Best Practices in Sexual Assault Prevention

Washington State Higher Education Conference

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

October 30, 2014

University of Washington

Alan Berkowitz
Agenda

- Goals for sexual assault prevention programs
- What we know about effective prevention
- The influence of social norms
- The role of bystander behavior
- Lessons learned from model programs
- The role of leadership
Three Domains of a Comprehensive Program

- Policies and procedures
- Services for victims
- Prevention for men and Risk-reduction programs for women

Prevention should never be at the expense of the other domains
No quick or easy solutions

- ...for the first time *in eight years*, our annual student survey of health and risk behaviors is showing significant reductions in alcohol use, anonymous reports of sexual assault, and risk factors for suicide—all indices are going down at the same time, which suggests to us that we are seeing culture change on campus.

- Although we are unable to determine which of our comprehensive prevention program elements is contributing to these positive changes, we have evidence that our interventions are working. Our major interventions include our bystander intervention campaign, a social norms campaign, screening and brief intervention for alcohol use, early intervention for suicide risk, and consistent policy enforcement.
Effective Prevention and Response

• **What** we do (content, theory, participants)

• **How** we do it (delivery system, institutional readiness, buy-in etc)

• The integration of “how” and “what” into a comprehensive intentional, planned effort.
Elements of Successful Prevention Programs

- Comprehensive
- Intensive
- Relevant
- Positive Messages
- Data Driven
Questions

- Does my campus have a task force composed of all key-players that coordinates SA prevention & response?
- Is it empowered from above and have the necessary resources?
- Are invitations to speakers and programmatic efforts coordinated?
- Are situations debriefed?
- Are there common, campus-wide goals, objectives and strategies?
- Is currently available campus data well-managed and accessible?
Who do we focus on?

- Potential victims?
- The minority who assault (5%)?
- The majority who are bystanders (95%)?

- Recent research has confirmed that approximately 5% of men commit approximately 95% of sexual assaults, while another 20-25% admit to some form of sexually coercive behavior

- Most men are not assaultive or coercive

- Previous victims are most at-risk for subsequent victimization
How do we?

- Teach at-risk individuals to reduce risk without victim blaming?
  - Identify and respond to risky situations
  - Reduce self-blame
  - Teach self-defense

- Inhibit perpetrators from perpetrating?
  - Understand perpetrator motivations and M-O
  - Create an inhibiting environment

- Encourage bystanders to intervene?
  - Understand and reduce barriers to intervention
  - Teach intervention skills
  - Strengthen norms that inhibit violence

- What is the role of leaders in all of the above?
Models of Prevention

Always focus on the positive

- Identify and respond to risk situations
- Teaching consent
- Understanding gender socialization
- Engaging the bystander
- Correcting misperceived norms

Which of these approaches will help us to support bystanders and inhibit perpetrators?
Considerations in Working with Men

- Men should take responsibility for preventing sexual assault (as opposed to “risk-reduction”)
- View men as allies and prevention partners
- Are most effective with peer educators in small all-male groups
- Discussions should be interactive, encourage sharing of feelings and beliefs, and reveal the true norm of discomfort among men
- Men must be accountable to women
Considerations in Working with Women

- Women (and men) need to be aware of risk-behaviors and risky situations
- Victim blaming must be avoided
- Skills for responding to risky situations can be taught
- Teaching self-defense enhances risk-reduction
- Risk-reduction is not prevention but remains necessary
Overall Strategy

Develop mutually reinforcing, synergistic programs to foster a comprehensive environment of change that reduces assaults.

One intervention alone or disconnected interventions will not change the climate sufficiently to reduce violence against women.
Men Who Sexually Assault

- Approximately 3-5% of men commit over 95% of the assaults
- In a study of serial rapists, 76 men committed 439 rapes and attempted rapes (Lisak & Miller)
- These men also committed 49 sexual assaults, 66 acts of physical abuse of children, 277 acts of sexual abuse of children, and 214 acts of batters (a total 1,045 offenses or approx. 14 offenses each)
- In addition, 44 other men were classified as “single act rapists” accounting for an additional 44 rapes
- Sexual predators seek out vulnerable women who are likely to be less credible as witnesses
What do we know about undetected rapists?

- Do not use a weapon
- Alcohol as the primary “weapon”
- Use of instrumental, not gratuitous violence
- Have access to consensual sex
- Engage in “hyper-masculine” behavior
- From all racial and ethnic groups and sexual orientations
- Are not mentally ill and may be highly respected
- Have extreme over-perceptions of the other men’s acceptance and support for their attitudes and behaviors
Strategies of Sexual Predators

- Stalking vulnerability: scouting for a target
- Grooming of victim
- Intentionally increasing victim’s vulnerability
- Isolation of victim
- Cognitive distortions
What will work to inhibit predator behavior?

- Correct perpetrator misperceptions about other men’s support for what they think and do
- Correct misperceptions that keep bystanders from intervening
- Teach bystanders to actively intervene
- (Empower women through effective risk-reduction)
The Role of Social Norms

- “Social norms” refer to the acceptability of an action or belief, i.e. they are unspoken rules about what is “normal” for a group or setting.

- Misperceived norms are a strong influence on behavior,
  - are used as self-justification by perpetrators,
  - influence how men define consent and whether or not they intervene, and
  - reinforce “rape culture” and promote victim blaming.
College Student Misperceptions

- Men and women overestimate other’s
  - sexual activity (# times & # partners)
  - belief in rape myths
  - willingness to use force
  - having sex without partner’s consent
  - perpetrators overestimate to a much
greater degree than non-violent men

- Men underestimate other men’s
  - discomfort with sexist & violent behavior
  - willingness to intervene
  - discomfort with male socialization
Social Norms: Underlying Beliefs

- **Pluralistic Ignorance**: the incorrect belief that one's private attitudes, judgments or behavior are different from others

- **False Consensus**: the incorrect belief that one represents the majority when one is actually a minority
Effects of misperceptions

- Men’s willingness to intervene to prevent sexual assault is correlated with men’s perception of other men’s willingness to intervene.
- Likelihood of assaulting increases when men believe that other men are more likely to endorse rape myths or more likely to engage in coercive behavior. This effect is greatest for rape-prone men.
- Victim blaming (self and other) is increased when support for rape-myths is over-estimated.
## Snowball Survey Pilot Data  (n = 37)
### White Ribbon Campaign

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Actual Norm (Self)</th>
<th>Perceived Norm (Most guys)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It’s not okay for a boy or man to cry</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s ok to dump a girl if she won’t have sex with you</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A man should make more money than his wife</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If a girl is dating a guy, she shouldn’t be spending time alone with other guys</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exercise: “What Do We Really Think?” White Ribbon Campaign Education and Action Kit
Girls perceived vs. actual intercourse

By the end of the eighth grade, how many girls do you think have had sexual intercourse?

Perceived

- None had sex: 12%
- Less than half had sex: 36%
- About half had sex: 27%
- More than half had sex: 17%
- Almost all had sex: 8%

Actual

- Never had sex: 78%
- Had sex: 22%

Have you ever had sexual intercourse (had sex, made love, gone all the way)?

8th grade girls, surveyed June 2002 by PPNYC
Bystander Behavior Stages
(from being a passive to an active bystander)

- Notice the event
- Interpret it as a problem
- Feel responsible for dealing with it
- Have the necessary skills to act

At what stage is my campus with respect to sexual assault and how can we move our campuses through these stages?
Reasons for Bystander Behavior

- Assume that it isn’t a problem because others don’t intervene (social influence)
- Fear of embarrassment (audience inhibition)
- Assume that someone else will do something (diffusion of responsibility)
- Believe that others’ aren’t bothered (social norms)
- Fear of retaliation or negative outcomes
The “Bystander Effect”

- The presence of other’s inhibits the desire to help
- i.e. more bystanders results in less help

but…

The bystander effect can be reversed when there are shared norms in support of intervention
Intervention Options

- Direct versus Indirect: Talk to the person directly or to the others who are present
- On the spot or later: Do something right away or wait
- Types of interventions
  - Confront the person/impose consequences, express feelings
  - Shift the focus (change the situation)
  - Shift the person (change the person)

Goal: To have more options for responding and feel better about your response
Active Intervention Options

Decide to Intervene

Indirect (to the bystander)
- Assess norm
- Engage allies and bystanders
- Make a plan
- Develop support for next step
- Offer support to the victim

During the incident
- Confrontation
  - Set limits or express feelings
- Change the focus
  - Non-participation
  - Change the subject
  - Shift the focus
- Change the person/shift attitudes

OR

Direct (to the offender)

After the incident

OR

Indirect (to the bystander)

During the incident

Direct (to the offender)

After the incident
Putting it all together
A Model Rape Prevention Program for Men

- Developed by Alan Berkowitz
- Tested by Christine Gidycz of Ohio University in a CDC funded study
- Incorporates definition of consent, normative feedback (about men in the workshop and men on campus), and practice in bystander intervention strategies (responding to scenarios)
- Offered in parallel with a women’s program
- Workshop recipients were men and women in residence halls with matched control groups
- Intensive peer-facilitator training & supervision
Findings for Men at Four and Seven Month Follow-up

- Perceived that their peers would be more likely to intervene (including sexually aggressive men)
- Perceived less reinforcement from peers for sexually aggressive behavior (among sexually aggressive men)
- Associated less with sexually aggressive peers
- Less likely to engage in sexually aggressive behavior (1.5% experimental versus 6.7% control)*
- Less use of pornography

*Rebound at 7-month follow-up
Women’s program components

- Definitions of rape and sexual assault
- Statistics on frequency of rape and sexual assault
- Discussion of societal pressures and causes of rape
- Discussion of common characteristics of perpetrators
- Discussion of parameters of consent
- Teaching of risk reduction techniques, including self-defense
- Provision of information about rape aftereffects
- Provision of information about victim assistance resources
Findings for Women

- No decrease in number of victims but decrease in times assaulted
- Less self-blame and trauma
- Greater assignment of perpetrator responsibility
- Increased protective behavior and assertive communication
- Other studies: differences based on previous victimization
Conclusions

- Identify and support healthy norms
- Focus on bystander intervention (BI)
- Teach consent in the context of BI
- Avoid “health terrorism”
- Create environments that inhibit perpetrators
- Reduce victim blaming
A Model Social Norms Marketing Campaign to Address Dating Violence

Gateway High School
(Springfield, MASS)

Special Thanks to Monica Moran
Boys Attitudes and Perceptions of “Trash Talking” Girls

“I don’t like to hear boys talk trash about girls or women.”

- 83% of male students agree or strongly agree with the above statement.
- 63% of male students agree or strongly agree that most other male students agree with the above statement.
4 Out of 5 Gateway Guys Really Don’t Want To Hear Trash Talk About Girls.

Here’s what they do about it:

• TELL THEM TO STOP
• LEAVE THE CONVERSATION
• CHANGE THE SUBJECT
• WARN THEIR FRIENDS ABOUT THE PERSON
• WARN THE PERSON BEING TALKED ABOUT

In a survey taken by Gateway High School students in January 2006, 83% of male students agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement, “I don’t like to hear other guys talk trash about girls or women.”

YOUR SURVEY. YOUR RESULTS.

This campaign is a collaboration between Gateway High School students and the Southern Hilltown Domestic Violence Task Force. Artwork by Gateway students.

Project funded in part by a grant awarded to the Town of Chester for the Southern Hilltown Community Assistance Program by the HUD, and the DHCD MA CDBG program.
Student Attitudes about Healthy Relationships

More than 80% of students agree that in most relationships they see at Gateway:

- Couples share decision making
- Each person has outside friendships
- Each person decides how and where they spend their free time
More than 80% of you agree that in most relationships at Gateway...

- Couples share decision making
- Each Person is allowed to have outside friendships
- Each Person chooses how and where they spend their free time

Data from a survey taken by 349 out of 419 Gateway High School students in January 2006.
Two-year follow up findings

- Boy’s misperception of other boys’ comfort with trash talk is corrected

- Boy’s misperception of norm for consent is reduced by half (from 73% to 82% with norm of 97/95%)

- Students who report that they have a friend who has been abused increases by 44% (from 18% to 26%)

- Increase of 32% in boys who do something in response to hearing “trash talk” (from 38% to 52%)
The Role of Leadership

- High-risk behaviors take place in an environment that either encourages (dis-inhibits) or discourages (inhibits) them.

- Leaders at all levels, including “informal leaders” have an important role in shaping the environment.

- Visible events send cues as to whether a behavior is tolerated or not.

- Leader behaviors are “visible events”
The effectiveness of prevention activities is determined to a great extent by visible leader support.

Are leaders perceived as supporting or inhibiting SAPR, drug prevention and other issues?

Effective prevention is a team effort and not only something that prevention professionals do “for the administration”
Leader Recommendations

- Reinforce the positive
- Believe reports (“Start by Believing”)  
- Encourage help-seeking behavior  
- Hold bystanders accountable  
- Seek out and hear stories  
- Support and reinforce those working on the issue  
- Address the larger culture/permissive environment that supports problems
No quick or easy solutions

• ...for the first time in eight years, our annual student survey of health and risk behaviors is showing significant reductions in alcohol use, anonymous reports of sexual assault, and risk factors for suicide - all indices are going down at the same time, which suggests to us that we are seeing culture change on campus.

• Although we are unable to determine which of our comprehensive prevention program elements is contributing to these positive changes, we have evidence that our interventions are working. Our major interventions include our bystander intervention campaign, a social norms campaign, screening and brief intervention for alcohol use, early intervention for suicide risk, and consistent policy enforcement.

State University of New York at Albany
References


• For bystander intervention scenario’s go to: www.alanberkowitz.com
Thank you for your willingness to lead by expressing values in action
Contact Information

Alan Berkowitz
Independent Consultant
Mount Shasta, CA 96067

alan@fltg.net

www.alanberkowitz.com