

PISC

PARTNERS
IN
SOCIAL
CHANGE

A Publication of the
**Sexual Assault
Prevention Resource
Center**, dedicated to
providing technical
assistance to those
engaged in sexual
violence prevention
in Washington State

WASHINGTON COALITION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT PROGRAMS

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Youth-Led Prevention






It's no wonder that many of us spend time working to prevent sexual violence with children and young people. Since the goal is to prevent first-time victimization and perpetration of sexual violence, we need to start giving tools and changing norms early on. Of course we also know that prevention work needs to span individuals, communities, and society and those social change efforts need to continue over the life span.

Young people are immersed in youth culture and can offer valuable insight into the causes of and solutions to sexual violence. When youth take a leadership role, it benefits them, their peers, their families, and entire communities. For all of these reasons, young people make wonderful allies and leaders in this work.

In this issue of *Partners in Social Change*, we examine the approach of youth-led prevention work. We discuss how this approach is consistent with the overall philosophy we have in Washington State of engaging stakeholders and valuing community ownership of preventing sexual violence. Next, we hear about an innovative youth-led prevention program in Cleveland that allows youth leaders to create unique projects in their communities. And who better to explain the benefits of youth-led prevention than young leaders themselves? Four of the fabulous members of Peer Solutions' STAND & SERVE share their insight into the peer leadership approach to prevention. Finally, we highlight one of the youth leadership projects that is happening here in Washington.

We're also excited to share a new feature, *Question Oppression*, which will be in several WCSAP publications. This is a space to explore aspects of sexual violence prevention in relation to an anti-oppression framework. As always, we conclude our publication with some of the related resources that are available in the WCSAP library.

We hope that these stories and resources support any prevention efforts you are doing or want to do with youth in your community! We welcome feedback at prevention@wcsap.org. 

Cordially,

Kat Monusky, Prevention Specialist
WCSAP, Prevention Resource Center



WCSAP
Washington Coalition of
Sexual Assault Programs



Volume XV Issue 1
Youth-Led Prevention

The mission of the Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs is to unite agencies engaged in the elimination of sexual violence through education, advocacy, victim services, and social change.

The Prevention Resource Center is a project of WCSAP, designed to provide support and technical assistance to individuals, communities, and agencies engaged in sexual violence prevention within Washington State.

Partners in Social Change
is published by the WCSAP Prevention Resource Center from its office in Olympia, Washington. The focus of this publication is to present information and resources for the prevention of sexual violence, with a special emphasis on social change.

For membership information, visit www.wcsap.org.

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A Youth-Led Approach

Kat Monusky, Prevention Specialist
WCSAP Prevention Resource Center

We know we all want the same thing, to prevent sexual violence before it can even occur, but it's much more complicated for us to figure out the best ways to make that type of change. Considering that sexual violence is a complex issue, it makes sense that prevention efforts will be complex as well. Therefore it is not a matter of finding the one perfect approach to primary prevention, but rather implementing a variety of prevention projects that are informed by guiding principles.

One strategy that is becoming more widely used in prevention is a partnership between youth and adults. In fact, recently VAWnet reported that the next segment of the National Prevention Needs Assessment shows that nearly half (42%) of identified innovative sexual violence prevention programs are doing youth leadership work. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center will be releasing the full report next year.

While programs may go by many names ("youth led," "youth driven," "peer leadership," "by and for youth," etc.), the concepts are the same: creating opportunities for youth to be meaningfully involved and take ownership of prevention in their communities.

Prevention efforts that utilize the expertise of youth can be structured in a variety of ways as well. One of the common ways in which youth play significant roles in prevention efforts is through a peer education model. This is extremely common on college campuses, where peer educators work to educate and prevent many public health issues. In this approach, the audience can very easily identify with those who are delivering the messages and therefore may internalize these key prevention points. Later in this issue of PISC, youth from a program in Arizona tell us about their experiences as peer leaders.

Another way in which community organizations can consider the expertise of youth is through an advisory committee or council. These types of committees can help ensure that the interests and needs of youth are being shared and guide the process. This provides an opportunity for youth to develop leadership skills and activism. Here in Washington State a few organizations that are utilizing this method of youth representation include Oasis Youth Council, The Legislative Youth Advisory Council, and the Teen Learning Council of the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

VALUE OF PROMOTING YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Prevention projects that create space for youth leadership are not all about youth. Adult allies serve as mentors and play an important role in the process alongside youth. This approach demands that we value the experiences, thoughts, and abilities of young people in our communities.

The concept of truly valuing youth as part of the process of preventing sexual violence is one that resonates with the overall approach to primary prevention here in Washington State. For more than a decade, the philosophy of Community Development has been a guiding principle for prevention work across our state, promoting community ownership of preventing sexual violence. Therefore, one effective way to prevent sexual violence in the lives of youth is to let them be the experts on how to do it.

If we refer to William Loftquist's Spectrum of Attitudes we can see the difference between viewing youth as objects and as resources. The critical element, as mentioned before, is that we must value youth. Loftquist explains that when we view people as objects our attitude is rooted in an assumption that one group knows what is best. This is sometimes the case in the exchange between youth and adults, so it is crucial that we be intentional to value and engage youth.


When we respect youth, or any group, and let them figure out the solutions to the problems they experience, then we are viewing people as resources and moving ahead to creating a more significant impact. The guiding principle of respect provides clear justification for taking a chance on letting youth lead the process.

The assets that youth bring with them make a youth-led prevention approach a great strategy.

The Youth Activism Project lays out a set of reasons why youth bring many strengths to community change projects:

- Set an example for other youth
- Influence parents and other adults in their lives
- Offer insider knowledge on the causes of violence
- Bring creative solutions to the table
- Have a strong voice in the media
- Sincerity and connection with those who have power
- Inventive ways to navigate challenges

A youth-led approach benefits the movement as well as the young people who are involved. For example, by placing youth in leadership roles now, organizations help develop strong leaders for the future and create more potential for community change. As young leaders increase their knowledge and skills, they are able to gain self-esteem and therefore be more effective in creating community change.

The other articles in this issue of PISC will provide more examples of the structure and impact of youth-led prevention programs. 

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Youth 360

Cultivating Youth Allies

for Sexual Violence Prevention



Alex Leslie, Prevention Specialist
Cleveland Rape Crisis Center

As the first Saturday meeting of Youth 360, our youth programming board, started I was nervous. I knew the theory, I knew the kids, and I believed in the program design; but could it really work? We were embarking on an adventure in sexual violence prevention programming hoping to create new activists and allies out of young people and, in turn, contribute to their own growth and abilities. I had nothing to fear: students in Youth 360 would go on to help create empowerment programs at their school, educate other teens at their local recreation center about sexual assault, create videos to show peers about demystifying rape, write thoughtful pieces to share with others online and in other places, compose music -- and two were even recognized by the Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper as local "heroes." Truly, we were doing the "work" of prevention.

Traditionally, our education and social change department provided prevention programs for a few weeks through in-classroom presentations with kids about sexual and dating violence. It works, but follows a typical classroom/teacher model that many of our colleagues have done for decades. How do we grow from there? The answer we came up with was something more long-term and in-depth. We had been doing Men of Strength Club programs for two years with moderate success; what about going beyond even that?

When I created Youth 360 I had been learning all about resiliency theory with my professional development time. Resiliency theory is the framework of promoting protective factors to engage young people in a "strengths-based" fashion. I learned a few fundamental things along the way that, over the course of our first Saturday meeting, were able to help me support great achievement in the participants that we sustain to this day.

Resiliency theory is the theoretical basis for Positive Youth Development; the intentional process of promoting positive outcomes for youth. I took to heart the basic principles of the Resiliency Wheel¹: provide a caring and supportive environment; set and communicate high expectations; provide opportunities for meaningful participation; increase pro-social bonding; set clear, consistent boundaries; and teach "life skills." Basically, make sure that the young people in my program had an opportunity to design things for themselves, given that they would then take more ownership for their individual projects and thus be more attached to the issue of sexual violence.

In creating Youth 360 I took care to include as many of these principles as possible. The result is a youth activist training program that pays students a modest stipend (which can vary, though we usually pay "members" \$75 per month, and "leaders" \$100 per month) to attend "residency trainings" once a month, to complete assignments (usually a writing or reading activity), to speak with an adult mentor (whom they have chosen), and to work on their projects. Each participant has a project that he or she creates and designs to engage the community in the prevention of sexual/dating violence. Students use these projects as opportunities to highlight their own strengths and skills. They created the projects and designed their outcomes—some had set their sights too high and had to moderate them a bit to get things accomplished by the end of the school year, while others needed more coaching to really step forward with something that would reach the community. All of that said, it is hard to capture on paper the difference it has made in our organization, but generally my colleagues, our advocates, and therapists remark on the positive effect that these outspoken and empowered young people have had on their work.

¹ <http://www.resiliency.com/html/mentor.contents.htm> Based on theories created by Nan Henderson, cited below the picture in link.

We learned a few things last year from this process. Most importantly, that we are creating more active citizens: members of Youth 360 cite a higher likelihood of becoming more engaged in all facets of potential activism. Moreover, we noticed a few keys to our success:

- **A rigorous application process**—use the application to really identify the type of youth you want to engage, and what qualities you value; interview the potential members you want to confirm entry into the group.
- **Keep the group closed and small**—groups should, ideally, be in the 10-20 member range, no larger than a successful classroom.
- **Put relationships at the center**—“people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care” (John Maxwell). Teens in our group don’t get it “right” every time, but they get the intention and the importance of what we want to accomplish, and have thus become attached to me, our other facilitators, and to Cleveland Rape Crisis Center and the movement.
- **Communication is key**—develop a pattern to communicate with young people; observe local drop-in and after-school programs to see what works for them, and what doesn’t work.
- **Use the skills they have**—that kid who won’t stop talking while you are talking should help you present the next time. The student who is doodling during your program can be enlisted to help create a poster that educates others. Meet them where they are, and you’ll be blown away—don’t make students conform to you.
- **Keep them coming**—members from last year have been brought back as peer mentors in the “leaders” group this year—if they want to still come and work with us, we knew we’d find a way to make it work.

It’s a challenge to engage young people in an effective way, and we’re learning every month how to do it better. Please contact me if you have an idea and want to talk through it, or want to practice implementing these principles in your current prevention activities.



“ . . . it is hard to capture on paper the difference it has made in our organization, but generally my colleagues, our advocates, and therapists remark on the positive effect that these outspoken and empowered young people have had on their work. ”

Alex Leslie is a Prevention Specialist at the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center and social change activist. His primary focus is creating and implementing programs that help educate youth about sexual violence, especially young men. His programs use approaches that engage youth as allies and activists for the prevention of sexual violence. He also does training programs in connection with the national organization, Men Can Stop Rape--some of which have taken him across the country and to work with the U.S. Air Force in Germany. He has been with the CRCC for more than five years, and has an MBA in Organizational Development and Leadership from Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management and a BA in Religious Studies from the College of William and Mary. ♦



In Their Own WORDS...

Interviews with Youth Leaders from
Peer Solutions' STAND & SERVE Program

**Kat Monusky, Prevention Specialist
WCSAP Prevention Resource Center**

One of the organizations that has been showcased as a promising model for their youth-led prevention work is Peer Solutions. There are many passionate and talented young people who dedicate their time to preventing violence through the STAND & SERVE program, and I was fortunate to connect with four of them to learn about their work as peer leaders.

Peer Solutions is an Arizona-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to cultivate healthy communities through STAND & SERVE (S&S), a primary prevention initiative fostering safety, equality, and respect as norms. STAND & SERVE utilizes a peer-leadership model to prevent child abuse; sexual, relationship, family, gang, gun and school violence; suicide, depression, oppression, substance abuse, eating disorders/poor body image, poor school

performance, homelessness and more before they begin. The program targets the underlying causes that perpetuate a spectrum of violence against youth and communities. The members of STAND & SERVE are given the opportunity to unite their communities by defining the problem and the solution together. Youth use their expertise in many ways, including developing activities, serving on the Peer Solutions Board of Directors, and facilitating workshops at local and national conferences.

Thank you to Nathan Haen, Christian Castro, Gabi Chevalier, and Darien Wendell for sharing your voices and insight. And also thank you to Jennifer Rauhouse, the Executive Director and founder of Peer Solutions, for helping to coordinate these interviews. Jennifer, the Peer Solutions team, and all the student members demonstrate tremendous commitment to ending violence.

Being in a position of leadership has given me something I've never really had before: a voice.

Why did you get involved in STAND & SERVE?

Christian:

I became involved with STAND & SERVE for the same reason most people buy junk food. The option was there and it didn't seem like a bad idea at the time. Many of my friends also highly encouraged me to join, so I obliged after four seconds of intense consideration.

Gabi:

The first meeting I went to was in my sophomore year of high school, and I had no real intention of joining any clubs for my high school career. That changed after a few hours with the Peer Solutions staff. I had not encountered anything like Peer Solutions: adults who wanted to work WITH students instead of simply educating them and an environment where everyone is equal and treated with respect whether they are Peer Solutions staff or not. It seemed too good to be true. Volunteer work, art, down-to-earth and funny staff, club members from all over town -- it seemed like a family who was eager for me to join them. It was not some exclusive thing, where there are a million applications to fill out and then a process. It was "Come in! Bring your friends! No worries." And who can really say no to that?

Nathan:

I got involved in STAND & SERVE towards the end of middle school, when I started to realize that there were things in and around my community that weren't right. I knew that I wanted to make a difference, as little or big as possible, and STAND & SERVE seemed like an excellent way to do that while still being able to enjoy what it is I was fighting for.



What keeps you involved?

Darien:

That's a... really good question. I guess you could say that I love the work I do. Before S&S got ahold of me, volunteering hadn't crossed my mind or anything of that nature, but once it had it stuck and held on tighter than I thought possible. I am absolutely enamored with the work this organization does and the environment it cultivates. It is unique from the other programs I've been introduced to, chaotic but efficient, and real community.

Nathan:

I stay involved with STAND & SERVE because I've fallen in love with the program and everything it stands for. STAND & SERVE has helped me through so much, both by being a peer educator as well as someone who was in the program, and the fact that I'm able to help others as well as myself has made it all the more rewarding. All of the goals and feats that STAND & SERVE has and will achieve had made such an astonishing difference in people's lives, and I can see that difference in the community around me, and being a part of that kind of change is such a wonderful feeling.



What is the best part about being a peer leader?

Christian:

Being in a position of leadership has given me something I've never really had before: a voice. It's such a strange feeling, finding one's voice when you yourself never fully realized you had one. Whenever I'm given the floor, I am given just that. No idle chatter. No facade of interest. Only people who are willing to listen and work together.

Darien:

Knowing that I have a chance, whether it be large or small, to make a difference in someone's life. Yeah, I'm only working with them a couple days of the week, but I love seeing that flicker that something we've talked about has buried itself in their minds, that we have the capability to teach these children at a young age what isn't okay and more importantly what is.



Why do you think peer leadership is an effective means of preventing violence?

Christian:

Peer leadership is as effective as you are willing to make it, a truth I've found out the hard way. To make the most out of peer leadership, education, or any relationship really, you must be willing to work with people. If you manage to both listen and communicate well with peers, rather than commanding the discussion, its effectiveness is hardly something to be argued.

Darien:

It doesn't cultivate an "authority and underling" type of relationship. It ensures that no bureaucracy exists, but a community is built. The age differences are minimal and with that, everyone is capable of relating to each other to a certain extent. That said, we aren't teaching -- we're simply having a conversation, a discussion, and in that something amazing always happens.

Gabi:

Even if we are different in age, putting everyone on the same plane and treating an eleven- and twenty-six-year-old with the same respect really makes an impact on attitudes and behavior for everyone in the group. Most of our behavior is learned through modeling. By modeling positive norms and speaking out against the normalization of sexual violence and oppression I effectively become a positive role model for the younger students. And it is realistic. I am not a slogan, I am not "pillars of character," I am a person whose actions are easily understood and mimicked.

How is STAND & SERVE making a difference in preventing violence?

Gabi:

It is making it easier to talk about, eliminating silence. It is helping to cultivate a safe and respectful place for people who need help, or want to help. It is educating youth, changing norms at a young age to prevent the normalization of violence. We are part of a community that everyone can identify with, and everything I do for Peer Solutions adds to the feeling of a respectful, peaceful, funny, positive and beautiful family. Our collective efforts are helping to create a generation of citizens who have a lasting desire to stop violence and have tools to do so.

Nathan:

I think a lot of what makes STAND & SERVE so successful is that we are very upfront about the problems that we're trying to stop. A lot of what we as a group have noticed is that the media often twists around the truth of what's really going on, either not talking about it at all, or presenting it in such a way that no one wants to talk about. It's like they're afraid that if they talk about it, it will suddenly become real. ◆





OutSpoken

LGBT Youth Speaker's Bureau

A Program of The Northwest Network
of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian, and Gay Survivors of Abuse

Shannon Perez-Darby, Youth Services Program Manager
The Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian, and Gay Survivors of Abuse

OutSpoken LGBT Youth Speaker's Bureau

This project of The Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian, and Gay Survivors of Abuse (The NW Network) brings together a diverse group of LGBT youth and adults to challenge forms of violence in their communities. Youth ages 13-24 can become educators and share their experiences and knowledge to build community connections and challenge the systems that impact their lives. The OutSpoken program supports these enthusiastic youth educators to build skills that will then allow them to educate their peers and communities through speaking panels, trainings, and workshops.

Benefits

- **SUPPORTING YOUTH LEADERSHIP**
OutSpoken deeply values the contributions and experiences of LGBT youth in the community. Many youth find healing in having the opportunities to not only share about their experiences but to create the kinds of loving and equitable communities they want to live in by becoming community educators and leaders as well as learning and growing with their peers in the program.
- **JOB EDUCATION**
This is a great chance for youth to develop job skills that will benefit them in many ways. The youth are expected to be responsible and are compensated for their work.
- **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**
OutSpoken is open to everyone because it does not require specific school or job experience, it simply values the life experiences of LGBT youth. Anyone can participate since a variety of skills and time commitments can be utilized.
- **SUPPORTS DIRECT SERVICES AND AGENCY MISSION**
The NW Network works to support everyone to have a great life so this program is another way to connect and offer resources. Through the speaking panels, youth and community members become familiar with the services offered and will be more likely to utilize them if needed.



Transgender
 Queer
 Liberation
 Love
 Gender-queer
 LGBT
 Gay
 fierce
 Living-Communities



Social Change

The NW Network works to provide opportunities for communities to engage in primary prevention of gender violence. *OutSpoken* supports violence prevention because youth are continually given skills and education to prevent violence and also act as agents of change in their communities. Youth attend monthly workshops that are designed to build healthy communities, challenge systems of violence, and build strong peer networks that can offer support. These workshops promote protective factors in the community. At the speaker's panels, youth are able to expand their influence within the community to create positive social change.

Trial, Error, and Success

The NW Network uses a Praxis model when going about social change work. First we try something out, take some time to reflect on the process, make adjustments to the project, and then try it again! Working with LGBT youth in the *OutSpoken* program is no different: we have had challenges and successes in engaging youth as leaders in social change. We have learned that paying youth a stipend to speak on the panels has been very helpful in terms of retention. Not only does the stipend create accountability but it also conveys the message that their contributions are valuable. Additionally being flexible and offering a variety of opportunities for involvement has been crucial! Youth can participate once a week or once every six months, on weekends or weekdays.

Growth

Historically, youth were accompanied on the panels by adult facilitators. We have heard from the youth leaders that as they age out of the program, they still want to stay connected to this work. Therefore we have begun utilizing youth leadership models for some of the panels and workshops where youth leaders and recently aged-out young people can support the growth of new *OutSpoken* leaders.



If you have any questions or would like more information you can visit The NW Network website, <http://nwnetwork.org>, or contact OutSpoken at 206-568-7777 or kristina@nwnetwork.org



Exploring the Connections Between Sexual Violence & Oppression

This is a new, regular feature of *PISC* meant to spark conversation about the relationship between sexual violence and oppression. The questions will be inspired by the topic of each issue of *PISC*, and are designed for beginners and those with deeper experience. You might choose to use one of

more of these questions as part of a staff meeting or in-service, a volunteer training, a Board retreat, or an informal lunch conversation. As always, WCSAP staff would be happy to assist you in using *Question Oppression* at your program, or grappling with the questions themselves. Let us know what you think!

What causes societal attitudes of “adulthood” (prejudice against young people)?

Why should we value youth as equals in our prevention work?

How can you challenge your own bias towards youth and youth culture?

How can your organization address this?

Do youth experience barriers to community leadership?

In what ways do systems create or inhibit youth leadership opportunities?

Do youth have intersecting identities that may cause barriers to developing their leadership ability?

How can you support youth to have conversations about these barriers?

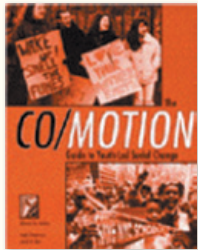
Is there value in creating mentoring opportunities for youth?

How can you meet them where they are and encourage them to dig deeper?

PREVENTION RESOURCES

Kat Monusky, Prevention Specialist
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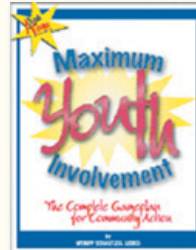
Did you know . . . that WCSAP members have access to check out our library items?
It's true. We mail them to you, and you mail them back.



The Co/Motion Guide to Youth-Led Social Change

Type: Guide

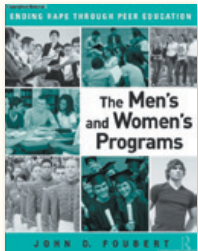
This training manual gives youth the tools, skills, and strategies to engage in community action.



Maximum Youth Involvement: The Complete Gameplan for Community Action

Type: Online Guide

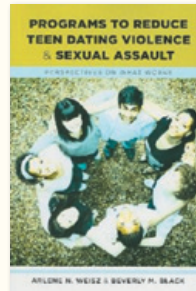
This in-depth guide explores the benefits of youth involvement plus provides guidance on recruitment, retention, and skill building with youth activists.
<http://youthactivismproject.org/FreeDownload/MaximumYouthInvolvement/MaximumYouthInvolvement%21CompleteGuidetoCommunityAction.pdf>



The Men's and Women's Programs: Ending Rape Through Peer Education

Type: Curriculum

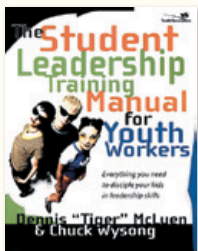
This guide, created for use on college campuses, provides tools to train and recruit peer educators. It also provides scripts, handouts, and worksheets for peer educators to use.



Programs to Reduce Teen Dating Violence and Sexual Assault: Perspectives On What Works

Type: Book

Representatives of more than 50 programs aimed at preventing youth violence were interviewed for this book and so it presents a broad picture of effective programming with youth.



The Student Leadership Training Manual for Youth Workers; Everything You Need To Discipline Your Kids in Leadership Skills

Type: Curriculum

This curriculum helps youth to organize and execute their own youth ministry programming.



Youth Involvement in Community Violence Prevention

Type: Journal

This issue of the Community Youth Development journal contains several articles that highlight ways in which adults and youth can work together to prevent violence. Also available online: <http://www.cydjournal.org/contents.html>





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End Sexual Violence in our Communities

PISC is *your* magazine.
We'd love to hear from you!

PISC
is *your* magazine.

We invite guest authors to submit pieces on a variety of topics, and welcome your submissions on prevention approaches, media reviews, and creative work like original art or poetry.

We would also like to feature highlights of your agency and the prevention work you are doing.

Direct submissions to
prevention@wcsap.org