Building Blocks
of a Connected Community

Community is an important part of all our lives. We are part of many communities including neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, places of worship, online spaces, and many more. The communities we are a part of will grow and change throughout our lives.

Communities shape us. They impact us in big and small ways – whether it's the parks and trails that connect us to nature or the volunteer groups and faith communities that make us feel connected to something greater than ourselves. When we feel disconnected from, or like we are not a part of, our community, our well-being can suffer (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2023). Likewise, when we feel connected, we can thrive in different ways. Beyond our individual wellness, the health and well-being of our communities also shape our lives. The conditions in the environments in which we are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and grow influence our health, housing, transportation, rates of violence, food availability, and access to education, among other things (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.b).

Community is powerful because our connection to one another impacts more than just ourselves. In an inclusive, equitable, and connected community, we can look out for one another and make choices to promote the safety and well-being of all. These connections are protective factors, meaning they can reduce or buffer against the risk of sexual violence (National Sexual Violence Resource Center [NSVRC], 2019). Making positive changes to a community can impact everyone within that community, both now and in the future. This makes building a connected community an impactful tool for change.

Some of the building blocks of a connected community:

People feel like they can have an impact.

People feel like they belong.

People know each other and can rely on each other.

The community has effective leaders.

There are parks, playgrounds, and other shared spaces that everyone can access.

There is trust within the community.

There are clubs and organizations where people gather.

There are safe ways to get around with all kinds of transportation.

Laws and rules treat all people fairly.

People in the community have their needs met.

There are many ways that people support each other in the community.

How connected is your community? Here are a few questions you can ask yourself:

- Do people in our community feel like they belong (CDC, 2021)? Do they feel like they can make a positive influence in the community? Do they have people they can rely on and trust?
- Do people in our community care about each other? Who are the community leaders who foster a sense of belonging and promote positive change?
- Are there parks, paths, and places to gather in the community that are

safe and accessible for all and where people don't have to pay to be there (CDC, n.d; Sargent, 2024)?

- Does everyone in the community have [equitable access to jobs](#) that provide a living wage (National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, & preventIPV, 2020.)?
- Is there accessible, safe, affordable, and reliable [public transportation](#) (Heaps et al. n.d.)?
- Does everyone in the community have access to [affordable healthcare](#) (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, n.d.a)?
- Are there [safe and accessible sidewalks](#) that are easy to navigate for people who use mobility aids (Williams, 2022)?
- Does everyone in the community have access to supportive community services that are culturally relevant?

These are only some of the characteristics of a connected community. You can get involved with one of the many groups in your community trying to achieve these goals.

If you are already part of a group, you may want to ask people in your circle questions like:

- What do you think a connected community would look like?
- How can we all work together to make our community more connected?

Additional Resources

Prevention basics
Primary Prevention Primer https://www.nsvrc.org/resource/2500/primary-prevention-primer

We Can Stop Sexual Assault, Harassment, and Abuse Before They Happen https://www.nsvrc.org/we-can-stop-sexual-assault-harassment-and-abuse-they-happen

Risk and Protective Factors: https://www.nsvrc.org/risk-and-protective-factors

Connected Communities

How to Measure a Sense of Community: https://www.nsvrc.org/resource/2500/connecting-communities-prevent-sexual-violence

What About Power and Patriarchy? Examining Social Cohesion Strategies to Prevent Sexual and Domestic Violence https://www.preventconnect.org/2016/06/what-about-power-and-patriarchy-examining-social-cohesion-strategies-to-prevent-sexual-and-domestic-violence/

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Williams, C. O. T. (2022, April 11). *Sidewalks to sexual violence prevention: A guide to exploring social inclusion with people with developmental disabilities*. Indiana Disability Justice. https://indisabilityjustice.org/sidewalks-to-sexual-violence-prevention-a-guide-to-exploring-social-inclusion-with-people-with-developmental-disabilities/