Pitfalls of Prevention

Many well-intended practitioners fall into the traps of less-effective prevention work. Common pitfalls include, but are not limited to:

- **Incorrect diagnosis of issues:** Given that sexual assault is so underreported (source), rising numbers of reports or cases do not necessarily indicate a rise in violence. Additionally, blaming a survivor of sexual violence for their assault and using that blame to frame prevention conversations (e.g. this person was assaulted because of the clothes they were wearing) is not productive toward prevention.

- **Incorrect choice of prevention strategies:** Harm reduction and safety strategies, such as buddy-system campaigns or self-defense classes, are an important public health strategy. However, they are not primary prevention because they do not address the root causes of gender based violence.

  Potential perpetrator-focused strategies, such as education aimed at teaching men not to rape, similarly miss the boat and are largely understood to be ineffective as they fail to engage all members of the community. Not only do strategies like this disengage men who become defensive, but they also do not address the root issue as men who are likely to perpetrate violence are not paying attention to these messages.

- **Incorrect application of prevention strategies:** When applying social norms strategies with campus prevention efforts, it is important to focus on highlighting pro-social behaviors rather than stigmatizing negative behaviors. The most effective social norms campaigns focus on highlighting misperceived positive norms, in order to induce behavior change by correcting an unhealthy misperception. [Ex.: “Dirty rooms are bad! Clean your room.” should be “93% of college students prefer a clean room to a messy one.”].

- **Not considering comprehensive strategies:** Programs and initiatives should shift away from response efforts focused on individual responsibility and deterring “bad behavior.” Strategies should address multiple levels of influence for sexual violence victimization and perpetration in the social ecology.

  Shifting toward comprehensive and multidisciplinary prevention efforts to address underlying contributors to violence offer opportunities for sustainable initiatives.

- **Simply addressing compliance or mandated education policies:** Strategies should be implemented that go beyond simply adhering to requirements or one-time programming.

- **Not collaborative:** Engaging members of your campus and local community as experts will ensure buy-in and strengthen prevention efforts.
Resource Guide to Enhance Your Campus Prevention Efforts

Note: This is not a comprehensive resource guide. This list below contains several resources to help guide your campus toward collaborative violence prevention education activities.

Comprehensive Prevention Strategies

Assessment & Evaluation

Toolkits
Title: “Shared Responsibility and Shared Success: Exploring opportunities for collaborative and effective prevention of sexual and dating violence”
Presenters: Mari Knuth-Bouracee & Khirin Carter, PATH to Care Center at UC Berkeley

Theoretical frameworks