staff**
 - Program staff support the program and are provided with training regarding the implementation of the intervention



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