

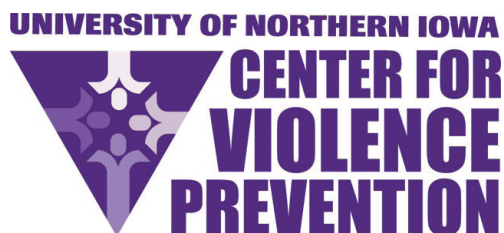
University of Northern Iowa | December 2017

PRIMARY PREVENTION ACTION REPORT

FOR IOWA SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

PreK-16 Gender Violence and Bullying Prevention Task Force

The Center for Violence Prevention and Governor's Office on Bullying Prevention



Funding for this project was supported by the Kind World Foundation

*“**Education** is prevention. Prevention is education. Preventing gender violence and all forms of bullying requires that we make the invisible, visible. That is, we must refrain from overlooking or ignoring the hurtful and harmful words, innuendos and demeaning attitudes and behaviors towards women, children and all who feel marginalized and powerless as these represent the foundation on which the perpetration of the most severe and egregious acts of violence and abuse occur. We must act together with increasing numbers of men and boys to institutionalize strategies and initiatives that systemically challenge, call out and eliminate all forms of violence and abuse in our society. As parents, educators and community stakeholders, we owe it to our young people and to ourselves to speak up and take collective action in order to foster healthy relationships, nurturing homes, safe schools and thriving neighborhoods in all Iowa communities.”*

Alan Heisterkamp, Ed.D., Director
Center for Violence Prevention, Governor’s Office on Bullying Prevention
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Iowa Law 280.28 HARASSMENT AND BULLYING PROHIBITED, applies to Pre-K-12 school districts and contains this requirement: Programs encouraged. The board of directors of a school district and the authorities in charge of each accredited nonpublic school are encouraged to establish programs designed to eliminate harassment and bullying in schools. To the extent that funds are available for these purposes, school districts and accredited nonpublic schools shall do the following:

- a. Provide training on anti-harassment and anti-bullying policies to school employees and volunteers who have significant contact with students.
- b. Develop a process to provide school employees, volunteers, and students with the skills and knowledge to help reduce incidents of harassment and bullying.

BACKGROUND

“Moving Upstream: A multi-systemic approach to prevent gender violence and bullying in PreK-16 educational systems and supporting communities.”

How prepared are Iowa’s educational institutions and community agencies who serve youth and families to prevent, intercede and respond to sexual harassment, gender violence and all forms of bullying? The answer to this question is, it depends. For the most part, Iowa’s elementary and middle schools have made it a point to implement and infuse social and emotional learning activities that address respect for others and anti-bullying initiatives into their educational practices, however, with some exceptions, these comprehensive efforts become “hit and miss” as youngsters transition from upper middle school grades on into high school. In high school settings, for example, learning activities around sexual harassment, gender violence and bullying are typically confined to a brief unit in a health course, or perhaps a two or three day module in a course on individual and family relationships - neither of which is necessarily required for students to take. Fast forward onto college or post-secondary enrollment - students are expected to know and understand the differences between healthy and unhealthy intimate relationships, what constitutes affirmative consent, healthy sexual behaviors, how they might respond as a friend, classmate or teammate should they be confronted with peer behaviors which are violent or abusive in nature, as well as what protections they, as students, are entitled to by federal law under the provisions of Title IX.

Over the decades, numerous programs and initiatives designed to prevent gender violence and bullying behaviors have been researched and marketed to school leaders and professionals. While bullying and abuse can take place within the

schoolhouse doors, bullying and gender violence are not “school problems” per say. They are community issues and should be addressed and confronted as such. Unfortunately, few communities and the schools they support have successfully organized or implemented a multi-level, multi-systemic approach to prevention that addresses the continuum of needs of students and stakeholders within the PreK-16 environment - an environment which consists of students, parents, staff and faculty, as well as those community leaders and agencies who serve the same youth and families.

With the goal and mindset of reaching out to policy makers, teachers and adults working in PreK-16 schools, students, community leaders and all who support non-violence programming, the Center for Violence Prevention and Governor’s Office on Bullying Prevention Task Force’s recommendations reported here will be used to develop training modules and supporting documents that will provide a framework for community allies and partners to effectively engage in strategies and procedures to prevent violence and abuse. Input from task force members along with additional experts and professionals representing public health, PreK -16 education, civil rights, law enforcement and juvenile court services, legal and family services, victim’s services and prevention specialists will be gathered and incorporated in the trainings. The proposed training modules and subsequent workshop will be designed around the spectrum of prevention model, *“School Systems and Community Partners Readiness Assessment Tool for Multi-Level Violence Prevention.”*

The Center for Violence Prevention and Governor's Office on Bullying Prevention (CVP-GOBP) was awarded funding from the Kind World Foundation to support a state-wide task force to examine PreK-16 current practices in prevention programming, as well as identify areas of need regarding policy and institutional practices; community and familial partnerships in prevention and victim services; environmental cultures that support incidence reporting and the teaching and learning of life skills to incorporate aspects of leadership development, advocacy and the active bystander approach to preventing harm and abuse.

The task force met one day each month between January 2017 and July 2017 with sub-committees of the task force meeting periodically throughout this same time period. The task force was managed and facilitated by Alan Heisterkamp, Ed.D., director of the CVP-GOBP at the University of Northern Iowa, and Joe Benesh, president of The Ingenuity Company, Des Moines, Iowa. The Ingenuity Company is a consulting firm that takes a unique, design-thinking approach with private and not-for-profit organizations to organize and construct strategic growth and improvement initiatives. The specific work of the task force was to explore and examine current practices, initiatives, trainings, collaborations and protocol within and among Iowa schools and communities that pertain to the awareness and prevention of gender violence and all forms of bullying.

This report provides an overview of the methodology employed throughout the project, definitions of key terms and concepts, a public health lens of prevention and its connection to federal (Title IX) and state policies that pertain to reporting and preventing sexual harassment and bullying, the causes and scope of gender violence and bullying, existing prevention strategies across Iowa's PreK-16 landscape, engaging men and boys in prevention and incorporating a framework, or spectrum of prevention, for maximizing school and community efforts. A list of recommendations and responses, not limited here, are provided to school and community leaders as they move forward in their efforts to prevent gender violence and all forms of bullying behaviors.

METHODS

The structured framework which guided the CVP-GOBP Task Force sessions was iterative and based on the concepts of design thinking: empathize, define the problem, ideate, prototype and test. The task force's initial sessions began with analysis, pulling apart the basic ideas and pre-formed notions around bullying and gender violence prevention held by task force members. Through directed discussion, the group began to narrow the focus by defining the target audience and the solution sets. Subcommittees, comprised of members from multi-disciplinary backgrounds, were formed around three major themes: causes and scope, prevention strategies, and response and implementation.

Subcommittees researched and explored current PreK-16 practices, protocols and solutions for their respective areas of focus. Then, through ideation, information was shared and vetted among fellow task force members. As a result, solutions were developed with additional granularity in sets of prototypes, allowing for the basic framework of a toolkit – a proposed resource for PreK-16 educational systems. Core areas of emphasis to be considered within the toolkit were broken down and further developed by committees within the task force. By utilizing a design thinking model, the group explored multiple ideas and perspectives and then reframed and reformed their efforts through consensus building and collaboration. During the last session in July of 2017, components of the toolkit were uniquely defined and ready for additional content to be developed and added in each thematic subject area.

WHAT IS GENDER VIOLENCE?

Gender or “gender-based” violence includes sexual assault, relationship violence in heterosexual and same-sex partnerships, sexual harassment, stalking, prostitution and sex trafficking. The term “gender violence” reflects the idea that violence often serves to maintain structural gender inequalities and norms. Gender violence disproportionately affects women and children, and those who identify as gay, bi-sexual, transgender and gender non-conforming.

Gender is also the most powerful predictor of sexual assault and relationship violence. These crimes are committed predominantly against women and are perpetrated most often by men. When men and boys experience violence, it is predominantly - though not exclusively - perpetrated by other men and boys. According to the National Intimate Partner Violence Survey (2010-2012), 36.3% women and 17.1% of men will have experienced some form of sexual violence in their lifetime. Additionally, 1 in 5 women (19.1%) have experienced completed or attempted rape. While men can also be victims of rape, men are more often the perpetrator in this crime. Gender violence often informs the types of violence committed, the way in which it is committed, and the impact experienced by victims. Gender violence can be motivated by aggression, revenge, competition, and entitlement and includes sexual violence and other forms of abuse against women, partners and children.

DEFINING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is a particular aspect of gender-based violence that has its own unique characteristics that merit particular focus by practitioners and various systems. The perpetration of sexual violence in the United States is recognized as a public health crisis that disproportionately affects women, girls, boys and non-conforming gender individuals. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) finds that: *“Sexual violence (SV) is a significant problem in the United States. SV refers to sexual activity when consent is not obtained or not given freely. Anyone can experience SV, but the majority of victims are female. The person responsible for the violence is predominately male (95% of perpetrators identify as male) and is usually someone known to the victim. The person can be, but is not limited to, a friend, classmate, coworker, neighbor, or family member”.*

Smith, S.G., et al (2017). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010-2012 State Report. Atlanta GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/wc/gender-violence/what-gender-violence>

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/>

DEFINING BULLYING

Bullying behavior has been and continues to be defined differently depending upon the organization or group. Several definitions exist, for example, the Virginia Youth Violence Project (2012) defines bullying as:

The use of one's strength or popularity to injure, threaten, or embarrass another person. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or social. It is not bullying when two students of about the same strength argue or fight.

The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program defines bullying as:

A person is bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons, and he or she has difficulty defending himself or herself.

Still, the Center for Disease Control defines bullying as:

Any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated. Bullying may inflict harm or distress on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm.

Finally, the state of Iowa defines bullying as:

"Any electronic, written, verbal, or physical act or conduct toward a student which is based on any actual or perceived trait or characteristic of the student and which creates an objectively hostile school environment and meets one or more of the following conditions:

- *Places the student in reasonable fear of harm to the student's person or property*
- *Has a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health*
- *Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's academic performance*
- *Has the effect of substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school*

-- Iowa Code 280.28

DEFINING INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE (DOMESTIC VIOLENCE)

The Department of Justice defines domestic violence, or intimate partner violence, as "a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner." Intimate partner violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. Technology can also provide a vehicle for perpetrators to harm, coerce, stalk or manipulate their partner. Abusive behaviors can include, but not limited to, behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.

DEFINING STALKING

The Department of Justice defines stalking as, “a pattern of repeated and unwanted attention, harassment, contact, or any other course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear.” Stalking can include, but not be limited to, receiving repeated, unwanted and frightening communications from an individual by mail, email, text or phone; leaving or sending a targeted person unwanted gifts or presents; following a person to places such as home, work, school or social events; making direct and indirect threats to harm a person or their children, pets, family members or friends; damaging a person’s property; or obtaining personal information about a targeted person through various means such as public records, their family members, private investigators, garbage and discarded items or co-workers.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND TITLE IX

Bullying and sexual violence are recognized as major public health problems in our country by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Center for Disease Control. Both victims and targets of bullying and harassment or violence can experience serious emotional and physical consequences from the harm that they receive, as well as perpetrate. Those who bully and those who are victims of bullying may experience short and long term consequences such as, but not limited to, depression, withdrawal from family and peers, truancy from school, poor grades, sleep disturbances, stomach aches, alcohol and drug use, feeling anxious or nervous, retaliatory, and have thoughts of suicide or self-harm.

Sexual harassment of students, which includes acts of sexual violence, is a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Title IX is a civil rights law that states: “No person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”

Establishing and maintaining safe cultures and climates in our schools and institutions of learning promote the well-being of students and staff and result in better academic and behavioral outcomes for students. Providing all students with an educational environment free from discrimination is extremely important. No student should ever feel afraid to attend school, be hesitant to go to class, or refrain from school activities out of fear of verbal, emotional, physical and sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, sexual coercion, sexual exploitation, trafficking, bullying, intimate partner violence or stalking.

<https://curry.virginia.edu/faculty-research/centers-labs-projects/research-labs/youth-violence-project>

<http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/bullying.page>

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/bullyingresearch/index.html>

<https://www.justice.gov/ovw/domestic-violence>

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESCINDS “DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER”

On September 22, 2017, the U.S. Department of Education and its Office for Civil Rights (OCR) rescinded the April 4, 2011 Dear Colleague Letter and the 2014 Q&A on Title IX and Sexual Violence. OCR guidance in the 2011 letter included the statement that, “providing all students with an educational environment free from discrimination is extremely important.” Since 2011, OCR focused schools’ attention on the critical issue of sexual violence, and the importance of implementing clear and equitable policies and grievance procedures. Until revised guidance is issued by OCR, the commitment to safe and supportive learning environments, including gender-based violence, will still need to be a priority because it is the right thing to do.

Advocacy groups, activists, parent groups and the media will continue to press schools to have no tolerance for mishandling allegations of sexual violence, and not abdicate their responsibility to their students. Establishing prompt and equitable policies and procedures, evidence-based prevention programs, timely investigations, and effective responses will be more important than ever, even as the political landscape changes. Moreover, in addition to Title IX, schools’ obligations to address sex- and gender-based harassment and discrimination, including sexual violence, stalking, and intimate partner violence, are explained in various documents or edicts including Title IX, Clery/Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Section 304, the U.S. Supreme Court, Title VII, Title VI, OCR, state law, and institutional policies and procedures. Despite the shift in sub-regulatory guidance, Title IX as written related to sex discrimination, requires schools to:

Disseminate a notice of nondiscrimination stating that the school does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its education programs and activities widely distributed and be available and easily accessible on an ongoing basis, including to communities with limited English proficiency.

Designate at least one employee to coordinate efforts to comply with and carry out responsibilities under Title IX. Responsibilities include overseeing all Title IX complaints and identifying and addressing any patterns or systemic problems.

Adopt and publish grievance procedures providing for prompt and equitable resolution of student and employee sex discrimination complaints which:

- Are known by all constituents through widely distributed notice of the grievance procedures.
- Contain adequate, reliable, and impartial investigation of complaints.
- Describe designated and reasonably prompt time frames.
- Delineate the process for notice of outcome to all parties.

Change comes from the inside out. While schools strive to meet compliance with civil rights laws, they also seek to look within for answers to the problem of gender-based violence. With the confusion that may arise from the rescission of the April 4, 2011, Dear Colleague Letter, the task force supports and encourages PreK-16 schools to renew and increase their commitment to creating and maintaining safe places in which to learn and to continue efforts to prevent gender violence and all forms of bullying.

<https://www.justice.gov/ovw/stalking>

See for example: Hawker, D.S. & Boulton, M. J. (2000). Twenty years’ research on peer victimization and psychosocial maladjustment: A meta-analytic review of cross sectional studies. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 41, 441-455. Fedewa, A., & Ahn S. (2011). The effects of bullying and peer victimization on sexual-minority and heterosexual youths: A quantitative meta-analysis of the literature. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 7, 398-418.

https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/tix_dis.html

CAUSES AND SCOPE

Gender and identity based interpersonal violence have a multitude of factors and issues associated with increasing the risk of its presence—as well as protective factors that are associated with decreasing the risk. Violence prevention and intervention efforts are best directed at eliminating or ameliorating risk factors and enhancing and promoting protective factors. These factors exist at the individual, family, peer, school, community and societal levels in which individuals live and navigate. This socio-ecological approach to gender violence and bullying guides our understanding and efforts at identifying, intervening and preventing violence. Research shows that as the number of risk factors increase, in the absence of protective factors, the likelihood of having academic, social and emotional challenges increases significantly.

The CDC, researchers, and prevention specialists have stated that the elimination of violence will require a multi-systemic—interconnected prevention effort at these various levels. Consistent across the various levels the following risk and protective factors have been identified:

Individual Level:

- Experiences of victimization: individuals who have witnessed or experienced family violence or sexual violence in their childhood are known to be a greater risk of experiencing subsequent violence in their adult lives.
- Attitudes and beliefs: a belief system that supports hyper-masculinity that endorses male control and entitlement, as well as supporting myths about gender violence have an increased risk of perpetrating violence and/or endorsing, directly or indirectly, such violence when witnessing it.
- Alcohol and substance use: heavy consumption of alcohol and “date-rape” drugs, particularly in social contexts, can endorse male privilege and entitlement and increase the risk of violence perpetration.
- Empathy: individuals who are empathetic have been shown to be less likely to engage in behavior associated with bullying and gender-based violence.
- Verbal, intellectual and social skills: the ability to understand, process and navigate contexts in which violence may be likely may serve as protective factors.
- Gender: while both males and females may be victims and perpetrators of violence, studies consistently show that males are more likely to cause more severe forms of violence, utilize violence more frequently as exertions of power and control; and are more likely to use it as an outcome of their masculine socialization.
- Depressed mood/low self-esteem and victimization: mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and attachment issues increases the risks of subsequent violence.
- Intellectual/emotional disabilities: children and youth who may have intellectual and/or emotional disabilities are likely to be at greater risk as targets for victimization.

Family Level

- Parental divorce and inter-parental conflict: exposure to family contexts in which parental conflict is present in the absence of parental warmth serves as a risk factor for subsequent relational conflict and victimization of children and youth.

- Weak parental bonds: Children and youth who are raised in families where parental bonding is weak and harsh parenting practices are utilized are at greater risk for subsequent violence
- Aversive family communication: being raised in an environment in which communication is associated with ongoing criticism, denigration, denial of individual thoughts and rights to share increase the likelihood of repeating such communication patterns in peer and personal relationships. Such communication is associated with increased likelihood of interpersonal and relational violence.
- Exposure to inter-parental violence: witnessing inter-parental violence including not only physical but emotional and psychological violence increases the likelihood of repeating, and/or experiencing such behaviors in interpersonal relationships that children and youth have in later life. A family environment characterized by a presence of love and care, and good conflict management, serves as a protective factor.

Peers and Social Network

- Negative peer network: children and youth who have peers who engage in anti-social behavior are at greater risk of engaging in such behavior themselves. Social networks that engage in pro-social behavior and challenge others who engage in actions that support violence are seen as protective factors.
- Loneliness: children and youth who feel isolated, alienated, and/or are ostracized by peers are at greater risk for victimization.
- Networks endorsing alcohol/substance use: social networks that support rape-supportive norms, or peer approval of forcing sex on women and/or using coercive tactics to gain sex are associated with increased likelihood of perpetrating violence.
- Peer norms: perceptions of norms associated with engaging in pro-social behavior or behavior that is conducive to bullying and gender violence has a major influence on the likelihood of an individual engaging in such behavior

School Level

- School culture: school environments where tolerance of gender violence and bullying occurs through ineffective policies and procedures and/or lack of awareness of such can lead to environments where students perceive there are no sanctions for engaging in harassment or gender violence. Such settings can increase the likelihood of abusive behaviors and create the perception that schools will not be receptive and responsive to reports of such incidences.
- Ineffective prevention initiatives: school systems that engage in prevention initiatives that are not evidenced based and/or adhere to best practices for prevention programming are likely not to change contexts and behaviors. One-time “assembly” type of prevention efforts are shown to, at best, raise awareness of an issue.
- Student engagement or lack thereof: systems that engage youth leadership and involvement in setting school culture; and give voice to the cross spectrum of students found within a system are likely to increase student connection and bonding to school support services.

Select references include: Downey, J.C., Gudmunson, C.G., Pang, Y.C., & Lee, K (2017). Adverse childhood experiences affect health risk behaviors and chronic health of Iowans. *Journal of Family Violence*, 32, 557-564.; Banyard, V., Cross C., & Modecki, K (2006). Interpersonal violence in adolescence: Ecological correlates of self reported perpetration. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 21, 1214-1332.; Arriaga, X., & Foshee, V. (2004). Adolescent dating violence: Do adolescents follow in their friends', or their parents' footsteps? *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 19, 162-184.; Vagi, K.J. et. al. (2013) Beyond correlates: A review of risk and protective factors for adolescent dating violence perpetration. *J. Youth Adolescence* 42. 633-649. <http://www.dps.state.ia.us/commis/ucr/>

- Risk reduction versus primary prevention: school initiatives that are driven by a risk reduction perspective (i.e. students learning how to be safer) are not addressing root causes of bullying and gender-based violence (i.e. individuals who are engaging in the behavior).
- Grade-level transitions: as students navigate through transitional years characterized by the advancement of grades from elementary to middle school, and middle/junior high to high school, they may be susceptible to various forms of harassment, bullying, hazing and sexual assault, as well as being exposed to alcohol and drug usage which can significantly increase the risk for victimization.
- Implementation of policies and procedures associated with Title IX: schools that are aware of Title IX obligations, policies and procedures—especially as it relates to sexual harassment and violence; and have designated and trained Title IX coordinators - are more likely to have a school culture and environment that is responsive to such violence.
- School—Community partnerships: school systems that work in collaboration with parents, and community partners, are more likely to offer comprehensive and consistent messaging to students, staff and faculty about norms of expectation for preventing bullying and gender-based violence as well as timely and accessible services for victims and survivors

Community

- Community champions: community and business stakeholders that support active bystander education and intervention among youth and the broader population are essential to blanketing a community's efforts to prevent violence and harm from occurring.
- Public Service Announcements: social media campaigns that promote and support positive social norms regarding healthy and respectful relationships, active bystander behaviors, asking for help, community resource contact information and engaging men and boys can and do contribute to creating a multi-level, multi-systemic approach to prevent gender violence and bullying.
- Social tolerance for violence: communities that have a high tolerance for violence and/or lack of accountability for perpetrators create contexts in which sexual and gender violence are more likely to occur.
- Patriarchal and rape supportive norms: communities and community systems in which men are in dominant roles and women hold subordinate status or are perceived as being a threat to the status quo of men's power are contexts in which a higher frequency of sexual harassment is likely to occur.
- Legitimized violence spillover: cultures or communities in which some types of violence or aggression are legitimized are likely to see a spillover of violence into other areas such as interpersonal relationships.
- Hostility toward women: higher levels of hostility toward women are associated with higher rates of sexual assault of women.
- Narrowly focused and/or isolated initiatives: communities that have narrowly focused and isolated intervention and prevention initiatives to address gender-based violence are likely to see limited impact.
- Community bonding and connectedness: communities and neighborhoods where individuals are seen as part of a collective voice and where norms of intolerance of gender-based violence predominate minimize the likelihood of violence occurring.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES AND FRAMEWORK: AN ECO-SYSTEM OF SUPPORT

The national and state-level discourse on gender inequality, as well as the unending stream of heartbreaking and emotional disclosures of bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault by women, children and some men, strongly suggests the need for increased implementation of systemic gender violence and bullying prevention. As a society and community of caring leaders and advocates, we know the processes, steps and initiatives needed to decrease the likelihood that violence and abuse occur and to prevent these behaviors from continuing - we have the programs and strategies at our fingertips, in fact, many are free and downloadable. What is needed now more than ever is the leadership, commitment and the political will to make gender violence and bullying prevention a priority among youth and families and within our broader communities.

In building, adopting, or implementing an effective system designed to prevent bullying and gender violence, it is important to operate from a framework known as the Socio-Ecological Model in which multiple strategies and approaches to prevention can occur and where partners and stakeholders can better define their respective role(s) and services.

The Socio-Ecological Model serves to support an ecosystem of support for schools and communities by identifying the complex interplay between four levels: individual, relationship, community and societal. Factors that influence violence and abuse can be examined and studied at each level whereby creating opportunities for school and community leaders to strategically devise and implement intervention and prevention efforts over a period of time.

Whether the educational system is large or small, urban, suburban or rural, outlining a systemic approach to gender violence and bullying prevention will assist in addressing the needs of the school and the broader community.

Measuring prevention efforts can be difficult work – oftentimes requiring patience and persistence. Changing or reculturing the social norms and climate of a notably complex school environment or community culture can take five to seven years. That said, having clear benchmarks and multiple data points to measure the success is critical. Leaning on “real-time” data alone will not satisfactorily answer the question as to whether or not a prevention strategy or intervention is working. Collecting and analyzing survey data regarding student and stakeholder attitudes and perceptions and involving diverse voices from the broader community through the use of focus groups to decipher how things are progressing are important. The key is to begin the work with distinct goals in mind and create a process whereby the data can inform work that is designed to continuously improve the system as a whole.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES AND POSITIVE BEHAVIORS AND SUPPORTS

Building positive culture in which youth can grow and thrive is everyone's responsibility. If schools and communities get culture right, prevention efforts will be more likely to become institutionalized. A successful approach to bullying and gender violence prevention will only occur when the culture and climate of an organization, a neighborhood, or institution is committed to supporting and maintaining positive, healthy relationships and behaviors. This involves students, parents and community partners.

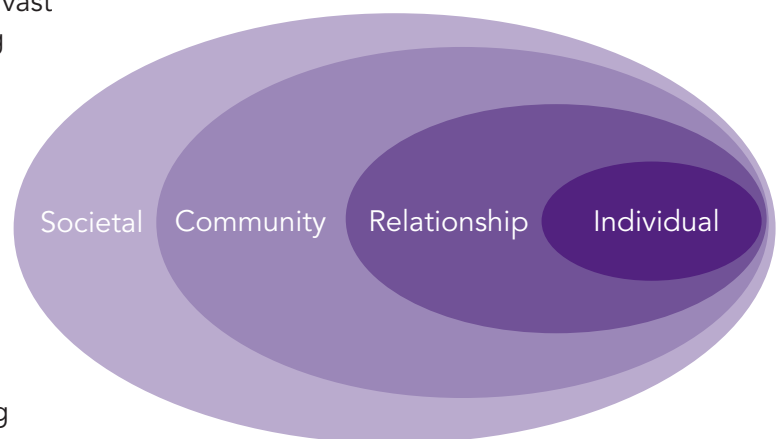
Planning, developing and implementing a PreK-16 bullying and gender violence prevention model or protocol will reduce and eliminate intentional acts of harm and abuse over time. It's not a quick fix. However, without a systemic plan or framework of prevention in place, gaps, delays and omissions in learning and skill development necessary for youth and young adults to grow and thrive socially, emotionally and academically in schools and communities are likely to occur.

Iowa's primary grades (PreK-5) have been implementing bullying awareness and prevention programming for over 35 years. Adoption and implementation of the Olweus™ Bullying Prevention Program, Second Steps to Respect or some variations thereof, have been prolific among elementary school populations. Additionally, the vast majority of middle schools support programming and curriculum consisting of topics and learning modules relating to conflict resolution, healthy choices, living drug and alcohol free and bullying prevention. These efforts are often strategically wrapped within a model known as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support, or PBIS.

PBIS is not a program, but an approach to improving school safety practices and increasing positive behaviors among students that are

conducive to learning. Proponents of PBIS believe: every child can learn proper behavior; intervene early to prevent serious problems; schools need to provide different kinds of support; research and science should inform how schools teach proper behaviors; and, utilize data to make decisions about behavior problems.

The challenge for bullying prevention programs and frameworks, such as PBIS, have been the ability of leaders and decision makers within secondary schools (grades 6-12) to adopt and implement such initiatives. These specific approaches to safe schools and violence prevention, along with overtly addressing the social and emotional needs of students, historically diminish in school systems as students advance and progress into the upper middle school and high school grades. This is due, in part, to a high school's focused attention on core subjects, i.e., mathematics, language arts, science, foreign language and social studies; increased state and federal testing and assessments requirements; college and career readiness; a lack of staff and faculty knowledge and skills on teaching and reinforcing healthy, intimate relationships or handling student disclosures of sexual harm and abuse; and a historic point of view that social and emotional learning belongs within the purview of primary schools.



SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND HIGHER EDUCATION: CONNECTIONS AND CHALLENGES

Over the past decade, colleges, universities and our nation's military institutions have significantly increased prevention education and reporting processes and procedures regarding the awareness, response and action to be taken in order to prevent sexual assaults and all forms of gender violence. Award-winning film documentaries such as *The Invisible War* and *The Hunting Ground*, brought to light the issues of sexual assault and rape within our nation's military and on our college and university campuses, and exposed overt methods and institutional practices that served to silence victims of sexual violence from coming forward to report crimes committed against them. Title IX investigations and civil rights' lawsuits filed on behalf of victims increased over time. Also, it is important to acknowledge that many secondary students in Iowa are also enrolled in coursework at the postsecondary level. Increasingly, more and more high school juniors and seniors enroll in college level liberal arts and science courses. In fact, in a 2015 Iowa Department of Education report, Iowa led the nation in the percentage of students under age 18 enrolled higher education. Confusion about which institution is responsible for investigating and responding to an incident if one occurs at a location different than the student's home school can be mitigated by establishing a protocol between and among the institutions involved.

In April 2011, the Office of Civil Rights and US Department of Education's Dear Colleague Letter surmised that sexual assault had become an epidemic on colleges campuses and reiterated that Title IX guarantees all students an education free from sexual harassment and violence. The Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act of 2013 now requires most institutions of higher education - including community colleges and vocational schools - to educate students, faculty and staff on the prevention of rape, acquaintance rape, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. Today, research on the bystander approach to prevent harm and abuse within college peer groups has led to mandatory trainings and knowledge that now employ it as a viable violence prevention strategy. Other topics such as recognizing behaviors that constitute sexual harassment and violence, alcohol consumption, affirmative consent, vulnerability of first year, female students and sexual assault, reporting procedures regarding sexual assault and harassment, and communicating the rights and responsibilities afforded to students around Title IX have become more and more prevalent during college orientation activities and events. While our nation's secondary schools also operate under the guidelines and requirements of Title IX, action taken to systemically train, educate and implement gender violence prevention (including sexual assault) programming to middle school and high school faculty, staff, parents and students has been slow to non-existent.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCREASED PREVENTION EFFORTS

Over the last three decades, Iowa's primary, or elementary grades, have overwhelmingly adopted systemic practices and programming to support social and emotional learning skills, as well as anti-bullying initiatives. This is also true for many community agencies and affiliates who serve or provide services to youth, such as Girl Scouts of America, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, as well as a variety of after-school and summer-based programs. More specifically, elementary schools (and some middle schools) have implemented programs such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Model™, Second Step to Respect™, Positive Behaviors and Intervention Supports (PBIS) framework, Character Counts and the Leader in Me™ to support the social and emotional learning needs of their students. Prior to, and most certainly since the release of the award-winning film documentary, *Bully*, in 2007, nearly all of Iowa's elementary schools embraced conversations and programming around preventing bullying behaviors. While a handful of secondary schools identify the need to extend conversations on "bullying" and healthy teen relationships among their student populations, most systemic, school-based, prevention programming ends at the middle school door.

Iowa's secondary schools provide students with some of the most meaningful, relevant and robust academic learning available in the United States. However, when it comes to social and emotional learning concepts such as healthy relationships, power dynamics and inequalities in intimate relationships, dating violence, healthy masculinity, anti-pornography and media literacy, Iowa's secondary schools find it challenging to meet the needs and requests of students and their parents. In a 2014 survey of approximately 700 Iowa parents of secondary-aged children, an overwhelming 66.6% reported wanting secondary schools to place more emphasis on issues related to preventing dating violence, sexual violence and bullying.

According to a 2017 study of a nationally representative group of high school principals, nearly 70% responded that they lacked formal training in dealing with and addressing incidents of teen dating violence and related forms of abuse. Additionally, only 35% indicated that dating violence was specifically addressed in their respective school policies, while many high school principals perceive teen dating violence as a "minor problem" in which adolescents engage. Moreover, parents and community leaders take for granted that secondary school resources and student access to trained professionals in these areas is readily available. However, school nursing and school counseling programs have historically not included adequate training to address these topics and issues either, thus, creating large gaps in skills and knowledge required to address and meet the needs of secondary students.

Lack of resources and training for schools and community stakeholders who are willing to engage and support violence prevention initiatives are serious threats to Iowa's youth and families. Iowa's state domestic and sexual violence coalitions and victim shelter providers are obligated to deliver services to victims of violence and abuse have experienced erratic swings in funding, as well as significant budget cuts during the past several years. According to agency directors in Iowa, last year yielded a 25% reduction in funding, yet demand for their services increased. All members of the local community are negatively impacted by gender violence and bullying, either directly or indirectly. Hence, all stakeholders must see themselves as positively contributing to solutions to end these behaviors..

Across the United States, over 20 state departments of education have adopted and/or amended policy language and PreK-12 regulations to stipulate what constitutes dating violence, sexual assault and gender violence. Many of these states' secondary schools also support practices and procedures that explicitly guide victimized students on how to report sexual harassment and sexual assault, receive reasonable

accommodations and supports, and secure safety plans and “no contact” orders from their perpetrator, should he or she attend the same school. To date, Iowa has not adopted additional language to define these terms.

Engaging student leaders in prevention efforts at the secondary school is crucial. Given support structures and permission from adults, secondary students are capable of deploying bullying prevention skills previously learned in the early grades and applying them to more complex social situations involving sexual harassment, racism, sexual objectification, sexual assault, rape and others such as stalking, or self-abuse. However, students need continued reinforcement and encouragement to do so.

Young people at this age should be keenly aware of what does and does not constitute consent within a casual or intimate relationship. A students’ freshmen year of college is too late for this learning and exposure to take place. Regrettably, outside of a 2-3 day unit in a health class or family and consumer science course on healthy relationships and family life, very little instruction or focus is given to these important relationship dynamics. As discovered by the task force’s exploration of secondary school health curriculum and instruction on preventing intimate partner violence and sexual assault, course content dealt primarily with risk-reduction practices and strategies to be used by potential victims. Little was mentioned, if any, on addressing the root causes of most intimate partner abuse and sexual violence or the gendered nature of those most likely to perpetrate the behaviors. When forming and utilizing a comprehensive approach to prevention, social norms and cultural practices that encourage violence as a part of masculinity must be addressed.

As is the case with college students, secondary students, too, can be effective practitioners of the bystander approach - capable of preventing situations and confrontations that have the potential to become violent or extremely abusive. From 2012-2015, 23 Iowa high schools were selected to participate in Safe and Supportive Schools, a federally funded grant through the Iowa Department of Education designed to address and measure student engagement, individual and school safety, and environment factors that contribute to learning. Today, the Iowa Department of Education supports 3 school districts’ efforts to reduce violence and improve and measure students’ access to mental health services.

In addition, with training and support offered by University of Northern Iowa’s Center for Violence Prevention, approximately 20 high schools in Iowa are implementing and sustaining a model which utilizes the bystander approach in preventing gender violence and all forms of bullying. The MVP Strategies™ train the trainer model educates school and community adults in gender violence and bullying prevention strategies and the bystander approach. Adults then identify and train high school juniors and seniors who, in turn, mentor and encourage younger, near-peer students to reframe intervening in potentially harmful or abusive situations as acts of leadership, friendship and courage – not behaviors associated with snitching or “being a nark.” Older peers give reassurance to younger peers that it’s okay and dignified to stand up for yourself and for the rights of others. The majority of young people do not condone bullying or violent behavior and they refuse to accept the bias and demeaning attitudes placed upon people of color and non-gender conforming people by those in positions of power and leadership.

While some secondary schools are actively engaged in supporting and implementing comprehensive strategies and approaches to reducing and ending gender violence and bullying, they represent only a fraction (12-15%) of all the school districts in Iowa.

<https://www.educateiowa.gov/article/2015/02/12/iowa-leads-nation-providing-college-credit-opportunities-high-school-students>

<http://campussaveact.org/>; <http://www.cleryact.info/campus-save-act.html>

Khubchandani et al (2017) Preventing and responding to teen dating violence: A National study of school principals’, perspectives and practices. *Violence and Gender* 4(4) 144-151.

Break the Cycle (<https://www.breakthecycle.org/>)

ENGAGING MEN AND BOYS

While the vast majority of men in the United States are not violent or abusive, the majority of violence and abuse inflicted upon women and other men is perpetrated by men. In order to reduce and eliminate the existence of gender violence and all forms of bullying, there must be a concerted effort among school and community leaders to address and challenge cultural issues and social norms that encourage and support violence as part of masculinity.

It is increasingly important to engage men and boys in conversations and discussions around healthy and respectful relationships, personal responsibility, gender equality, consent and open communication between parents, guardians, mentors and peers. Additionally, men and boys need the affirmation and reassurance from other men and boys that all forms of violence and oppression are wrong and that they have the power to intervene and disrupt abusive language or “locker room talk” and other potentially harmful and violent behaviors before they occur. One such program that has garnered support from PreK-16 educational institutions and the Iowa High School Athletic Association is Coaching Boys into Men™.

Organizations in our state that serve youth, particularly young men, are poised to deliver positive messages of what it means to be a man who strives to conduct himself in a manner that respects the dignity and well-being of all peers, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, or religion. As friends, brothers, sons, fathers, nephews, grandchildren, mentors, co-workers and professionals, men and boys have the power to be positive role models and exemplify an expression of masculinity that is non-violent and respectful of others.

RESPONSE AND IMPLEMENTATION

The approach to preventing gender violence and bullying envisioned by the task force is unique in that a continuum of support from preschool through the college years must respond to the needs of children and young adults at each phase of their development. In recent years, post-secondary institutions have been pushed to develop stronger response mechanisms to address sexual violence and abuse, yet little knowledge and learned experiences have been shared with colleagues and stakeholders at the PreK-12 level. PreK-12 educators and leaders are also struggling to respond appropriately when sexual abuse or other forms of gender violence are reported, in part, due to lack of training and experience among individuals mandated to investigate and respond. By working together on prevention and response, the entire PreK-16 system could, in fact, devise strategies and programs to achieve greater likelihood for success. Knowing the extent to which an institution or system is employing evidence-informed practices across multiple levels of prevention is the first step in creating a comprehensive, multi-level, multi-systemic approach to prevention.

SPECTRUM OF PREVENTION: READINESS ASSESSMENT TOOL

Adapted from Larry Cohen’s work in public health and prevention, the “School Systems and Community Partners Readiness Assessment Tool for Multi-Level Violence Prevention” was designed to facilitate and engage educational systems and community partners in conversations on preventing gender violence and other forms of bullying and relationship abuse. This adaptation of Cohen’s spectrum of prevention model contains the following five components:

SPECTRUM OF PREVENTION-SCHOOL & COMMUNITY

Adopting and Influencing School and Civic Policies

Changing and Modifying School Based Practices

Schools Fostering Coalitions and Networks with Parents & Broader Community

School Faculty and Staff Education & Professional Practice

Strengthening Student Knowledge, Awareness and Skills

Adopting and Influencing School and Civic Policies:

At this level of the spectrum, work associated with adopting and influencing school district policy means identifying needs and strength in the awareness, education and prevention of sexual assault, gender violence and all forms of bullying. Working together as a community of learners, parents and educators can have a positive impact on the mental and physical well-being of all students. Policies and regulations at the state and local district level can address protocol for school employees when handling student disclosures, bystander education and comprehensive prevention strategies. School policies related to Equal Educational Opportunity and Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment need to be of quality, contain appropriate legal framework, be communicated to students and parents and be consistent with best practice.

Changing and Modifying School and Institutional Based Practices

Prevention at this level of the spectrum involves changing and modifying school-based practices that support orientation programming, curriculum and instructional practices, scheduling to support advisee-advisory time, community partnerships, review rules and regulations regarding state and federal policies, and establish routine safety practices in order to improve prevention and intervention efforts against violence and abuse in PreK-16 educational settings.

Schools Fostering Coalitions and Networks with Parents, Guardians and Community:

At this level, PreK-16 schools fostering coalitions and networks with parents and the broader community means creating or strengthening the ability of faculty, staff, parents, and all constituents to join together to maximize expertise and resources on preventing gender violence, bullying and abuse. This becomes

significantly more important as public resources and funding are reduced or cut. Coalitions and networks can band together to pressure and support local, state and federal political leaders to invest in education and primary prevention strategies that will effectively reduce and end gender violence and bullying.

School Faculty and Staff Education and Professional Practice

Promoting education and training to school faculty and staff means educating and providing critical information to those who influence others, whether they be certified staff, paraprofessionals, administration, residence life, food service, building maintenance, or transportation service providers. It is critically important to ensure that those who provide instruction, advice, or serve as role models to youth have the information, skills, and motivation to effectively communicate and demonstrate bullying and gender violence prevention strategies.

Strengthening Student Knowledge, Awareness, and Skills

Strengthening students' knowledge and skills means assisting and encouraging all students to increase their knowledge and capacity in recognizing the warning signs of bullying, relational and dating abuse, promoting healthy relationships by avoiding abusive and violent behaviors, demonstrating gender respect among all peers, and establishing a peer culture whereby social norms support active, pro-social bystander behaviors that confront bullying and gender violence. Students should also be knowledgeable of their rights under Title IX, and along with their parents or guardians, know the names and contact information of their respective community's domestic and sexual violence victim service and mental health providers.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS AND PRIORITIES FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

The task force recognizes that several concerned parents, neighborhoods, school districts, community agencies that serve youth and families, and post-secondary institutions are already taking positive steps to reduce the incidents of gender violence and bullying. But, more needs to be done. We must increase our collective responsibilities and exercise multiple approaches and initiatives in order to create the safe homes, schools, neighborhoods and communities we all deserve. Members of this task force and along with partners across the state are committed to working with and supporting schools and community leaders in organizing and structuring multi-level, multi-system approaches to prevent violence and abuse.

Drawing upon and being grounded in best practices in primary prevention, systems collaboration and organization, and the work of the task force, the following recommendations may be considered and adopted by PreK-16 institutions and their community partners in prevention:

State Level

- Participate in a school and community partner training that utilizes the School Systems and Community Partners Readiness Assessment Tool for Multi-Level Violence Prevention - a multi-system assessment tool to evaluate and assess all aspects of a comprehensive approach to preventing gender violence and all forms of bullying in a PreK-16 educational environment.
- Develop a statewide network of Title IX Coordinators from PreK-16 educational institutions (including community and private colleges) to share strategies and procedures that provide efficient and timely reports and investigations of harassment and abuse, as well as share policy and guideline dissemination practices and advertisements to students, parents and staff.

- Incorporate the Social Ecological Model (SEM) as a guidepost for communicating and promoting school and community risk and protective factors to be addressed by prevention programming and initiatives among PreK-16 constituents. Use the SEM model to design and implement a community-based, school-wide program to share adequate knowledge, procedures, and programs to appropriately respond to gender violence and bullying.
- Acknowledge that gender-based violence is a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and provide prompt and equitable resolution of sexual harassment and discrimination complaints.
- Establish steps to prevent discriminatory effects on the complainant across the PreK-16 educational system and develop solutions and safeguards to prevent the recurrence of harassment and sexual assault in PreK-16 educational institutions.
- Advocate for and adopt policies that require education and instruction on topics related to: the prevention of intimate partner violence, active bystander education, relationship abuse, sexual violence, unwanted sexual advances, affirmative consent and human trafficking. Consider using Break the Cycle's, Framework for Developing School Policies to Address Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking <http://www.breakthecycle.org/sites/default/files/Policy%20Guide%20FINAL%20.pdf> to guide and inform the conversation.

Community Level

- Utilize the "School Systems and Community Partners Readiness Assessment Tool for Multi-Level Violence Prevention" to facilitate and engage educational systems and community partners in conversations on preventing gender violence and other forms of bullying and relationship abuse.
- Utilize a comprehensive social and emotional learning curricula for all students that responds to the needs of children and youth at each phase of their development.
- Form partnerships between school districts and institutions of higher education to provide programming and awareness activities, and skill development under the guise of "college readiness" that educate and train secondary students, school and community leaders on topics related to implicit and explicit bias, privilege and oppression, gender inequality, dating violence, affirmative consent, sexual assault, stalking, and bystander education.
- Create mentorships for young men that focus on the practice of healthy relationships, gender equality, intimate relationships and consent and the social norms that support healthy masculinity.
- Provide continuous gender violence and bullying prevention professional development and training opportunities within and among PreK-16 education institutions. Collaborate with community service agencies and school partners who serve the same population of youth and families.
- Examine the intersectionality/shared risk and protective factors with other issues impacting youth (e.g. suicide, delinquency) and partner with other community agencies and coalitions that have at their core—creating healthier children, youth, families and communities.

E.g. Nation, et al (2003). What works in prevention: Principles of effective prevention programs. *American Psychologist* 58, 449-456; Cox, P.J. Finkelstein, D.M., Perez, V.E. & Rosenhbach, M (2010). Changes in capacity among local coordinated community response coalitions supported by the DELTA program. *Journal of Family Social Work*, 13, 375-392; Casey, E., & Lindhorst, T. (2009). Toward a multi-level, ecological approach to the primary prevention of sexual assault: Prevention in peer and community contexts. *Trauma, Violence Abuse*, 10, 91-114..

District Level

- Complete an analysis of your PreK-12 school district's health and safety policies and practices by conducting the School Health Index (SHI) along with results from your school's Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System survey. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/shi/index.htm>
- Adopt and prioritize the PreK-12 health curricular recommendations for Sexual Health and Violence Prevention presented by the Center for Disease Control's Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool (HECAT). <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/hecat/>
- Advertise and promote to all students, parents and constituents the name(s) and location of Title IX coordinator(s) assigned by PreK-16 institutions to organize compliance efforts; publish policies and reporting procedures; and provide education, prevention, remedies, and enforcement; and track progress over time as a part of the annual school climate report.
- Create a separate subcommittee of the School Improvement Advisory Committee (required by Iowa law) to engage with diverse, underserved and marginalized populations to support and implement solutions to eliminate gender-based violence and bullying. This group would be comprised of a cross-section of citizens with diverse viewpoints as an internal mechanism for developing appropriate prevention strategies and response procedures.
- Reinforce expectations that all students will be treated with equality and fairness, and without fear of bullying, gender-based harassment, sexual harassment or violence of any kind. Include specific awareness and prevention strategies to reduce and end bullying and violence against those students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer, special needs, students of color, or with a specific religion.
- Review and revise all policies and practices that support and encourage victim blaming, such as dress codes that place women and girls responsible for boys' and men's aggressive and sexually inappropriate behavior, and adopt comprehensive policies that address root causes of gender violence and bullying.
- Encourage parents, faculty, staff and all PreK-16 employees to enroll in courses and/or learning opportunities on preventing violence, bullying, racism, sexism, homophobia, etc., offered through local and state professional services organizations, e.g., Iowa Safe Schools, Iowa Department of Public Health, Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Iowa Coalition Against Domestic Violence, Center for Violence Prevention - UNI, Office of Human Rights and local faith communities and community colleges. Consider reviewing the Safe Place to Learn online resource package that provides a range of materials to support school efforts to prevent and eliminate peer-to-peer sexual harassment and sexual violence at the secondary level. http://airhsdlearning.airws.org/sexualharassmentmod3-9-12v2/story_content/external_files/BystanderFocused.pdf
- Partner with local sexual violence prevention specialists and advocates to adopt and implement strategies and programs that engage men and boys as allies with women and girls and non-gender conforming individuals to prevent and end gender violence and bullying.

School Level

- Actively recruit and support the engagement of men and boys in conversations and training on issues related to healthy relationships and consent, masculinity, personal responsibility, and objectification of women and girls.
- Establish prevention strategies and practices that include and engage student leaders as facilitators to help model and promote healthy relationships and positive school culture in elementary schools, secondary schools and institutions of higher education.
- Implement and practice active bystander education and intervention strategies that are consistent and ongoing in order to create a critical mass of youth and adults who feel responsible, reassured and empowered to challenge social norms that support gender violence and bullying. <http://www.mvpstrat.com/mvp-programs/high-school/>
- Set aside time throughout the academic year for near-peer mentoring to effectively communicate positive and weighty messages around preventing gender violence and bullying in and among younger peer groups. Consider spending 25-30 minutes per week to deliver bystander education and prevention strategies to entire student populations.
- Include PreK-12 students in the design, creation, and implementation of social norming campaigns or a carefully orchestrated series of social media messages that support and reassure peers' intentions to desire positive, safe, and healthy relationships with one another.
- Develop and utilize partnerships between the PreK-12 educational system and area colleges and universities to reinforce consistent gender violence prevention education, messaging and skill development that address common risk and protective factors.

CONCLUSION

There is nothing more important than providing for the safety of our youth and for each other. Everyone has a role to play in preventing and responding to sexual violence, gender violence and bullying. Given the proper tools, information and platform on which to converse and share with other peers, students can play a significant role in preventing violence and harm. Parents and guardians play an important role in providing support and information at home on healthy relationships for their sons or daughters. Educational institutions have a responsibility to create safe environments in which to learn. Schools are in the unique position to initiate and connect community partners and outreach services to parents and students in need of guidance and support. Community agencies, too, play a role in providing education and support services to schools, whereby increasing their ability to adequately serve students who may have witnessed or experienced trauma or some form of abuse or violence.

To make prevention meaningful and sustainable, there needs to be a plan or framework that will guide a multi-level, multi-systemic approach to reducing and ending gender violence and all forms of bullying. Taking on such a task should be as common among PreK-16 education systems and their community partners as are initiatives and commitments to improving skills in reading, writing, critical thinking and promoting college and career readiness. The responsibilities for implementing, monitoring and measuring the impact and results of primary prevention strategies can and should be accomplished by a school and community team comprised of committed, caring and compassionate individuals who have the courage to imagine a future without violence.



