

PARTNERS IN BUSINESS AND POLICY



“Every dollar invested in prevention not only changes the lives of individuals, but also saves literally hundreds of dollars in the costs associated with future violence. However, public funding is very limited and the number of community-based organizations receiving any of these funds is also limited. Supporting opportunities for communities to work together and raising private dollars is essential - to benefit the health and wellbeing of everyone.”

(Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance, 2013)

Investing in prevention saves lives. And dollars.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a costly crime leading to far reaching and long lasting health impacts for individuals, families, and their communities.

The most recent national research tells us that 29% of women and 10% of men have experienced IPV and have reported at least one significant health impact related to this violence. Impacts include: severe injury, PTSD, substance abuse, needed crisis, housing and/or medical services, missed days of school/work, and becoming pregnant and/or contracting sexually transmitted infections. The economic burden this has on healthcare delivery, criminal justice, and social service systems is substantial, cross-cutting, and ongoing.

“The health-related costs of rape, physical assault, stalking and homicide committed by intimate partners exceed \$5.8 billion each year. Of that amount, nearly \$4.1 billion are for direct medical and mental health care services, and nearly \$1.8 billion are for the indirect costs of lost productivity or wages. The estimated total days lost from employment is \$858.6 million. The value of lost productivity from employment is \$727.8 million.”

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, April 2003)

Fortunately, preventing IPV is possible. But the time to act is now. Recent studies out of California suggest that just a 5% reduction in rates of IPV would account for an \$8.6 million dollar economic savings. Prevention offers us strategic solutions – a means to foster healthy, thriving futures for

families and communities and furthermore, a means to financially unburden our economy in the process. Our current service delivery and victim advocacy systems are providing vital lifelines to those impacted by IPV, but if we ever seek to end victimization and build truly healthy futures, we must invest in proactive, community-driven prevention efforts.

What is intimate partner violence?

Preventing intimate partner violence means stopping violence before it happens.

The goal is to create and sustain thriving, healthy relationships and communities where the threat of IPV doesn't exist. Prevention efforts seek to promote and reinforce factors associated with healthy, respectful relationships (like positive communication, empathy-building, family and community connectedness) and counteract those factors associated with initial perpetration (like childhood maltreatment, insufficient resource access, unhealthy attitudes and beliefs). This means cultivating communities and an over-arching culture, of safety, equality, and respect. In this way, prevention is intergenerational social change work – designed to change social norms and individual behaviors contributing to the existence of violence. And in order for the work to be most effective, it needs to start early, be comprehensive, and be widely supported.

Because IPV is such a complex problem, the solutions must also be complex – requiring community-specific strategies to promote health and wellness across the lifespan. Luckily, the field of public health offers us concrete tools and frameworks for understanding how to effectively engage in the work and organize change on a large scale.

Who's doing the work?

A network of community-based organizations and the communities they work for.

Over the past 40 years, the movement to end IPV has established deep roots in communities in an effort to provide vital crisis services and raise awareness. These key players have organized collective efforts to examine, understand, and respond to the overwhelming rates of victimization – an ongoing process that has yielded rich and diverse connections to families, neighborhoods, community businesses and institutions (like schools, government, and social service providers), and policy makers at large.

Moreover, researchers and practitioners in public health, at colleges and universities and in private sectors, are supporting and providing the best available research to those community-based organizations who are implementing best practices in the field. Investing in the movement means investing in building evidence, supporting community sustainability, and changing lives.

Examples from the field

Virginia's Red Flag Campaign

The [Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance](#) submitted a proposal to the [Verizon Foundation](#) to forge a multi-year partnership on an exciting new project: the Commonwealth Campus Campaign. The vision behind the campaign was to create the first statewide awareness and education campaign designed specifically to address dating violence among students on Virginia's college and university campuses.

With the generous support of the Verizon Foundation, the Action Alliance worked with local businesses to form a public relations team, and convened an Advisory Committee of college and university faculty, staff and students from across the state to help guide the creation and implementation of the Campaign. Verizon Foundation representatives and Action Alliance staff also served as members of the Advisory Committee.

The public relations research team conducted focus groups of college students to explore the nature of dating relationships on campus and to identify hallmarks of healthy relationships versus abusive ones. During those focus groups, students revealed that they are willing to intervene with friends who are being victimized by or acting abusively toward their dates. Students also clearly indicated that they would be receptive to hearing intervention and prevention messages from their friends, should they ever find themselves in a dating violence circumstance.

Following the outcome of the initial focus groups, the Advisory Committee decided to design a campaign that would 1) target college students who are friends/peers of victims and perpetrators of dating violence, 2) educate friends/peers about "red flags" (warning indicators) of dating violence, and 3) encourage friends/peers to "say something" (intervene in the situation). Thus, the Commonwealth Campus Campaign was renamed and [The Red Flag Campaign](#) was born.

For more information about the Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Council, or to join us in advancing a unified national prevention agenda, visit PreventIPV.org.