

Prevention Assessment, Year 2 Report: Innovations in Prevention

Townsend, S. (2012). Year 2 Report: Innovations in Prevention. Encola, PA. [National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#).

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) is conducting a three-year project assessing needs and strengths of the sexual violence prevention field. This project will improve our understanding of the training and technical assistance needs of the field and the capacity for effective prevention. While many of the recommendations in the report are tailored for Coalitions and national TA providers, there is still much to be gleaned at the local level.

In year two of the project, the focus was on programs that demonstrate exceptional innovation in their work. The main objectives of this assessment were to capture information about the nature of the innovative programs, learn how these innovations developed, the components of organizational capacity critical to success, and the role of partnerships. The researchers collected information from RPE coordinators, coalition staff, program staff, and engaged community members through a variety of techniques. There was a large survey to collect self-reported information on the diffusion, or spread, of innovative prevention; in-depth case study interviews with select programs; and finally an archival review of curricula and others materials utilized by programs. There are twelve programs that were nominated, evaluated, and now are included in this report for the innovative prevention work. These programs were assessed on eighteen dimensions that included both programmatic and organizational measures. The programs selected represent multiple community settings: traditional rape crisis centers, state coalitions, campuses, youth specific agencies, sexual trauma centers, dual domestic and sexual violence agencies, and culturally specific agencies. Full highlights of each of the programs are available in the [full report](#) from NSVRC. Additionally, you can listen to [PreventConnect's podcast interviews](#) with a few of the innovative programs.

There were many interesting and helpful findings about the programmatic and organizational characteristics of the twelve innovative programs. Below you will find some of the highlights that may be useful in your own work.

Activity Characteristics:

- The innovative programs' activities can be categorized into four areas:
 - Skill building with youth; such as bystanders, gender & media, or healthy relationships
 - Youth leadership & mobilization
 - Mobilizing men & boys to challenge sexism, promote positive masculinity, & change systems
 - Mobilizing communities
- Programs used multi-session curricula with learning objectives
 - Ranged from 4 to 24 sessions, with an average of 10 sessions
 - Each session builds upon the next; instead of single lessons combined
- Gained access to schools by mapping curricula learning objectives with state learning standards to demonstrate their programs also meet academic goals
 - Prioritized delivering programs that will be effective, rather than simply complying with school requests for one-time programs

Mobilization Characteristics:

"...it requires letting go, trusting the community, and trusting the process." (p. 22)

- Serving others' needs
 - Sexual assault agencies first address the needs of the community & other organizations
 - Infused prevention into the community by attending other organizations' meetings & supporting their efforts
- Meaningful coordination
 - Tap into existing community efforts & value overlapping social issues
 - Train others to help raise awareness so sexual violence experts can focus on more intensive primary prevention work; also helps to shift norms around violence by creating community ownership of the issue
- Active collaboration
 - Project-oriented collaborations that allow for others to truly participate

Organizational Characteristics:

- Common themes around prevention philosophy
 - Prevention viewed as a process of changing the social landscape
 - Primary prevention kept separate from awareness or outreach; agencies valued both but made clear distinctions between the two & some even had separate staff for each type of work
 - Prevention should be community-specific & programs tailored to reflect what the community needs
- Prevention is institutionalized & a part of the organizational culture
 - Strategic plan & mission reflect commitment to prevention
 - Internal & community motivations for prevention drive the work, not the funding requirements
 - Prevention woven throughout the agency & given equal importance to direct services
- Valued an anti-oppression approach that addresses the intersectionality of multiple forms of oppression in relation to sexual violence
- Agency longevity; in existence on average of 30 years & doing prevention work on average of 20 years
- Leadership, support, & autonomy in the work environment
 - Directors both provide strong leadership & nurture the leadership of other staff
 - Supporting leadership & other professional development opportunities
 - Directors have confidence & trust staff by giving them freedom to use their strengths & encourage creative thinking

Staffing Characteristics:

- Most of the innovative programs had multiple prevention staff
 - Average full-time employees was 2.8 FTE
- Valued personal & philosophical qualities over formal education skills
 - Prevention staff possess passion, willingness to take risks or have difficult conversations, organizational skills, & the ability to communicate complex concepts to the community
- Unlike many staffing estimates in our field, turnover was not common with prevention staff in these organizations; average staff retention was 5 years
- Low turnover was credited to agency culture
 - Competitive compensation that includes health & retirement benefits
 - Policies that value individuals: flexible scheduling, leave, & child care
 - Fun environment that includes validation, camaraderie, social outings, staff lunches, & institutional measures to prevent burnout
 - Sense of importance in the work & individual contribution

Funding Characteristics:

- Range of operating budgets:
 - Median agency budget was \$1.3 million; with a range between \$101,000 & \$9 million
 - Median prevention budget was \$182,000; with a range between \$80,000 & \$1.5 million
- All of the programs reported using some general or unrestricted funds to conduct their prevention
 - Most allocated between 10- 29% of their total budgets to prevention
- Concerns with funders' understanding of prevention that causes restrictions
 - Requirement for "evidence-based" curricula, focus on number of people served, seeking an immediate reduction in prevalence, requiring evaluation without funding or support, & insistence of one theoretical framework instead of allowing for community customization
- Despite their success in prevention work, all of the organizations still reported struggles with ample & stable funding

The report made many suggestions to state and national technical assistance providers about these implications and future directions. However, there is still much information that is useful at the local level and therefore we would like to offer some suggestions on how to use this report in local, Washington organizations.

Suggested uses:

- The activity characteristics in the table above are consistent with the messaging here in Washington that promotes [The 9 Principles of Effective Prevention](#) and are reflected in the [state prevention standards](#). Refer to these characteristics and the program examples in the report when designing or updating prevention programs.
- The philosophy of mobilization described in the report shared commonalities with Washington's practice of [Community Development](#); this report can help reinforce your messages of the importance of community specific work to potential stakeholders and funders.
- Qualities of prevention staff and organizational structures may be used to assess individual and organizational capacity for primary prevention.
- All of the information in this report may be useful for creating proposals of new prevention projects or seeking additional funding sources.