
Preface



Intellectuals solve problems; geniuses prevent them.

- Albert Einstein

No mass disorder afflicting mankind is ever brought under control or eliminated by attempts at treating the individual.

- George W. Albee

Introduction

The World Health Organization has characterized sexual violence as a “common and serious public health problem affecting millions of people each year throughout the world” (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002). In the United States, the American Medical Association (1995) described child sexual abuse as “a silent, violent epidemic,” with study findings suggesting that 30% - 40% of girls and 13% of boys will experience sexual abuse prior to their 18th birthday (Bolen & Scannapieco, 1999). During college, it is estimated that 20% to 25% of women suffer an attempted or completed rape (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Sadly, these figures reflect only a small portion of the many acts of sexual violence that occur. Still, it is clear that the scope of the problem and its far reaching implications necessitate not only “after the fact” treatment services, but a significant commitment to the prevention of this insidious societal problem.

By its nature, prevention is at its best when it is collaborative, when research and practice are melded to produce effective strategies, and when its audience is as broad based as possible. Prevention’s richness and power comes from the collaboration of often diverse perspectives, a blending of expert and community member, front line worker and researcher, survivor treatment professional and offender treatment provider, policy maker and advocate, as well as the voices of victims, survivors, and offenders themselves. At the same time, the strategies reflecting prevention genius are those that draw liberally from both well designed research and the wisdom of community practice. Finally, to be relevant and useful, prevention must be framed in a way that makes it accessible to the professionals who are most likely to put it into practice on a daily basis.

This sourcebook was conceived with these goals in mind. It was designed as a practical resource for professionals designing, implementing, and evaluating prevention programming. It begins by providing a context for “Understanding Sexual Violence”. This section offers a historical background, insights into criti

cal risks underlying sexual violence, and a template for using theory to guide prevention practice. The “Prevention Strategy” section explores cutting edge approaches which provide a framework for designing and enhancing prevention practice. A closer examination of prevention systems issues are addressed in the following section, “Impacting Systems to Enhance Prevention: Public Policy, Media, & Technology.” These chapters investigate the confluence of prevention and national policy, child exploitation, internet safety, and online professional communities. The fourth section provides illustrative examples of “Evidence-Based Prevention Programs”. “Approaches to Create Better Prevention Programming,” offers “how to” advice for program design. It discusses issues such as evidence based programming, strategies for developing various types of prevention initiatives, and approaches for measuring program effectiveness. “Special Populations” are discussed next and address people with disabilities, athletes, college students, participants in youth serving organizations, and culturally diverse individuals. The sourcebook concludes with a look at “Future Directions in Prevention” from the perspective of 17 national experts in the field.

This project was the vision of a multidisciplinary group of professionals reflecting expertise in a diverse array of prevention, advocacy, and treatment arenas. The group represented the first Prevention Committee of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA). ATSA is an international, multi-disciplinary organization dedicated to preventing sexual violence (www.atsa.com). Given the genesis of this project and the long term commitment of ATSA to these goals, all proceeds from this book will be donated to ATSA’s ongoing prevention initiatives.

The vision for this sourcebook has been brought to fruition by an immensely talented and experienced group of authors. They are the architects and have provided the foundation for the next generation of prevention programming. It is now up to you to take on the challenge... to be creative, to innovate, to design effective programs, to tailor them to various groups and communities of color, and to establish their worth through evaluation... It is now up to you to embrace the genius of prevention.

References

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