

Why Community-Based Prevention?

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

~ Dr. George Albee, Editor
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Family Violence Impacts the Entire Community

Family violence impacts families from all educational backgrounds, all economic strata, all races, all ethnicities and all religions. Potential perpetrators and victims of family violence are found in schools, churches, workplaces, parks, grocery stores, apartment buildings, and every other place imaginable in a community. ***Community-based prevention is the best way to reach all members of our communities.***

Violence is Interwoven into our Social Fabric

While individuals commit violence, their behavior is powerfully influenced by multiple domains, such as family, peers, community, institutions, media, and the broader society. One important theory underlying prevention research, the *ecological framework*, asserts that the factors that contribute to complex health issues, such as violence, are interwoven into our social fabric. ***Multi-pronged prevention strategies that address not only individual risk factors but also domains of influence, systems and norms are required to change behavior and prevent violence.***

Individuals and organizations who engage in root cause analysis of violence consistently conclude that violence will be with us as long as oppression is with us. When a community is able to eradicate racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of oppression, it will be able to end violence. ***Only ambitious, community-based strategies have the potential to achieve community transformation that fosters violence free families.***

Everyone Has a Role to Play in Violence Prevention

Because individual behaviors are not solely responsible for violent outcomes, effective prevention must reach beyond the individual. Often prevention is wrongly conceptualized simply as education aimed at changing individual behaviors. Also, reliance on the criminal justice system to provide accountability inadvertently allows community members to act as passive witnesses to violence rather than partners in preventing violence.

Community-based prevention reflects a systems approach that widely distributes responsibility for changing community norms and practices.

Community-based prevention involves more than the usual suspects in problem-solving to end family violence, generating opportunities for creative solutions and powerful combinations of community assets.

Community-based prevention allows for a wide range of skills, talents and resources to be applied to ending this persistent social problem.

Community-Based Prevention Can Work

Prevention efforts that are owned by the greater community are likely to withstand challenges. Agency-based efforts are vulnerable to staff turn-over or budget cuts that do not prioritize prevention. ***When the community creates social pressure for attention to family violence prevention, those efforts are more likely to be sustained.***

When many agencies work to prevent violence in isolation, they often duplicate efforts. ***Community-level planning is often the most efficient route to designing and implementing effective prevention strategies.***

Voices for Community-Based Prevention

Violence will not end overnight, but communities can be empowered with tools to change the roles that men, women, and children play and to protect those most vulnerable. Implementing such a new concept will necessitate strategies, tactics, and actions that have not yet been conceived of or designed...

Reshaping the future opens up the possibility of transcending more insulated goals and activities and seeing the efforts to end violence against women as an integrated part of a broader social justice agenda, prioritizing coalition building with other anti-oppression groups. Such work must invest energy in flattening out the power structures as well as sharing a common platform with disempowered groups, abolishing a separation between victim and expert, working hard with those whose daily work does not bring them face to face with violence, and forging new understandings of and new solutions for violence against women.

~ Ms. Foundation for Women

The beliefs we promulgate, the gender roles we reinforce, and the myths we uphold all contribute to a climate in which intimate partner violence and sexual violence is permitted and reinforced. We must challenge the systems, norms and beliefs that enable people to hold and wield power and control over others. This is among the most promising approaches to prevent violence against women before it occurs -- to foster a culture in which everyone takes action to reduce the factors that contribute to intimate partner violence and sexual violence.

~Prevention Institute

Since child maltreatment is a complex problem with a multitude of causes, an approach to prevention must respond to a range of needs. Therefore, Prevent Child Abuse America has designed a comprehensive strategy comprised of a variety of community-based programs to prevent child abuse. Reflective of the phases of the family life cycle, this approach provides parents and children with the education and support necessary for healthy family functioning. Although a community may not choose to offer services in all program areas, as a group they respond to the needs of all family members.

~Prevention Child Abuse America

Elder abuse, like other types of domestic violence, is extremely complex. Generally a combination of psychological, social, and economic factors, along with the mental and physical conditions of the victim and the perpetrator, contribute to the occurrence of elder maltreatment.

~National Center on Elder Abuse