



**Prevention and
Intervention
of Sexual
Violence in
Schools:**

**Talking
about “It”**

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Prevention and Intervention of Sexual Violence in Schools: Talking about “It”

Introduction

The need for a booklet focusing on sexual violence among school aged-children arose from the concern that sexual violence often gets lost when violence prevention is addressed. Many adults are uncomfortable talking about sex. That discomfort combines with differing perceptions as to the harm done by sexual violence and makes it difficult for adults to know when and how to intervene. Sexual bullying and bullying about sexual orientation create even more puzzles. All of this leads to the tendency to minimize problematic sexual behaviors and related issues.

Another impetus for this booklet was a high profile sexual assault that took place in an urban high school in St. Paul Minnesota. The ramifications of this incident touched the sensitive nerves of male and female relationships, cultural differences, racial tensions, and the tendency to blame victims. It left resounding waves of shock, disbelief, fear and sadness. It fueled the rapid grinding of the rumor mill. It divided the school and community.

The context of this incident created an invaluable community forum for discussion of these issues. We acknowledge the valuable input from students, teachers, school administrators, and community members who shared their insights and the numerous state agency and community experts who provided information and resources. Special recognition is given to Cordelia Anderson who interviewed students, faculty and school administrators and was the principal writer of this report.

Many community groups worked together to begin dialogue and ensure input from a broad spectrum of school and community members. Discussions included representatives from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Children’s Mental Health Division; St. Paul Schools, the Minnesota Department of Corrections; the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, the Initiative for Violence Free Families and Communities in Ramsey County; Sensibilities, Inc.; Sexual Offense Services; the St. Paul Police Department; and others. Thoughtful and candid responses and recommendations from students, staff and a variety of experts are reflected in this booklet.

A lack of a common vocabulary or common definitions increased the discomfort related to talking about sexual issues. This booklet helps to establish a shared vocabulary so that constructive dialogue can begin.

What this booklet is:

The booklet is a start. It is a tool to get people who work with children and youth talking about sexual violence. It provides basic information useful for anyone who works with children or youth.

What this booklet is not:

It is not a curriculum for students or a training manual for staff. This one small booklet cannot and does not contain all the information schools or communities need.

Recognizing Harmful Sexual Behaviors

Many of the harmful sexual behaviors that occur in schools are not criminal sexual conduct, nor even illegal sexual harassment, but are forms of sexual bullying. Bullying about sexual orientation is one of the most frequent forms of abuse, especially between males, but it is one of the least talked about. Sometimes bullying clearly crosses the line and becomes harassment, which is illegal. Sexual behavior problems, sexual bullying and sexual harassment occur day to day, K-12. They require appropriate interventions and prevention just as much as the more sensational but less frequent criminal sexual acts.

“We need to have zero indifference, not zero tolerance.”

Dr. Nan Stein, author and researcher

The full range of sexual violence needs to be put on the priority list of comprehensive school-wide prevention efforts. Such efforts need to be connected to issues of concern such as tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, violence prevention, bullying, teen pregnancy prevention, sexually transmitted diseases (STD's), sexuality education, mental

health, gay lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) issues; and restorative justice.

The sexual assault that took place within a St. Paul high school led to discussions of sexual behavior problems, sexual aggression and sexual violence, kindergarten through twelfth grade. These dialogues also demonstrated how often victims of sexual abuse continue to be expected to be the ones who can prevent it and then are blamed when they can't stop it.

A Sexually Toxic Society

**When incidents of sexual violence are as frequent as they are;
When mass media is filled with images that pair sex with violence;
When dominant messages sell sex void of any sense of meaning,
significance or responsibility;
When gender socialization continues to be destructive; and
When adults are hesitant to proactively talk about sexuality;
We have a **sexually toxic society.****

Schools are affected daily by the ripple effects of a sexually toxic and sexually disrespectful society and the harm it causes to children and youth. Schools face the particular challenge of how to create safe school climates, conducive to learning, when they are part of a sexually toxic culture. Another challenge for schools is to effectively address sexual violence when they already have a number of other specialized issues to deal with. Staff face immense pressures to improve basic standards while also addressing a variety of social problems - all amidst budget cuts! While this booklet focuses on schools, schools are clearly only one piece of the prevention puzzle. Schools need the help and support of everyone in the community, especially the families of students.

Talking About “It”

Although comprehensive efforts are needed to prevent sexual violence, an important beginning is to talk – talk about “it.” When we respectfully talk with each other, we can sort through confusion and differences and reach solutions to keep our children be safe and help our schools become safe, welcoming environments in which to learn.

Surgeon General David Satcher recently released a report, “Call To Action Report to Promote Sexual Health and Responsible Behavior.” Satcher talks about sex education beginning with parents, but

that schools play an important role: “Schools have always been the great equalizers.” Along with sexuality education and discussion that is respectful of “the diversity of sexual values within any community,” Satcher also recommends ensuring that programs that aim to prevent sexual abuse are available. He calls for “mature and thoughtful discussion about sexuality.”

We need to talk about “it” and we hope this booklet will help.

Acknowledgements

The primary writer of Prevention and Intervention of Sexual Violence in Schools: Talking About “It,” Cordelia Anderson, has been working in prevention for 25 years. She consults with schools and other local and national agencies to enhance prevention efforts, assist with interventions and heal after harm has been done. Contact information: Sensibilities, Inc., 4405 Garfield Ave. South, Minneapolis, MN 55409, E-mail: Cordelia@visi.com, (612) 824-6217.

Much of this booklet is from the book Talking About It which is currently being reworked from “Touchy Issues,” unpublished, written by Cordelia Anderson, 2001.

The Touch Continuum: Park of A Risk –Reduction Curriculum, Cordelia Anderson, SIECUS Report, Volume, 29, Number 1, Oct/Nov 2000

The Touch Continuum, Cordelia Anderson, 1978, Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Project, Hennepin County Attorney’s Office.

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Section 1: Basics

It Happens

On October 6, 2000, at an inner city high school in St. Paul, Minn., something happened that shook the school's and community's sense of safety and challenged their attitudes and values. Three boys were accused of sexually assaulting a female classmate during the school day on school premises. One of the boys was accused of raping her, one of forcing her to perform oral sex and the third boy of aiding and abetting the crimes by remaining outside the room, serving as a lookout.

“Quality people, good people could do unexpected things. It is so hard for me to see any of these guys in this situation.”

Student

“I feel so sorry for the girl it happened to especially when people say they don't know what to believe.”

Student

Whatever happened, it was not comfortable for most people to talk about. Whatever happened was not far from what has or could occur in or outside other schools. Immediately questions rang through the hallways and in the community. Students and adults alike struggled with what really happened, whom to believe and how to prevent it from happening again.

All three boys eventually pled guilty. The boy who stood guard pled to aiding and abetting the false imprisonment of a minor. The two other boys pled guilty to third degree criminal sexual conduct and must register as sex offenders. Although, the court proceedings with regard to this matter have come to a close, the trauma and the ripple effects are far from over.

It is challenging enough to face the fact that sexual violence can and does happen in high schools. It is even harder to come to terms with the reality that abusive sexual behavior happens in the lower grades. The following are some elementary and middle school examples reported to the writer of this report.

Elementary and Middle School Examples

Two kindergarten boys hold down a kindergarten girl. While one boy pins her down the other touches her vagina over her underwear.

Two first grade boys hold another boy in the bathroom. One boy inserts a pencil up the boy's anus and touches the boy's penis.

A middle school staff person sexually harasses other staff at school.

A middle school boy sexually harasses a teacher.

A school is all abuzz after a web page spreads sexual rumors about a number of students.

An eighth grade girl skips school with other students; all are drinking. Two boys attempt to force her to have sex.

Ninth grade boys expose themselves in the locker area not far from the main office.

A popular teacher pleads guilty to sexual contact with students.

Though a relatively small percentage of all incidents of sexual violence happen within schools, no school is exempt from the reality and potential of sexual violence. While sexual bullying and inappropriate sexual behaviors are far more common occurrences, elementary, middle and high schools are increasingly dealing with aggressive and illegal sexual behaviors. All schools can take steps to minimize the likelihood of sexual violence and to intervene effectively. Proactive steps begin with encouraging positive and appropriate behaviors and taking bullying more seriously. Violence is also averted by prompt and sensitive investigations of reports and actions to recover and heal the harm after an incident.

Schools & Community

School and community partnerships are critical to help our children be safe and to reduce sexual violence. Although the information in this booklet is written for those who work in schools it also pertains to all who work in other ways with schools or with children and youth in other settings. The school community involves the parents and families of students as well as the broader community. All partners are key to the solution.

The goal is for all schools to be safe, secure and healthy learning communities. All schools should be welcoming places where everyone feels connected and is free from sexual violence, physical violence, emotional/psychological violence.

What is Sexual Violence?

Definitions

Sexual violence is one form of violence. Sexual violence is defined as sexual actions or words that are unwanted by and harmful to another person. (MN Dept. of Health: A Place to Start)

Behavior is abusive if it is:

- 1) without consent
- 2) occurs between people of unequal power
- 3) coerced

(“It is abusive if..” adapted Gail Ryan)

There are differing degrees of harm and severity of sexual violence. There are many different types of sexual violence including, but not limited to, child sexual abuse, incest, child pornography, exposure, cyber-stalking, rape, sexual intimidation, and sexual bullying and bullying around sexual orientation.

Sexual bullying, sexual aggression and sexual violence — whether verbal, physical or psychological — interfere with learning. They create a disrespectful if not a blatantly hostile environment.

Behavior Continuum

Behaviors, including sexual behaviors, fall on a continuum: 1) those that are appropriate and helpful in a school, 2) behaviors that are inappropriate and harmful, 3) behavior that break the school rules and/or criminal laws.

Opinions and perspectives may vary widely when applied to a given incident. While one person may view an incident as teasing, another may see the same thing as sexual violence. These value-based differences create difficulties for schools in setting clear criteria along the behavior continuum. The

difficulties are further exacerbated by cultural differences that inform values. Schools often have no standard reporting or assessment procedures clear enough to counter personal perceptions. This is one of the areas where staff, administrative and community dialogues are needed to establish practical and functional definitions. The following terms are suggested for community dialogue:

Healthy, Appropriate, Respectful, Safe

Behaviors that are expected, encouraged and helpful in a school setting.

Teasing, flirting

Fun, playful, mutual, no harm done, relationship enhancing, problematic only when detracting from school tasks.

Mutually Inappropriate

Consensual sexual intimacy or sexual behaviors in school.

Bullying

Not fun for at least one party, not mutual, harm done, aggressive, harmful to relationships; school policies vary.

Harassment

There is a continuum of coercion/intimidation in unwanted words and behaviors, harm done, against school policy, against the law; must be reported.

Violence

Unwanted words and behaviors that are intimidating or coercive that hurt people; without consent or equality and with coercion; forced, tricked or manipulated; harm done; against school policy, against the law; must be reported.

In determining severity the focus should be on the harm done. Stop means stop. When a person says “stop” or is upset, the behavior should stop.

How Big is the Problem of Sexual Violence in Schools?

- Research indicates that one in five girls and one in seven boys will be sexually abused by age 18 (Finkelhor, 1994); 30-50% of all abusers are under age 18 (Rogers & Tremain, 1984);
- One in 10 girls and almost one in 20 boys reported being physically abused or raped on dates (MN Student Survey, 1997)
- One in five high school girls reported being hit, slapped, shoved or forced into sexual activity by a dating partner (Journal American Medical Association, 2001)

Despite these statistics there are few studies that show how much sexual misconduct occurs in schools. In-school frequency of these behaviors is hard to clarify for many reasons: schools define and report sexual misconduct differently; victims under-report their experiences; and schools lack incentives to accurately report.

Sexual harassment is the type of sexual violence that generally receives most attention by schools. According to the recently released American Association of University Women (AAUW) study of 2,064 eighth through eleventh graders, harassment pervades school life. Four out of five students experience harassment; girls report only slightly more harassment than boys. While more students say their schools have a sexual harassment policy, than reported in the 1993 AAUW study, the behaviors continue. Students still rarely tell adults, even though both boys and girls report that harassment is upsetting.

How is Sexual Violence Different from Other Kinds of Violence?

More than other types of violence, sexual violence brings out mixed attitudes that get in the way of an effective response on the part of staff, students and the community. People tend to react ambivalently to anything that has to do with sex. Many are uncomfortable talking about sex in a respectful and non-joking manner. With sexual violence, there is more blaming of victims and minimization or confusion about the seriousness or harm of the behavior. For those victimized by sexual violence, the emotional harm can be profound, striking at the core of one's self and identity.

Because sexual violence raises so many uneasy feelings, it is easily ignored when other problem behaviors are discussed. In addition, our society typically responds to a "problem of the hour" instead of looking at the connections between various problems. While each problem has unique elements, prevention of an array of forms of violence must have a broader and more interconnected base. When it comes to action to prevent harmful behaviors, there is overlap between what is needed to reduce sexual violence and what is needed to prevent all other destructive behaviors.

Section 2: Prevention

"We live in a violent, racist and sexist society where people with lesser power are hurt by people with greater power. Anytime incidence is this high, then whatever is producing it is everywhere, not just in individuals."

Dr. John Briere, University of Southern California

The 3 P's Approach to Sexual Health and Responsible Behavior: Promotion, Protection, Prevention

In the Surgeon General's Call To Action To Promote Sexual Health and Responsible Sexual Behavior, Dr. Satcher calls sexual health a "significant public health challenge." He writes about individual responsibility and community responsibility and emphasizes the importance of a public health approach. He describes the public health approach as: 1) identifying the problem; 2) identifying risk and protective factors; 3) developing and testing interventions; and 4) implementing and further evaluating those interventions that have demonstrated effectiveness.

The typical approach to preventing problems around sexual behaviors has been "just say 'no,'" which holds potential victims responsible for stopping the harm from happening. This approach misses the point in many ways. In concert with the public health model, consider the "3P" approach: promote, protect and prevent.

Promotion

Promotion of sexual health and responsible sexual behavior is based on increasing protective factors and encouraging healthy development, which includes core life skills and creating healthy school climates. Children and adolescents need caring, compassion, connectedness with adults and peers, and other healthy relationships. Studies show that increasing protective factors, assets and emotional intelligence reduces risk factors and positively affects academic achievement. Dr. Robert Blum, University of Minnesota reminds us of the importance of protective factors within prevention strategies: "Getting rid of a risk factor is proven to not have the impact that increasing a protective factor has."

Protection

Protection requires the development of measures to improve safety and security. Safety assessments of buildings can identify high-risk areas and other gaps. Hardware — the technology to provide protective surveillance — is an important piece of the puzzle, not to be minimized. But “heartware” — the need to deal with interpersonal issues — is critical.

Prevention

Prevention necessitates providing education, skill development to prevent harmful behaviors. There needs to be a clear and consistent message that it is never okay to force, trick or coerce anyone else into sexual contact or sexual behavior. It is not fun, it is not a game and it is damaging.

When a sexual assault incident does occur, effective interventions for students, staff and community must be in place to prevent further harm, and to provide restoration from the harm already done.

Four Approaches to Prevention of Sexual Violence

The four approaches outlined below focus on sexual violence but also apply to broader efforts to stop offending behaviors, reduce the three chance of victimization, and increase the capacity of bystanders to intervene. All of these efforts ultimately reduce the sexual toxicity of our society.

1) Stop sexual offending behaviors

Identifying those who have offended and who have records through criminal background checks, screening or sex offender registration can help to minimize their access to potential victims. But stopping offending behaviors goes well beyond monitoring those already known to be abusive.

“Our power of omission is creating sex offenders. Our kids get hurt hearts when adults sexually abandon our kids. We need to battle our denial that our kids could become sex offenders.”

Jan Hindman, Juvenile Sex Offender therapist and author

Long before behaviors become criminal, children and youth need to understand the damage caused from sexual bullying and sexually destructive behaviors. They need skills especially in areas such as communication,

empathy, compassion, accountability and impulse control. They need to understand healthy relationships, friendships and the necessity of respectful interactions. They also need to learn about sexual health.

Since youth are surrounded by messages that condone or minimize sexually destructive behaviors, it is necessary to address the myths and faulty thinking that feed sexual behavior problems and violence. The worst form of faulty thinking removes accountability from the person who caused the harm and blames the one harmed because “she asked for it,” or he “wasn’t man enough to stop it.” And, despite all the work done around gender equity, there is still a long way to go.

Girls continue to be socialized to believe their feelings do not matter as much as those of others. Simultaneously, they learn to get attention via looks and sexual appeal. Conversely, boys tend to be socialized away from connection, away from

“Who should we target?” Prevention efforts must be directed at men and informed by research on factors that place males at risk for perpetration.”

Dr. Mary Koss and Karen Bachar, University of Arizona (National Sexual Violence Prevention Conference, May 16-19, 2000)

empathy toward others, and away from recognition of their own feelings. They are encouraged to prove their masculinity by behaving in a sexually aggressive manner toward girls and by belittling boys who aren't masculine enough.

2) Reduce chances of sexual victimization

Victimization is only meaningfully reduced by reducing the likelihood that anyone will commit a sexual offense in the first place. However, it is also necessary to educate the public about what they can do to be safer. Broad based awareness and understanding of the dynamics of sexual violence helps potential victims know how offenders trick, pressure and coerce victims. More effective and assertive communication and a strong sense of personal rights and boundaries also serve as protection.

“Address the insecurity of many girls that makes it tough for them to voice their opinions.”

Student

Developing self-respect and self-esteem serve as protective factors against an offender's coercion and blame. Families and organizations must create safe and supportive environments for those confused or hurt to come forward and report harmful behaviors.

3) Build capacity of bystanders

When someone is behaving in a sexually offending manner, those who see it, hear it or suspect it need to know what to do. This means not spreading rumors and not engaging in put-downs (gender, race, culture, class, ability, sexual orientation) or inappropriate jokes, gestures or behaviors. Sexually offending behaviors should be addressed in an assertive rather than aggressive manner. Those involved should be treated with compassion and sensitivity – but not at the cost of keeping destructive or harmful secrets. Building the capacity of everyone to act brings the possibility and responsibility that everyone can be a peacemaker. Only then will we have a culture in which violence is no longer a virtue, but stopping violence is.

“When people disapprove of something someone else does, they need to speak up.”

Student

4) Address the sexually toxic society and work to create a sexually healthy society including learning and work environments

“Each of us can help others we see to cope with what they fear or are feeling.”

Student

Although individual knowledge and skills are important, the impact of living in a sexually toxic society cannot be ignored. While social and systemic change is complex, there are action steps that stop indifference to sexual violence. We need to encourage positive, proactive and respectful education on sexual health. Adults must accept responsibility. Adults need to encourage and model positive relationships, friendships and other connections and demonstrate respect, responsibility, and compassion. We need to take “smaller acts” like sexual bullying seriously and not ignore them. Adults need to be expected to supervise, protect and guide youth and intervene against harmful behaviors without causing further harm. We also need collective actions to address policies, legislation, mass media and social norms that perpetuate damaging attitudes and behaviors.

“The real power of mass media is in the shaping of social norms and expectations. Whoever tells the stories defines the culture. With children and youth bombarded with images of sex and violence, it is not surprising, although it is tragic, that more and younger children are engaging in sexual behavior and in perpetrating sexual assaults.”

Dr. David Walsh, Executive Director of the National Institute on Media and the Family

“When responsible adults fail to provide clear information and values about sexuality to the young, we then abdicate our leadership and power to the ‘volunteer sex educators’ in our communities: the child molesters and rapists who use children’s and teen’s natural interests and curiosity to their own ends.”

Walter H. Bera, Ph.D. Therapist and educator

The Touch Continuum: A Tool for Education and Dialogue

“I’m afraid to touch my students anymore. I think I know the difference between touch that is appropriate and touch that isn’t, but it’s just not worth the risk of not knowing what someone else might be thinking.”

Teacher

“My mom said no teacher has the right to touch me.”

2nd grader

There has been an “awfulization of touch.” In the search for quick, easy answers to problematic sexual behaviors, bullying and violence, the only kind of touch allowed seems to be “no touch.” This is an oversimplified, impractical response that punishes everyone for the violations of some. Ironically, this response also sexualizes all touch and confuses everyone.

Beyond simply developing skills to deal with touch that is confusing or harmful, prevention also involves promoting healthy and appropriate touch. Why? We have far too many touch starved children,

adolescents and adults. When someone is touch starved they may not know appropriate ways to get their needs touch, nurturance and affection met without resorting to sex or violence. Appropriate, nurturing touch is critical to healthy development.

Students and adults need help clarifying differences in touch. Just as there is a continuum of behavior, there also is a continuum of touch from positive to confusing to negative. The Touch Continuum is a tool

“Indeed, to a very significant extent a measure of the individual’s development as a human being is the extent to which s/he is really able to embrace another and employ the embrace of others...to get, in a very real sense, into touch with others.”

Ashley Montagu, author of Touching

to help children, youth and adults talk about touch and develop the skills they need to set limits and respect others’ limits. What fits where on the continuum varies with individual and cultural perspectives. Dialogue is an important part of clarifying how each person views different touches. A lesson to learn from dialogue is that we must pay attention to cues provided by others and use them to guide behavior. If one person thinks a touch is okay or fun but the other person doesn’t, the rule is

simple: respect the other person and stop. If one person intended a touch to be positive, but the same rule didn't apply to the other person: respect the other person and stop.

The following **Touch Continuum** is a tool to help children/youth/adults identify their own perspectives on what type of touch fits into each category.

THE TOUCH CONTINUUM				
< Lack	Nurturing	Confusing	Exploitative	Lack >
(Boundaries; limit setting)	(Okay; Safe; "Good")	?	(Not Okay; Not Safe; "Bad")	(Deprivation)

Touch is confusing:

- when the receiver is not accustomed to the touch
- when the receiver is not sure about the intent of the giver
- when there are double messages about the touch
- when the touch is equated with sex
- when the touch feels good but there is something 'secret', coercive, or not safe about it
- when the touch changes from something that was okay to something that is unclear or not okay

When touch is confusing to a child it is important for the child to talk with an adult to sort out the confusion. The Touch Continuum provides an opportunity to initiate this discussion.

“In my country everybody touched everybody. There was nothing sexual about it. Men touch other men. Women touch other women. Adults touch children. They communicate and express their feelings through touch. Doesn't everyone know children need touch? What's going on in this country anyway? Sometimes it's so upsetting I want to go back home.”

Elementary teacher, new to this country

Promising Strategies

“When we know how to reduce the torment, but do not do it, then we become the tormentor.”

Primo Levi, Italian novelist

“Talk About It Model”

Schools can't do it all and shouldn't be expected to. Messages need to be reinforced throughout the community. The “Talk About It Model” is one simple way to look at what can be done. It can be used to guide small dialogue and discussion groups within schools and in the community.

Talk about it: Encourage discussions and dialogue.
Help staff, students and the community — including families — to talk about sexual violence.

See it: Increase awareness of sexual behavior problems and sexual violence in schools. Help staff, students and the community to see and understand the behavior continuum

Name it: Educate staff, students and the community to give specific names to specific behaviors and to be clear about what behaviors are encouraged, discouraged and/or not tolerated. Make sure this process involves dialogue. The input and insight of all are important for positive change.

Speak up: Educate staff, students and the community to speak up in assertive, non-aggressive ways toward inappropriate or harmful behaviors. Build support for reporting such behaviors.

Speak out: Identify social norms (behaviors, attitudes, outside influences and systems) that condone, minimize or encourage sexual misconduct or sexual harm. Identify actions that can help to change destructive social and school norms.

Take action: To create a desired school climate, everyone in and around a school needs to do their part. But in addition to personal responsibility for positive behavior and speaking out against inappropriate or harmful behaviors, schools need policies and practices that promote healthy development, protect students, staff and community and prevent sexual violence.

“Inaction leads to bad action.”

Student

“Schools may well be the training grounds for domestic/sexual violence through practice and permission for sexual harassment. When sexual harassment goes on in front of your eyes or inappropriate behavior is trivialized, then we're part of the problem.”

Dr. Nan Stein, Author and researcher

11 Steps and Promising Strategies To Get People Talking about “It”

“To achieve a gender safe school, we need to employ several simultaneous strategies to ensure that sexual harassment will not have a presence. Calling this “zero indifference,” rather than “zero tolerance,” would mean that the adults will notice the behaviors, comment on them, intervene, and make corrections accordingly.”

Nan Stein, Ed.D., Senior Research Scientist, Center for Research on Women, WCW Research Report, Fall/Winter 2000

The following steps and strategies are helpful tools that can assist in creating a safe, respectful school environment. They recognize that the school cannot do it alone. They welcome the community in and invite conversation. These steps require dialogue with and between students, staff, parents and community members. These strategies acknowledge and utilize community resources providing necessary expertise and cultural competencies.

1. Use a school wide, comprehensive approach

Schools need to commit to multiple approaches that are deliberate, on-going, comprehensive and involve the community. All strategies can be strengthened by paying attention to the “three Ps” of promotion, protection and prevention. Concentration should focus on all four areas of prevention (stop offending, reduce victimization, increase the capacity of bystanders, address the toxic society).

In addition to training and curriculum, these efforts need to build on daily opportunities to reinforce core messages. Desired behaviors need to be encouraged through positive modeling on the part of students, staff and community. Parents need to be drawn in as partners in prevention. The development of a respectful and compassionate school climate develops over time, with consistency and repetition.

In *Drawing the Line: A guide for effective sexual assault prevention programs*, Dr. Alan Berkowitz outlines the qualities of effective programming. The best programs are:

- Comprehensive (While school and community-wide efforts are encouraged, it doesn't mean we can't start small. Do what you can do, where you can do it.)
- Intensive (long-term and interactive)
- Relevant (to those receiving the messages)
- Positive (about healthy relationships and what can be done for people who have experienced sexual assault)

2. Review and update all policies

- Conduct adequate background screening for all staff and volunteers.
- Assure policies on sexual violence issues are up to date.
- Assure policies protect students and staff.
- Assure policies are easily understandable and known by all.
- Encourage those harmed to come forward and report.
- Help students and staff know what is expected as well as what is not.
- Make it clear to all that there is zero indifference to all forms and levels of violence, including bullying about sexual orientation or other sexual issues and sexual violence. Make it clear that all levels of sexual violence are taken seriously.

3. *Improve staff's ability to assess risk and harm*

- Provide basic information on sexual violence.
- Provide basic information on sexual health and protective factors.
- Assure staff and students know what to do if they see a sexual behavior problem or hear about one.
- Assure staff and students know how to be part of the solution and what efforts are underway to prevent sexual violence.

“We need a standard. Touch that is appropriate is okay, but not sexual activity.”

Student

“The atmosphere here is too relaxed. That may seem weird for me to say but teachers need to be more professional. Teachers need to teach us how to act.”

Student

4. *Train all stakeholders (staff, students, families, and youth workers)*

- Encourage those harmed to come forward and staff to sensitively respond.
- Encourage dialogue between staff, administrators and community to identify better ways to deal with sexual behavior problems of children and youth.
- Encourage the consistent and more standardized reporting and recording of the full range of sexual behavior problems.
- Work with community professionals whenever needed for assessments and interventions.
- Train school crisis response teams to be able to assist with sexual violence.
- Consider restorative methods whenever possible. Suspension, expulsion or administrative transfer may be a way for the schools to respond to a problem, but may not be the best ways to help a child or youth learn to change his or her sexual behavior problems or assure safety to others.
- Encourage better sharing of information, to the extent possible within data privacy, so the best possible planning can be done to assist a student with sexual behavior problems and to prevent further harm.

5. *Conduct a broad-based awareness campaign*

- Promote a unified message based on input from all key recipients of the message.
- Help to focus on what is being worked for, instead of only against; identify desired behaviors.
- Celebrate those doing the right thing. Take time to notice and celebrate peacemakers; those who dare to do the compassionate thing.
- Encourage positive actions on the part of students, staff and families.

6. *Encourage dialogue: for information gathering, understanding and learning*

Talk about “it”. Sexual misconduct and violence thrives in secrecy and silence. Our individual and societal shame, embarrassment and confusion about sexuality and sexual violence can no longer get in the way of respectful dialogue. Students, staff, families and community members need opportunities to talk about these often confusing and controversial issues in a safe, respectful and positive environment.

7. *Comprehensive Curriculum*

- Teach and reinforce basic social and life skills in a manner that is interactive and practiced with repetition.
- Build in protective factors.
- Teach what needs to be said as explicitly, respectfully and sensitively as possible; don't avoid talking about "it" for fear of controversy.
- Work with related community resources.

“Health classes don’t usually cover sex in any real way.”

Student

8. *Use appropriate community resources*

- Identify community resources, including counseling and therapy resources; inform schools about the information and services they offer.
- Schools need to develop positive working relationships with community resources and make their services easily accessible.
- Clarify standards or best practices to help select appropriate resources for your school.

9. *Involve parents*

- Tell parents what the school is doing.
- Provide parents with information that helps them to talk with their children.
- Encourage parents to reinforce prevention messages and skills.
- Build on the strengths and expertise of parents and families to help achieve the goals of the school.
- Find creative ways to get more parents involved, such as having students present what they have learned to parent groups.
- Encourage discussions regarding cultural differences in terms of perceptions of sexual health, responses to sexual behavior and the meaning of sexual violence.
- Parents whose cultural backgrounds vary need empathic support while learning to understand norms, laws and practices in this country.

10. *Use Restorative Justice/Measures for Prevention and Intervention*

Restorative Justice is a philosophy and practice of restoring the health and safety of all involved in an incident rather than simply punishing. Restorative justice recognizes the harm done and the need for healing. It considers the impact on the victim, the perpetrator and the community.

Restorative interventions are conducted in a manner that helps to repair harm, reduce risk and build community. Interventions are sensitive to the victims: victims participate by their own choice, without any pressure to do so and there is adequate support for all of those harmed. The interventions also hold perpetrators accountable, help them to see the impact of their behavior and to make amends.

Restorative measures are also used to build community, heal relationships and develop skills. Curriculum activities include such things as use of dialogue groups or talking circles to discuss issues, develop life skills and address smaller, less damaging behaviors in a way that helps students learn from their mistakes. (See Resource list pages 19 and 20 for more information.)

11. Coordinate school and community efforts

Schools and communities engage in many prevention and intervention efforts, which may be closely related. This is true on a district level as well as within individual schools. Coordination is key to being sure that sexual violence intervention and prevention are addressed along with other issues to promote healthy development and safe climates. Identify a way to share information and coordinate efforts.

Section 4: What To Do After An Incident?

An environment that promotes honest discussion and ensures safety and respect is critical after an incident.

Tattling vs Telling and Reporting: Encourage those harmed to come forward

A simple distinction between “tattling” and “telling” is that tattling is done to get someone else in trouble. Telling or reporting is done to stop a person from hurting themselves or someone else. Students and staff need to be encouraged to come forward and “tell” or “report” when they do not feel safe or are being hurt, harassed, or violated. It is up to adults to create safe environments for those being harmed to come forward with questions or reports.

Listen Respectfully to Disclosures (LASER)

Most adults do not need to think of themselves as investigators or judges. They simply need to be caring and respectful people who listen carefully to what is being told to them. The LASER Model may help:

Listen - Carefully, respectfully and as non-judgmentally as possible

Affirm - What the person is saying or feeling without trying to impose your feelings or beliefs

Support - Support the person for coming forward.

Empathy - Pay attention to cues about how they feel.

Refers - Just as they came to you for help you may need to go to someone else for help.

If you are a mandated reporter, and the incident is a reportable offense, let the person know you need to report. Even if the incident is not a reportable one, you may need to tell someone else in order to get help to respond effectively. Be clear about reporting laws and internal procedures for handling reports.

Lessons Learned from an Inner City School

Let's go back to the story at the beginning of this booklet that described an incident at a St. Paul high school. What follows are the insights from an interview with the high school principal, Mary Mackbee:

What worked?

- “We learned first the importance of taking care of the victim. Once you understand what happened, call the police and make a report and call the family. Then call the district so they can prepare for the media. A consistent message is needed. Our media department was excellent. Rely on them to help you manage the media.

“If the victim decides to come back to school, it’s important to take action to make sure s/he is safe from derogatory comments, threats or harassment of any sort. Along with reminding everyone of refraining from rumors or defaming comments it can be helpful to ‘shadow’ the person to make sure they are not bothered. Even when schools have taken proactive steps toward a safe environment for those who report incidents, there are many issues that complicate whether or not staying in the school where the offense occurred is the best choice.”

Asked why staff might not respond immediately to a girl crying and clearly upset the principal pointed out, “In a high school you see someone crying a lot. They, especially the girls, are most often upset or crying over boyfriend-girlfriend type problems. You ask, ‘can I help you with anything?’ You do not think that an assault may have just happened.”

- “We learned what must happen when allegations lead to a criminal investigation. It is necessary to ‘keep the integrity of the investigation’ and ‘contain information.’ When the site of the incident is on school grounds, the incident site must be secured, and caution must be taken not to disturb the incident site.”
- “We learned how to manage an internal review process. Parallel tracks of the criminal investigation and the school process need to happen with as much cooperation as possible. Schools prepare for suspensions pending the outcome of the case.”
- “We learned the power of communication. Communicate with the staff, students and parents/families. Let them know there is an on-going investigation, which means administration can only give bare facts about the incident. We have to follow data privacy so we cannot give names of the alleged victim or perpetrators. We cannot be the source of that information even if it’s on the news. The school became responsible to contain the information, manage behaviors, reduce talk like rumors and threats. It was critical to remind everyone, the truth will come out, don’t judge, let the investigation continue, try to be objective and stay out of rumors or defaming comments.... You also need to let people know there is a plan, something will be different. We added extra security, re-keyed and took back keys, had a security audit, added a wireless system, brought in a consultant for planning and staff training.”
- “We learned that even if the district is very supportive, the principal will be the spokesperson. You can’t distance yourself. Get the support you need.” (Note: District policies vary; some may use a media department or media spokesperson.)

Hindsight

- **Administration and staff do not have enough training on dynamics of sexual violence or handling reports.** “The most perplexing thing was the attitude of staff. I did expect the staff to be objective and not to take sides. Some staff had immature attitudes. Some are not comfortable talking about engaging in dialogue about this. I learned not to assume everyone is comfortable. When they know the kids, it may be hard to distance themselves from their relationship with the students. It can be hard to imagine this is possible when they only saw the students’ good side. Staff need on-going training and need to be sensitive and objective.”
- **Strong emotional responses are generated that complicate the healing.** “I hadn’t expected the polarization within the student body and staff. The taking of sides.”
- **It is easy to feel safe when we are not.** “You feel truly responsible. I had not anticipated this. You get lulled by a sense of security. I worked hard to change the school around and to create trust. We tried hard to provide a safe environment. It is devastating to not be able to protect them. We worked to build trust and give students freedom. Then the actions of a

few meant we had to take some of the freedoms away from everyone. The power of one incident to turn around the schools reputation is devastating. (It is especially hard when it happens in the school family.) From the school behavior of these boys we could not have predicted they would do something like this. They were respected and trusted because of their record of school services.”

- **Community resources are needed by schools.** “Between the range of comfort, knowledge and beliefs of the staff and the limits of what could be talked about with a criminal investigation, it would have been better to bring more community resources, experts in the field to hold dialogues with small groups of students.”
- **Continual, proactive education is essential.** In response to what schools can do to prevent sexual violence the principal said: “Schools can only reinforce appropriate behavior. Keep reinforcing what is acceptable and what is not. Students need to understand intent versus impact. You may not have intended for a comment or behavior to be offensive but if that was the effect, then stop.” Further, “we need to help students pay attention to how others respond. How others (adults and students) respond helps determine if their behavior was appropriate or not. We also need on-going staff training and education of students.”

“Don’t avoid talking about it. It’s like it’s a secret now.”

Student

“I don’t need someone to talk at me, just someone to talk with me.”

Elementary Student

“The incident needs to be discussed. Most students say they don’t want to talk about it, but we really haven’t since right after it happened. They say they are sick of it, but there has been so much loss. Loss of spirit; loss of pride.”

Student

Section 5: Talking About It: Dialogue

Talking with each other in a constructive, respectful and reflective manner is a far better option than resorting to legal proceedings to settle differences. Such dialogue is key to promoting healthy development, protecting students, staff and families and preventing harm. In the words of Kay Pranis, former school board member and a leader in restorative justice: Dialogue is important to establish community norms and mutual responsibility. Use the learning environment to involve people to take responsibility for themselves and for one another.

Dialogue can help to establish what kind of school, classroom and behaviors are wanted. Dialogue makes it clear that everyone’s voice, story and perception are needed and appreciated in working toward solutions. Dialogue helps to develop empathy and compassion by providing an opportunity to reflect on the impact of your behavior on others.

There are some cautions that must accompany dialogue. In theory, a trained teacher should be able to facilitate a constructive dialogue, but, in reality, discomfort with this topic and/or lack of specific sexual violence training can be detrimental. Those facilitating the dialogue must be sensitive, non-judgmental and adequately trained or prepared.

The following are a range of ideas for possible dialogues. (They vary to meet the developmental and situational needs of a range of learners. Language can be adapted for different ages, levels of experience and related activities in the school. Some approaches to dialogue recommend asking questions in a specific order; others emphasize the power of personal stories and experiences in building solutions.)

Possible Dialogue Points and Questions

The behavior continuum described in this booklet includes “mutually inappropriate” behavior. These are some of the most confusing behaviors because both people agree to the behavior, but it is not appropriate at the time, place or manner it’s done. What are mutually inappropriate behaviors that take place in or around your school? How should staff, students, visitors respond when they see such behaviors?

What does it mean to be respectful to others emotionally, physically, socially, sexually?

What does it mean to take responsibility for how you act and react emotionally, physically, sexually?

Let’s talk about different kinds of touch.

- What are examples of touch do you think are good?
- What are examples of touch do you think are bad?
- When is touch confusing?
- What is the difference between touch that is safe/okay/good and touch that is not safe/not okay/bad?

What is sexual abuse or sexual violence?

- What might make it hard for a victim of sexual violence (someone who is forced, tricked or coerced into sexual touch or sexual behaviors) to tell/report?
- Who could be a “sex offender” (a person who forces, tricks or coerces someone else into sexual touch or sexual behavior)? Often it is a person who is known to the person harmed. Why do you think this is true?
- Can you think of any reasons why one person would force or trick another person into sexual touch or sexual behavior?
- Though most males do not commit acts of sexual offenses, most of those who do are males. Why do you think males are more likely to try to trick, pressure or force another boy or girl into sexual contact?
- How might someone who sexually harms/hurts others keep the victims from telling?
- How is sexual bullying like or different from other kinds of bullying?
- If you hear or see someone calling someone else sexual names or saying hurtful sexual things about them, what can you do?
- If something like this happened to you, what would you do?
- When sexual crimes cross racial lines, do you think it changes how people respond? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- What are your ideas about how to keep someone from ever starting to sexually abuse other people?
- What needs to happen to stop all kinds of sexual violence in this school?
- What does it mean to refrain from put-down/slurs, whether racial, gender, ethnic, gay/lesbian/bi-sexual/transgender, class?

- When does playing, teasing or flirting change to bullying, harassment or violence?
- What are expected behaviors or roles for boys? For girls? What is the result of these expectations?
- What do you want our classroom or school to be like?
- What is your experience of what it is like now?
- How can you help it to be more like what is desired?
- What do you need from staff to make it better?

Laws Related to Sexual Behaviors

(Educators' Note: Make sure you emphasize that by talking about the laws, you are not a lawyer and are not giving legal advice. If you are unclear about legal questions that arise, consult a lawyer or the county/district attorney.)

There are laws dealing with sexual behavior. If these laws are violated, they can have very serious consequences. Laws vary state to state. While this is true, it is also the case that unwanted touching of a person's private parts is always criminal once the individual has said "no".

Possible questions for dialogue around laws are:

- Do you think most boys/girls are aware there are laws related to criminal sexual conduct?
- Do you think most boys/girls follow the laws? Why? Why not?

Sergeant Carter's 5 Points to Rapidly Maturing Young Men

Sergeant Melvin Carter, St. Paul Police Department, with input from the Sexual Violence Action Team of the Initiative for Violence Free Families and Communities in Ramsey County, developed these talking points. They are designed to help young males understand the Minnesota laws related to criminal sexual behavior and the serious consequences of these behaviors.

1. Age Factor

If a girl is under 16, and you are at least two years older, having sex with her is against the law and you may be charged with "criminal sexual conduct." This is true even if the girl consents to sex. Rape is one kind of Criminal Sexual Conduct. Remember for all legal purposes, oral sex is considered sex! Claiming that you did not know her real age will not help.

2. Grabbing and Feeling

Touching a girl sexually against her will over her clothes is a crime for which you could be charged criminally.

3. No Means No!

Even if you think that she teased you, or that she was "asking for it," she has the right to say no at any time, even after things have heated up. If she made you a promise, she always has the right to change her mind.

4. Registered Sexual Offenders

Forcing another person to have sex using force, violence, threats or fear is a sexual offense, also known as criminal sexual conduct. Rape is one type of Criminal Sexual Conduct. Once you have been convicted of criminal sexual conduct, you will have to register as a sexual offender. Living the life of a registered sexual offender in Minnesota can be a very unhappy state of existence! You may be required to provide a DNA sample, notify officials and sometimes neighbors every time you change addresses, possibly for the rest of your life.

5. Always Make Sure That Consent Is Consent

A drunk, drugged, or sleeping person is incapable of giving consent. Drugging a person without their knowledge or consent could cause permanent injury or death. This very dangerous criminal act has severe penalties.

This Is Only the Beginning

This booklet is intended to be a helpful tool for parents and individuals that work with kids (teachers, coaches, youth pastors, recreation and youth leaders and others) to talk with children about sexual violence and respectful behaviors. The information presented here has been gained from local and national sources.

In St. Paul many individuals from state, county, city departments and community organizations worked together with local school district, staff, students and parents, to address the immediate responses to an in-school sexual assault. Adults and students candidly shared their shock, sadness, and fears. Together they identified ways to begin forthright discussions about sexual issues, to develop methods to prevent or address future incidents of sexual violence and, to create respectful, safe environments within schools and the community. Together they had the courage to Talk About “It.” Your community can too.

The following are some resources to help your community Talk about “It.”

Resources

American Medical Journal, August, 2001, Dr. Jay Silverman, Reported Abuse of Girls In Dating Relationships.

A Place to Start: A Resource Kit for Preventing Sexual Violence. 1998. Minnesota Department of Health, St. Paul, MN. For an order form and to view the Kit online, go to www.health.state.mn.us/svprevent. See in particular the 'Youth Development' section and tools. MN Department of Health, PO Box 64882, St. Paul, MN 55164-0882, (651) 215-8954

Hostile Hallways: Bullying, Teasing, and Harassment in School, by Harris Interactive, for AAUS Educational Foundation, 2001. 800/225-9998, www.aauw.org

Committee for Children, Talking About Touching & What Do I Say Now (video for parents and caregivers), 1 (800) 634-4449, 2203 Airport Way South, Suite 500, Seattle, WA 98134-2035

Drawing the Line: A Guide to Developing Effective Sexual Assault Prevention Programs for Middle School Students, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; www.acog.org (202) 638-5577.

ETR Network, PO Box 1830, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830, (408) 438-4060; Resource Center for Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention www.etr.org/recapp/. See Archives for sexual abuse information and tools and etr.org for health education resources and research www.etr.org/recapp/.

Jacob Wetterling Foundation, PO Box 639, St. Joseph, MN 56374-0639, (320) 363-0470, <http://www.jwf.org>

The Kempe Children's Center, Gail Ryan, 1825 Marion Street, Denver, Colorado 80218, (303) 864-5252, Email: Kempe@KempeCenter.org

Konopka Institute for Adolescent Health, University of Minnesota, Box 721, FUMC, 420 Delaware Street, S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455-0392 (612) 625-8417, <http://www.jkahn@tc.umn.edu> Adolescent Health Studies; Healthy youth development; Risk and protective factors; Resiliency

Lost Boys, James Garbarino, The Free Press, 1999

Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault www.mncasa.org or (800) 964-8847

Assistance, during the day, information, resources and referrals to local crisis programs.

RAINN (800) 656-4673 (HOPE) The line connects caller with the rape crisis program in the area from which they are calling.

MN Higher Education Center Against Violence and Abuse <http://www.mincava@tc.umn.edu>

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: *Guidelines for Programs to Reduce Child Victimization: A Resource and Know The Rules* (8 Rules and Booklets related to sports, internet, theme parts, babysitting, etc.); www.missingkids.com, 24 hour, toll-free hotline 1800-THE-LOST; CyberTipline: www.cybertipline.com NCMEC, Charles B. Wang Int'l Building, 699 Prince St. Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3175

National Institute on Media and the Family, David Walsh, "Media Wise Curriculum" 606 24th Ave. So. Suite 606, Mpls., MN 55454; www.mediafamily.org

National Sexual Violence Resource Center, a project of PCAR (Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape) www.NCVRC.org, toll free: 877-739-3895, email: resources@nsvrc.org;

A Parent's Handbook How To Talk To Your Children About Developing Healthy Relationships, Liz Claiborne, 1450 Broadway, NY, NY 10018, www.lizclaiborne.com

Real Boys, William Pollack, Owl Book, Henry Holt & Company, NY, 1998

Raising Cain, Dan Kindlon, Micheal Thompson, Ballantine Books, NY, 1999

Restorative Justice: www.doc.state.mn.us then click on restorative justice

651 642-0267, MN Department of Corrections, Restorative Justice Initiative, 1450 Energy Park Drive, Suite 200, St. Paul, MN 55108-5219, Kay Pranis, Sue Stacey, Tim Hansen

Face to Face: Spaces for Reflective Community Dialog, Kay Pranis, MN Department of Corrections, VOMA Connections, #6, Summer 2000

MN Department of Children, Families and Learning, Nancy Riestenberg, Violence Prevention, 1500 Hwy 36 West Building, Roseville, MN 55113-4066, (651) 582-8433

Search Institute 1 (800) 888-7828, 700 South Third Street, Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55415, <http://www.search.institute.org>, (Developmental Assets); Asset Assessment:

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Promote Sexual Health and Responsible Sexual Behavior. www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/sexualhealth/call.htm.

SIECUS <http://www.SIECUS.org/> 130 West 42nd St, Suite 350, NY, NY 10036 (212) 819-9770

Stein, Nan, *Gender Violence/Gender Justice*. Wellesley, MN: Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, 1999.

Stein, Nan, *Sexual Harassment in an Era of Zero Tolerance*, WCW Research Report, 2000.

STOP IT NOW!. Toll-free number for abusers and their friends and families: (888)PREVENT (888-773-8368)www.stopitnow.com, P.O. Box 495, Haydenville, MA 01039 (413)268-3096;