

It's time ... to incorporate the bystander approach into sexual violence prevention

This three-page fact sheet presents a brief overview of the bystander intervention approach to sexual violence prevention, key points about this type of intervention, evidence-based outcomes regarding the effectiveness of the approach and key resources for finding additional information about this model.

Key features of the bystander approach

A bystander, or witness, is someone who sees a situation but may or may not know what to do, may think others will act or may be afraid to do something. Bystander education programs teach potential witnesses safe and positive ways that they can act to prevent or intervene when there is a risk for sexual violence.

This approach gives community members specific roles that they can use in preventing sexual violence, including naming and stopping situations that could lead to sexual violence before it happens, stepping in during an incident, and speaking out against ideas and behaviors that support sexual violence. It also gives individuals the skills to be an effective and supportive ally to survivors after an assault has taken place. Research shows that this technique is a promising way to help prevent the widespread problem of sexual violence across campuses and other communities.

Five steps toward taking action

(Adapted from Darley and Latane, 1968)

1. Notice the event along a continuum of actions
2. Consider whether the situation demands your action
3. Decide if you have a responsibility to act
4. Choose what form of assistance to use
5. Understand how to implement the choice safely

Successful bystander education prevention programs

Everyone has a role in changing community knowledge, attitudes and behaviors. In-person bystander education prevention programs provide chances to build skills for helping directly or indirectly without placing bystanders' safety in jeopardy by focusing on practicing intervention strategies. Successful in-person programs usually include single-sex groups led by peer or professional educators using active learning methods that involve participants in discussions rather than lecturing to them. The number of programs employing part or all of the bystander approach is growing, but only a few have been scientifically evaluated and found to be effective in changing knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors. These evaluated programs are listed below.

- **Bringing in the Bystander™:** Teaches college students appropriate and safe ways to intervene before, during and after a sexual assault. Experimental evaluation found this program to be effective regarding changes in knowledge, attitudes and behavior (www.unh.edu/preventioninnovations/index.cfm?ID=BCC7DE31-CE05-901F-0EC95D-F7AB5B31F1).
- **Men's Program/1 in 4:** Focuses on empathy building with college men, teaching them ways of being supportive allies for survivors after incidents of violence. This program was shown to be effective regarding attitude change (www.oneinfourusa.org).
- **Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP):** Focuses on student leaders and athletes in high school and college about men's roles in gender violence prevention. The program uses sports metaphors and framework. Initial evaluation of the program indicated that it is effective regarding attitude change (www.jacksonkatz.com/mvp.html).
- **MyStrength Club:** Provides a multi-session club for high school boys, providing them a place where they can explore ways they can help prevent sexual violence. Preliminary evaluation showed promising results regarding increase in participants' likelihood to say they would make changes in community and be willing to interrupt in instances of sexual harassment (www.MyStrength.org).

Social marketing campaigns

A growing number of social marketing or outreach campaigns utilize a bystander approach to preventing dating and sexual violence. Here are examples of two campaigns:

- **Know Your Power Campaign:** Consists of four posters each featuring a different scene with bystanders modeling appropriate and safe intervention behaviors. A preliminary evaluation of the campaign indicates that promising differences were found between awareness of students who reported seeing the campaign compared to those who did not (www.know-your-power.org).
- **The Red Flag Campaign:** Composed of six posters each focusing on a specific component of dating violence. The backside of each poster features a comparison of the positive qualities of healthy relationships versus the red flags of dating violence (www.theredflagcampaign.org).

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This fact sheet was developed by Mary M. Moynihan and is part of the CD for the 2011 Sexual Assault Awareness Month campaign. For more information, contact the National Sexual Violence Resource Center at www.nsvrc.org/saam or 877-739-3895.