

ALLIES IN HEALTH, WELLNESS, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE



*“Understanding the overlapping causes of violence and the things that can protect people and communities is important, and can help us better address violence in all its forms.”*  
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014)

**Healthy living is our goal.**

**Whether you’re an advocate working to end oppression or a public health practitioner working to reduce rates of teen pregnancy, there is often a shared desired effect: safe, stable, healthy lives, equitable resource access, community cohesion, and socially just environments.**

To the extent that people’s identities and experiences are interconnected and whole so too must our solutions to social and public health problems be interconnected and whole.

Despite the shared or overlapping outcomes, our work across movements often remains separate and distinct. The varied strategies and approaches used, as well as different funding streams, infrastructure, language and theory, often create a silo effect and artificial separations. And yet, communities don’t experience issue fragmentation in the same way that our movements do. This means that effectively addressing health and wellness must not only take into account the complexity of a community, but it must also recognize the complexity and systemic nature of our work.

Many of the risk factors contributing to poor social and health outcomes – substance abuse, sexual and intimate partner violence, mental health issues, sexually transmitted infections, asthma, obesity, etc. – are overlapping. Combining our shared goal of achieving healthy living with these overlapping risk factors provides us with the groundwork from which a unified vision for change can take hold. If we move from fragmented fields operating in silos to a complex, interconnected movement, we will have exponentially greater impact.

## Making a collective impact

*“Violence takes many forms, including intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child maltreatment, bullying, suicidal behavior, and elder abuse and neglect. These forms of violence are interconnected and often share the same root causes. They can also all take place under one roof or in a given community or neighborhood and can happen at the same time or at different stages of life. Understanding the overlapping causes of violence and the things that can protect people and communities is important, and can help us better address violence in all its forms.”*

(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014)

### Collective impact approaches must address and embrace complexity.

Increasingly, there are more and more public health movements organizing around the task of preventing **adverse childhood experiences** (ACEs) and addressing early predictors of poor health later in life. These approaches include considering the impacts of systemic oppression and are supportive of restorative justice efforts by increasing community capacity and growing robust, trauma-informed systems. However, in order to do this effectively, a number of key movement players are required. Trends in the direction of a coordinated systems or collaborative approach are allowing us to address the limitations and gaps that currently exist between movements and to find common areas of alignment. Recognizing that health, wellness, and social justice is not the responsibility of a single discipline or agency – but rather a shared framework from which we operate – is essential to creating lasting change. We work more fully and effectively when we work together.

### Here are some items to consider when coordinating a **collective impact approach** to our work:

- Who are those allies working to achieve the same or similar outcomes?
- Define a common agenda - what is the shared vision among partners?
- Ensure shared accountability
- Coordinate mutually reinforcing strategies and activities that saturate communities using various realms of influence
- Work to achieve continuous communication among partners
- Coordinate and convene ongoing backbone support via stakeholder group or steering committee

## Examples from the field

*Project Connect* is a national initiative to change how adolescent health, reproductive health, and Native health services understand, respond to, and engage in efforts to prevent sexual and domestic violence. Research demonstrates that programs like *Project Connect* can help improve maternal and adolescent health and decrease the risks for unplanned pregnancy, poor pregnancy outcomes, and further abuse.

*Project Connect* has trained nearly 6,000 health care providers in specific interventions to assess for, respond to, and prevent domestic and sexual violence in their clinical settings. The initiative has helped establish partnerships between public health programs and domestic and sexual violence advocates to effectively identify and refer victims of abuse. *Project Connect* teams have also had a significant impact on state-level policies, including instituting assessment of domestic and sexual violence into statewide protocols, improving data collection by adding new questions about domestic violence to statewide surveillance systems, increasing funding statewide for clinics that address violence, and requiring annual training on violence in key state programs.

For more information about the Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Council, or to join us in advancing a unified national prevention agenda, visit [PreventIPV.org](http://PreventIPV.org).