

Sexual Violence Prevention



INTRODUCTION, INNOVATION AND INTEGRATION

AGNIESZKA D. MCCORT, M.A.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST
SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION
INJURY, SUICIDE, AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION UNIT
COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH &
ENVIRONMENT

Learning Objectives



- History and evolution of sexual violence prevention efforts
- Current state of sexual violence prevention efforts
- Integrating efforts with other violence prevention fields
- The future of sexual violence prevention efforts

History of Sexual Violence Prevention Efforts



- Sexual violence prevention emerged from the social movements of the late 1960s and 1970s in the United States.
- In her book *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (1975), Susan Brownmiller traced the origins of rape laws as a means for men to obtain restitution for damage to their property, which included women.
- In these early years of the violence against women prevention movement, women worked in small, grassroots feminist collectives to develop the first rape crisis centers (RCCs). Nearly all (RCCs) were staffed by volunteers with the goal of transforming sexist ideologies, power relationships, and the existing social structure.

History of Sexual Violence Prevention Efforts



- During the mid-1970s, the National Organization for Women (NOW) initiated legislative reform in the U.S., which led to all 50 states changing rape laws within a decade. This included:
 - Removal of spousal exceptions
 - Implementation of Rape Shield Laws
 - Change the definition of consent
 - Exclude the need for there to be a witness to the rape.
 - Increase the age of statutory rape from 10 to 12 years old in most states.
 - Elimination of the 90-day statute of limitations.
- In addition to the legislative changes, the National Center for the Prevention and Control of Rape at the National Institute of Mental Health was created in 1975. This resulted in millions of dollars becoming available for researching the impacts of sexual violence and treatment for survivors.

History of Sexual Violence Prevention Efforts



- Two things occurred simultaneously:
 - Early sexual violence prevention professionals realized that they differed on the goals and approaches to prevent violence against women.
 - Despite these conflicts, as more RCCs developed, several early violence prevention professionals came together to form state coalitions.
 - In 1976, the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR) helped establish the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NCASA).
 - PCAR also worked to establish the first emergency room exam protocols for sexual assault survivors 1976, and in 1980, they developed a law enforcement training manual.
 - By 1979, more than 1,000 RCCs had been established across the United States.
- By 1980, the rape crisis movement became professionalized and institutionalized.
 - State and federal funding was made available to hire professional and paraprofessional staff.

History of Sexual Violence Prevention Efforts



- A Champion of Sexual Violence Prevention Efforts
 - Vice President Joe Biden
 - ✦ 1978, the Privacy Protection Act attempted to focus the attention in the courtroom on the defendant's conduct by excluding the victim's past sexual history from the courtroom.
 - ✦ 1984, the Violence Prevention Service Act created a special restitution fund, with criminals paying fines to compensate victims. Rape and domestic-abuse victims received priority for compensation.
 - ✦ 1990, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was introduced and signed into law September 3, 1994, as Title IV of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994.

History of Sexual Violence Prevention Efforts



- Despite gradual increases in government funding, prevention efforts were divided between criminal justice and public health approaches.
- In 1988, Robin Warshaw discussed research collected by the 1984 Ms. Magazine Project on Campus Sexual Assault in her book, *I Never Called It Rape*.
 - As a result, the term “acquaintance rape” became popularly understood and shifted the focus of prevention and intervention.
 - Violence prevention professionals began to understand the root causes of sexual violence, developed and refined programs, and lobbied for support and funding of prevention efforts.
- Various further research confirmed two key concepts:
 - Rape and fear of rape have an impact on every woman’s life and that fear influences choice and restricts freedom.
 - Rapists aren’t necessarily pathological, but may be extending and exaggerating culturally supported gender role stereotypes.

History of Sexual Violence Prevention Efforts



- As more survivors spoke out and public awareness grew, an urgent desire to protect those who were perceived as the most vulnerable to victimization became priority.
 - Self-defense programs
 - Child abuse prevention
- The 1990s began an era of accountability:
 - Funders, policy makers, and general public started demanding program accountability
 - Researchers began to move beyond documenting the occurrence of sexual violence and better understanding who is vulnerable.
 - Evaluation = Best practices
- Susan Faludi's book, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (1991), effected prevention by:
 - Questioning the validity and impact of prevention programming
 - Ultimately, this helped violence prevention professionals more closely examine the effectiveness of prevention programs.

Current State of Sexual Violence Prevention Efforts



- Currently, the attention of researchers and violence prevention professionals is focused on the primary prevention, which is defined as any approach that take place before violence occurred.
- The charge of funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is to prevent the initial perpetration of sexual violence.
- Throughout the United States, this falls under the purvey of state departments of public health together with state sexual violence prevention and intervention coalitions.

The Spectrum of Prevention



Primary
Prevention



Secondary
Prevention

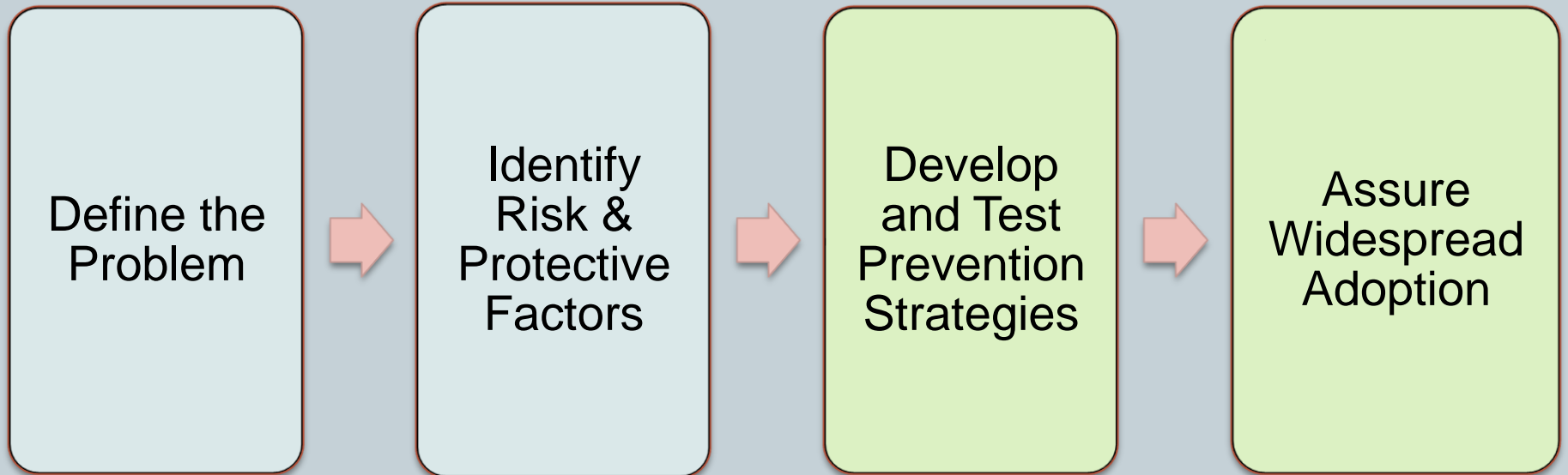


Tertiary
Prevention

- Primary Prevention: Any action, strategy or policy that prevents violence from *initially occurring*.
- Secondary Prevention: Immediate responses after violence has occurred to deal with the consequences in the short-term.
- Tertiary Prevention: Long-term responses after violence has occurred to deal with the lasting consequences of violence.

*Definitions from Center for Disease Control

Public Health Approach to Prevention



Define the Problem



- Review your local program data
- Review your law enforcement statistics
- Review community demographics and context
- Talk to your schools, health departments, social service departments, and other human service organizations
- Ensure you are gathering information from diverse sources

Identify Risk and Protective Factors



- **Risk Factors** – associated with a greater likelihood of violence perpetration: contributing factors – may or may not be direct causes. Not everyone who is identified as "at risk" becomes a perpetrator of violence.
- **Protective Factors** – may lessen the likelihood of violence victimization or perpetration by buffering against risk: can exist at individual, relational, community, and societal levels.

Risk Factors

INDIVIDUAL

- Anger and hostility
- Belief in strict gender roles
- Desire for power and control in relationships
- Alcohol and drug use
- Having a history of aggression
- Impulsive and antisocial tendencies
- Hostility towards women
- Hypermasculinity
- Childhood History of sexual and physical abuse
- Witnessed family violence as a child

RELATIONSHIP

- Association with sexually aggressive and delinquent peers
- Family environment characterized by physical violence and few resources
- Emotionally unsupportive familial environment
- Having friends in violent relationships
- Strong patriarchal relationship or familial environment

COMMUNITY

- Lack of employment opportunities
- General tolerance of violence within the community
- Weak community sanctions against perpetrators
- Exposure to violence in one's family and community violence
- Holding norms accepting or justifying the use of violence in dating relationships

SOCIETAL

- Poverty
- Societal norms that support violence
- Societal norms that support male superiority and sexual entitlement
- Societal norms that maintain women's inferiority and sexual submissiveness
- Weak laws and policies related to gender equity
- High tolerance for levels of crime and other forms of violence

Develop and Test Prevention Strategies



- It's important to strategically develop and implement community-based and culturally relevant prevention programs for various reasons:
 - Effectiveness
 - Community buy-in and support
 - Sustainability
- Programs should undergo rigorous evaluation before they are widely disseminated.

Prevention: Who is it for?



- Approaches that are aimed at groups of the general population regardless of individual risk for sexual violence perpetration or victimization are called **universal interventions**.
- Approaches that are aimed at those who are thought to have a heightened risk for sexual violence perpetration or victimization are referred to as **selected interventions**.
- Approaches that are aimed at those who have already perpetrated sexual violence or have been victimized are called **indicated interventions**.

Ensure Widespread Adoption



- Once data supports an effective prevention strategy, the goal is to establish the prevention strategy as a standard in the field of sexual violence prevention.
- Dissemination techniques that can promote widespread adoption and implementation of the new standards include:
 - Training
 - Networking
 - Technical assistance
 - Evaluation, both process and outcome

Primary Prevention Across the Socio-ecological Model



SOCIETAL

Multi-partner collaborations to change laws & social norms that support teen dating violence.

COMMUNITY

Environmental influences designed to impact the climate, systems, and policies.

RELATIONSHIP

Interpersonal influences: peers, intimate partners, and family members.

INDIVIDUAL

Individual influences: biology, temperament, attitudes and beliefs; exposure to violence.

Nine Principles of Effective Prevention Programs



- **Comprehensive**
- **Varied Teaching Methods**
- **Sufficient Dosage**
- **Theory Driven**
- **Positive Relationships**
- **Appropriately Timed**
- **Socio-Culturally Relevant**
- **Outcome Evaluation**
- **Well-Trained Staff**

Sexual Violence Prevention Efforts



- **Definition of Sexual Violence**

- A completed sex act without the victim's consent, or involving a victim who is unable to consent or refuse.
- An attempted (non-completed) sex act without the victim's consent, or involving a victim who is unable to consent or refuse.
- Abusive sexual contact which is defined as intentional touching.
- Non-contact sexual abuse.

~ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Sexual Violence Prevention Efforts



- Definition of Sexual Health
 - Sexual health is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well being related to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity.
 - Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.
 - For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled.

Colorado Sexual Violence Prevention Efforts



- **State Prevention Team**
 - Vision Statement

The Colorado Sexual Violence Prevention Team will work with diverse communities to support healing and increase health and safety by examining the root causes of sexual violence, and utilizing solutions generated from communities across the state of Colorado.

Integrating Violence Prevention Efforts



- Shared Risk and Protective Factors Project
- Teen Dating Violence Prevention
- Integrated Curriculum

Thank you!



Agnieszka McCort, M.A.

Program Development Specialist

Sexual Violence Prevention Program

Injury, Suicide, and Violence Prevention Unit

Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment

303-692-2591

Agnieszka.mccort@state.co.us