

# Communities First

A PROJECT ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN SEXUAL  
VIOLENCE PREVENTION: COHORT 2, 2019

## Communities First

### Preventing Sexual Violence in Minnesota

The following Communities First project is the result of the work of Asian Women United of Minnesota, DREAM Technical Academy, Liberty Community Church, Upstream Arts, and Voices of East African Women, and produced in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Health Sexual Violence Prevention Program, within the Violence Prevention Programs Unit, Injury Violence Prevention Section.



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## Introduction

Marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by sexual violence.<sup>1</sup> The voices of those most affected by sexual violence are often the least heard, but it is vital for us to listen. While the field of public health has helped steer us toward a better understanding of primary prevention, there is still a need to be inclusive of key community perspectives and contexts. If sexual violence prevention efforts are to succeed in reducing disparities, it is critical for large institutions to listen to, learn from, and empower community experts.

Communities are unique and complex, and prevention strategies must take that into account. Communities are the most qualified to determine what effective sexual violence prevention strategies look like for themselves and for their communities. Communities are experts as to their own needs and readiness. To this end, the Minnesota Department of Health Sexual Violence Prevention Program (MDH SVPP), continues a process of listening and learning, in partnership with selected communities, to ensure that community voices in sexual violence prevention are heard, through a project called Communities First. Included in this report is the work of five organizations, Cohort 2, who recently held stakeholder listening sessions in communities across Minnesota. Their findings, insights, and recommendations are included in the organization specific summaries section.

Communities First is a project to prompt community-based organizations to ask the question, “What does sexual violence prevention look like in our community?” Each of the five organizations held three to five meetings with stakeholders they identified as essential in beginning these conversations. MDH SVPP provided an orientation to sexual violence prevention concepts and tools with each organization and included information on the Spectrum of Prevention, the Social Ecological Model, and the Three Siblings Story Model (see Appendices A, B, and C).<sup>2,3</sup> In addition, MDH SVPP provided ongoing communications of additional prevention resources and networking opportunities over the course of the grant period. The communities’ findings reveal that there are similarities across communities, but cultural practices and nuances need to be highlighted and understood for prevention efforts to be successful. For some communities, even discussing the topic of sexual violence is considered taboo while in other communities, sexual violence has been a much discussed reality but with more of an intervention/response frame, rather than a prevention frame.

MDH SVPP would like to thank Cohort 2 for taking this journey with us and leading the way on what is possible. Built upon the work of Cohort 1, Cohort 2’s contributions have strengthened our collective understanding of what can work and what does not work in preventing sexual violence, and they have paved the way for this project to continue. Our deepest gratitude to

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<sup>1</sup> Black, M.C., Basile, K.C., Breiding, M.J., Smith, S.G., Walters, M.L., Merrick, M.T., Chen, J., & Stevens, M.R. (2011). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 Summary Report. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

<sup>2</sup> Cohen, L. & Swift, S. (1999). The spectrum of prevention: developing a comprehensive approach to injury prevention. *Injury Prevention*, 5, 203-207. Retrieved September 19, 2018, from, <https://www.preventioninstitute.org/tools/spectrum-prevention-0>

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2009). The social-ecological model: Understanding the factors that influence violence and how to best prevent it. Available: <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/violence-prevention-basics-social-ecological-model#sv>

## COMMUNITIES FIRST: PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN MINNESOTA

Asian Women United of Minnesota, DREAM Technical Academy, Liberty Community Church, Upstream Arts, and Voices of East African Women, and we look forward to continuing this journey in partnership.

Of note, the Introduction, About the Project, and Conclusions sections were written by MDH SVPP. Organization Specific Summaries, however, were written by our partners. This was done to provide partners with two-pager handouts that they could use for their ongoing work, to maintain the goal of this project and limit any filter or dilution to the partner voices and lessons they share with us.

## About the Project

### Minnesota Department of Health – Sexual Violence Prevention Program

#### Who we are

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Sexual Violence Prevention Program, funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Rape Prevention and Education Program, brings a public health lens to working with individuals and organizations to strengthen capacity to prevent sexual violence in Minnesota.

#### The role of public health

In order to prevent sexual violence, it is critical to ensure all voices are heard, most importantly, voices from marginalized communities who are disproportionately affected by sexual violence and underserved by current mainstream prevention approaches. To marginalize means to put or keep (an individual or a group of people) in a powerless or unimportant position within a society or group.<sup>4</sup> This includes but is not limited to people with disabilities, people of color, Native Americans, LGBTQ individuals, children, women, and people of lower income. Marginalized communities have historically been left out of the dialogue where funding and policy decisions are being made. Public health's role as a convener can help bring visibility to these voices, make these critical connections and make this work transformative by centering leadership from within marginalized communities.

The MDH Sexual Violence Prevention Program has made it a priority to support and elevate voices and leaders to the forefront of the discourse surrounding sexual violence prevention. Through community listening sessions and engagement, we are embarking on a journey to listen, learn, and share knowledge from community experts. We need to learn what works best for each community, given that each community has its own strengths, shared experiences, history, current contextual factors, traditions, customs, and beliefs. Additionally, different communities are at different places along the continuum of experience and knowledge related to sexual violence awareness and prevention. For prevention to be most effective, communities must lead the way, based on their knowledge of their own community and of community readiness, in partnership with public health.

#### Communities First project description

The purpose of this initiative is to work with organizations who are motivated to strengthen their capacity to prevent sexual violence through a collaborative project. Communities First focuses on supporting organizations to engage their stakeholders in sharing and exploring their expertise about what it would take to end sexual violence in their communities.

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<sup>4</sup> In *Merriam-Webster Online*, Retrieved September 6, 2018, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

## Asian Women United of Minnesota

### Who we are

Asian Women United of Minnesota (AWUM) is a community-based, nonprofit organization committed to ending violence against Asian women and children, increasing survivor safety, promoting women's self-determination, empowering Asian women and girls, and building stronger and safer communities by promoting safe and healthy relationships within the Asian-Pacific Islander (API) community and beyond. AWUM originated from the energy and efforts of a group of Asian women in 1993 that became aware of gaps in services to the Asian women experiencing domestic violence in the Twin Cities metro area and its far-reaching suburbs. AWUM became a 501(c)(3) organization in 1996 and opened the doors to the House of Peace Shelter in 2001.

Our mission is to end domestic violence by supporting safe and healthy relationships. We have served over 500 women and children on average every year, providing an emergency shelter and legal advocacy for domestic violence survivors. Our goal as the sole domestic violence shelter in Minnesota focused on Asian, refugee/immigrant battered women is to make ourselves accessible, available, and welcoming to any woman who may need our help.

### Our Process and Findings

AWUM conducted three focus groups with House of Peace participants, Karen women, and South Asian women. The facilitator asked questions, in a large group setting, to solicit participants' opinions on the root causes of sexual violence and domestic violence within the API community, with a focus on how to prevent sexual violence against women in the API community. The facilitator also asked about the limitations of the current law enforcement system in working with the API community, and participant experiences with law enforcement. Although all participants identified as API women, they represented a very diverse community of different cultures and life experiences.

#### **What AWUM can do to prevent sexual violence:**

- Increase knowledge of domestic and sexual violence within the API community.
- Hold perpetrators of violence accountable – engage community leaders to have hard/sensitive conversations.
- Provide women with information for safety planning, childcare, and employment so that they can work towards making more informed decisions and plans for themselves and their children.
- Work towards reducing biases against Asian women as they seek service from different organizations.
- Host more focus groups with different API communities in order to lift up the voices of the API community and increase the visibility of Asian women who have experienced or are currently experiencing sexual and domestic violence.

### Recommendations for domestic violence prevention professionals:

- Educate and raise awareness of sexual and domestic violence among men in Asian American communities.
- Work with educators and social workers to teach children, parents, and community members what domestic and sexual violence is.
- Educate community on the importance and meaning of consent, including the concept of forced marriage.
- Understand how legal processes (like Harassment Restraining Orders and Orders for Protection) affect people from different cultures.
- Utilize public service advertisements and social media to promote information about available services.
- Consider the intersections of substance use and violence, particularly when working with Asian American communities.

### Recommendations for policymakers and funders to prevent sexual violence:

- Understand the complexity of oppression of immigrant/refugee women going through domestic and sexual violence.
- Provide more funding for culturally-specific organizations to build capacity to prevent violence.
- Ensure accountability and consequences for perpetrators of violence.
- Reform the Order for Protection process to broaden the definition and include emotional abuse as part of domestic violence experience.
- Women, particularly Karen women, identified substance misuse as a precursor to violence. Consider how access to alcohol differs by neighborhood and how limiting alcohol outlet density could prevent violence.

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*“To prevent sexual and domestic violence, women should be able to go public and share their experience of abuse. This requires raising awareness in the South Asian communities by utilizing public campaigns, pamphlets and other helpful resources specifically designed for the South Asian community. Many participants pointed out that there should be more activities for raising awareness in the community that make everyone aware that the abuser is the one to blame while there needs to be collective assistance and encouragement for the survivor, which contributes to breaking the taboo of sexual and domestic violence in the community.” - AWUM*

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## DREAM Technical Academy

### Who we are

DREAM Technical Academy is a public charter school located in Willmar, MN. DREAM stands for democratic society, responsible citizens, engaged learners, agents of change, and multicultural setting. DREAM began operations in 2014 and we are currently in our fifth year. The student body at DREAM is racially diverse and DREAM is considered a high-poverty school. We currently enroll 61 students. The average Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) score of our student body is 3.8 and most of the students that come to DREAM have a history of trauma, bullying, and often have academic struggles, especially in the areas of reading and math.

At DREAM Technical Academy, we build healthy, purposeful relationships to create a safe haven where dreams and ambitions are actualized and hope is fostered. We maintain a democratic learning community in which students are accepted for who they are as individuals. We are a trauma-informed school that nurtures each student's academic, emotional, and social well-being. Our vision is to ignite the innate curiosity within students, guiding them to engage with their local and global communities so they will become lifelong leaders and learners. We believe self-directed, personalized learning invites students to choose the ways they learn and demonstrate mastery which increases engagement and enhances their learning experiences. Through Project Based Learning, students design rigorous projects which help them learn key academic content, meet the state standards, and practice twenty-first century skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, innovation, communication, and collaboration. We advocate for social justice and equity for all and practice restorative justice as an effective alternative to punitive responses to wrongdoing.

### Our Process and Findings

DREAM Technical Academy held a series of meetings with students and staff at DREAM as well as with a local five-county children's mental health collaborative, Putting All Communities Together (PACT). With support from DREAM staff, two students from DREAM planned and facilitated the meetings. The student leaders asked participants about the root causes of sexual violence and then asked them to identify prevention strategies for each root cause, using the Spectrum of Prevention (see Appendix A). The conversations were facilitated using post-it notes to allow for personal reflection.

#### **What DREAM Technical Academy can do to prevent sexual violence:**

- Require staff to receive training on sexual violence and trauma.
- Staff and students should also start by believing when someone discloses violence.
- Review DREAM's sexual harassment and bullying policies annually, including both staff and students.
- Further education regarding sexual violence, the root causes, and what we can do prevent sexual violence from occurring in our school or to/by our students.

- Empower students to recognize their own self-worth and increase self-confidence. In the students eyes, having the tools necessary to create boundaries, healthy relationships, and defend themselves were vital elements of what prevention looked like to them.
- Empower DREAM families, particularly parents and guardians, along with students.

**Recommendations for MDH to prevent sexual violence:**

- Without excusing the harm perpetrators cause, we need to research what led them to commit sexual violence so that we can better understand how to prevent them from doing so.
- Schools and communities need more resources for survivors in rural communities.
- Keep holding these listening sessions with as many organizations as you can!
- Go to the youth of our state. There are powerful voices that need to be heard in order for sexual violence to end.
- Do not underestimate the power of believing survivors as a prevention strategy.
- Empower youth, survivors, and others in ways that equip them with the tools to create healthy boundaries and relationships, be confident bystanders, trust their gut, and have the skills to defend themselves.

**Recommendations for policy makers to prevent sexual violence:**

- Harassment of sexual violence survivors should be against the law.
- Sexual violence prevention training should be a requirement for teachers.
- Every organization needs sexual harassment and violence policies put in place.

**Recommendations for funders to prevent sexual violence:**

- Funding for early childhood initiatives. The PACT members were adamant about this. There are trained professionals ready to do this vital work, but there is not enough funding to support it.
- FULLY fund sexual violence prevention work.

**Recommendations for data collectors to prevent sexual violence:**

- Always keep in mind that most sexual violence victims do not report.
- Do not discount the role that social media played/plays in the normalization of sexual violence. What many of us know to be sexual violence, many youth may not, mainly because media has normalized and even glamourized sexual violence.

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*“I really think we should try and focus with our people who cause harm. We want to reach out to those people and get them the resources they need. They’re not bad people, just somebody looking for control after having lost it in their own lives.” –  
DREAM student*

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## Liberty Community Church

### Who we are

Liberty Community Church, Presbyterian Church USA (Liberty) was chartered as the first African American-led Presbyterian congregation in Minnesota. Liberty has two buildings in north Minneapolis, both used for our community engagement initiatives and one solely as a homeplace for victims/survivors of the sex trade. Our vision supports transformative and radical community engagement, community organizing, and constructing strategies for resisting oppression and promoting the healing of the body, soul, and mind. A critical component of this vision is the congregation's active engagement with the community beyond our membership.

The Northside Healing Space is designed to be a safe and culturally celebratory space for the African American community of North Minneapolis to heal from trauma. Northside Healing Space connects community members to clinical care for trauma, but—crucially—also offers healing strategies that have emerged from centuries of resistance and resilience in the community. We provide individual healing sessions, resiliency practice groups, drop-in space for victims of sexual exploitation, support groups, youth leadership programs, youth participatory action research groups, and trauma informed sessions.

The mission of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Academy, Liberty's out-of-school-time program, is to prepare young people to live future-oriented, hopeful, community-connected, and courageous lives. We equip and support scholars K-12 with trauma-informed and culturally relevant education and experiences. Together we utilize critical thinking, radical imagination, and creative problem solving to co-create communities that thrive.

### Our Process and Findings

All meetings were led by Rev. Dr. Alika Galloway. The telling of one's story is a core value of Liberty; we tell our stories as a way of remembering that we belong to one another and, as such, we practice a theo-ethic of interrelatedness and interdependency. We did not use a formal agenda for our meetings. We held the question "what can we do to prevent sexual violence" as the issue to discuss; we used a format that was comfortable and culturally competent for our participants. Three groups participated in discussions: a group of men; a group of women; and staff from 21<sup>st</sup> Century Academy. The following findings and recommendations surfaced during those discussions.

#### **The importance of historical context:**

- Recognize that sexual violence has always been part of the African American landscape since the slavery era.
- Our community desires reparations for all the sexual violence perpetrated on the Black female body, including public acknowledgement and thoughtful consideration of the harm caused by the slave trade and the continued impact it has on Black women today.

- White males who purchase Black bodies perpetrate the majority of the sexual violence that has occurred in our community.

#### **The impact of sexual violence on men and gender diverse folks:**

- Recognize men's vulnerability to sexual violence and the unique experience men have in accessing services and support.
- Men are viewed as strong and not subject to sexual violence, but they experience it too.
- Destroy the myth of highly sexualized/eroticized Black males.
- Do not assume that your boys are not subject to sexual violence in sports.
- Athletics teaches that sexual violence is okay and the hypersexual masculine athlete is revered.
- Gender identification and sexual orientation issues cannot be ignored. Prevention must be inclusive of people of all genders and sexualities.

#### **The importance of centering and protecting children:**

- Teach sex education in school, including healthy relationships, intimacy, and abstinence.
- Train teachers and staff how to identify signs of sexual violence and abuse.
- Train our children that they are not at fault.
- Allow our children to be children instead of sexual fantasies.
- Correct the foster care system to protect children from sexual exploitation.
- Listen deeply to children's stories.

#### **The role of the prison system in sexual violence prevention:**

- Examine the sexual violence that occurs in the prison system and let the community know that it is real but not acceptable.

#### **The role of the media in sexual violence prevention:**

- Stop making movies where sexual violence is viewed as erotic.
- Cherish relationships.
- Look at the culture of violence that we perpetrate in this country - this is not just a sexual issue it is a violence issue as well.
- Insist that the media stop using White blond hair girls as the model for sexual violence. Representation matters.
- Use social media to proclaim that Black bodies are not for sale.

#### **What all of us can do to prevent sexual violence:**

- Broaden definitions of what sexual violence looks like.
- Believe and support victims.

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*“This is the history and story of our culture. Since the onslaught of slavery, Black female bodies have not been our own – and the tradition has been passed on and passed on.” - Liberty*

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## Upstream Arts

### Who we are

Upstream Arts was founded in 2006 by Matt and Julie Guidry, parents of a child with disabilities. Our mission is to use the creative arts to activate and amplify the voice and choice of individuals with disabilities. In our programs, professional artists facilitate multidisciplinary arts activities, creating an interactive environment that builds the social/emotional and communication skills needed in the classroom, workplace, and out in the community. In addition, we produce performances, exhibitions, and other arts events that equip audiences with new narratives and perceptions about disability; and we share creative tools for community problem solving and for advancing inclusion through convenings, professional development, and trainings. We serve all people with intellectual, emotional, behavioral, and physical disabilities, those with visual impairments, and those who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Our mission and our work are not only for the self-identified disability community, but rather the arts can transform how we all connect, learn, work, and engage with each other.

Since 2014, our groundbreaking The Art of Relationships program has educated hundreds of individuals with intellectual disabilities on sexual health and safe relationships through the arts. In addition, we convene professionals working across the disability, social service, arts, and health sectors to raise awareness of the crisis of sexual assault within the disability community, and contribute to creative community problem solving across sectors to address this crisis.

Individuals with disabilities face significant challenges to safety, connection, and full inclusion in our communities. Historical and systemic inequities, together with persistent stigma and segregation, have resulted in individuals with disabilities—in particular those with intellectual disabilities—having limited opportunities to participate in employment, healthy social relationships, civic and independent community life. Within the disability community, there is an overlooked crisis of sexual abuse and sexual violence. Individuals with disabilities are sexually abused at alarming rates, and too often by their caregivers or people in their daily lives that they are dependent on for care and economic needs. Very few cases of sexual abuse involving people with intellectual disabilities are ever reported.

### Our Process and Findings

Listening sessions were held with adults with disabilities; support staff, disability service providers, and families of people with disabilities; and Upstream Arts staff /Board. Arts-based activities were used in the sessions. Conversations were focused on adults with intellectual disabilities who receive daily services from disability service providers. Main findings were:

- People with disabilities have been denied choice and voice by society, and as a result, sometimes believe (and their reality supports) that they have no choice or control over their lives or their bodies. Some have internalized their dehumanization.

- People with disabilities that are non-verbal or communicate in a non-traditional way are especially vulnerable to sexual violence.
- People with disabilities have been left out of education on sex and relationships.
- Individuals with disabilities, caregivers, and disability service providers are largely unaware of the sexual abuse crisis within the disability community.
- Within disability service organizations there is often a culture of dependency, and support staff have power and control over individuals' lives, resulting in environments where individuals with disabilities are more vulnerable to sexual violence.
- There is a staffing crisis within the disability service industry which results in inconsistent and inadequate supports and limits individuals with disabilities' control over their lives.
- Practices and policies on staff/client boundaries, reporting, and sex education vary greatly among disability service providers and are often implemented inconsistently.

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*"A root cause of the disproportionate amount of sexual violence and abuse within the disability community is the historical and continued dehumanization and segregation of individuals with disabilities."*

*– Upstream Arts*

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#### **Recommendations to preventing sexual violence:**

- Increase public understanding of the humanity of individuals with disabilities including that they have, want, and are capable of having healthy sexual relationships.
- Build a grassroots movement to shine a light on the public health crisis of sexual abuse and violence faced by the disability community.
- Increase access to education for individuals with disabilities on sex and healthy relationships in k-12 school settings and throughout an individual's life.
- Increase community-wide inclusion of individuals with disabilities through more inclusive housing, increased transportation options, and increased everyday opportunities for people with and without disabilities to interact.
- Change power dynamics between people with disabilities and their staff/care providers through training/use of Person Centered Thinking and Informed Choice approaches.
- Change the dependency culture of disability service providers to a collaborative culture in which staff and clients work together to ensure the client leads a self-determined life.
- Mandate consistent organizational policies and practices and shared industry language across disability service providers on staff/client boundaries, mandated reporting, healthy relationships education, and sexual violence prevention.
- Address the staffing crisis within the disability services industry.
- Recognize different forms of communication and provide training on how to creatively communicate and build relationships with individuals who don't communicate verbally.
- Change parameters for Mandated Reporting by allowing non-verbal and behavioral cues and communications to be acceptable as forms of evidence.
- Create coalitions and networks of disability service providers to allow for continuity of care and communications on a daily basis, as well as at crucial life transition moments.

## Voices of East African Women

### Who we are

Voices of East African Women (VEAW) was founded because of an urgent need for East African and Muslim women to have a place where they can be safe, receive the services and healing that they need, as well as connect with other women to support each other. VEAW promotes individualized safety planning based on the belief that women are the experts in their own lives, through promising and best practices in education intervention and prevention. We seek to advocate that the Voices of East African Women are heard, by bringing the community together to support each other in times of crisis and change.

Voices of East African Women offers Farhio House, an emergency shelter for women and children who are victims of abuse and violence. Women and youth are able to get the help that they need through counseling, shelter, individualized safety planning, and other services to improve their health and well-being.

Voices of East African Women staff engaged Somali community members to discuss perceptions of sexual violence in the Somali community. In recent years, Minnesota has become home to the largest Somali population in the United States which ranges from 30,000 – 100,000 people. Most Somalis live in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. They have brought their religion and cultural beliefs with them and created safe places such as the Somali Mall in Minneapolis where they gather.

### Our Process and Findings

Participants came from previous focus groups we had held with various members of the Somali community. Somali migration to the United States and Minnesota reflects various experiences. It was our desire to capture as many experiences and views as possible so that we could identify and evaluate effective sexual assault and domestic abuse prevention strategies. Participants included: Imams, male and female elders born and raised in Somalia, middle-aged women and men born and raised in Somalia, and young-adult men and women born in the United States or who migrated to the United States before age 18. The following ideas came from those discussions.

#### **What Voices of East African Women can do to prevent sexual violence:**

- Develop “Circle of Mother” program to create a safe place for women to discuss sexual violence prevention strategies.
- Develop a culturally appropriate partnership with Imams and other religious leaders on sexual violence.
- Enhance prevention through Farhio House emergency shelter for women and children.

**Recommendations for funders, policymakers, and practitioners to prevent sexual violence:**

- Engage and educate researchers, policymakers and funders on Somali culture and beliefs.
- Provide adequate funding and time to develop community engagement and education services to support sexual violence prevention in culturally meaningful ways for professional sexual violence prevention work.
- There is an opportunity to start discussions with Somali parents to learn about sexually transmitted disease prevention for adolescents.
- Provide mental health and well-being services to Somali women.

*“What is more important for us is to focus on the overall well-being of the Somali women in general. They are under so much pressure to learn how to be in this country, raise their children and on top of that manage men’s desires.”*

- Support Somali business women and entrepreneurship.

*“We need to educate women to become entrepreneurs, have access [to] capital so that they can provide for themselves”*

- Prevent female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C).

*“FGM/C is a painful experience that women go through. It is difficult to talk about sexual intimacy when you have experienced FGM/C, which is a form of assault of young girls. We need that prevention here to give awareness, education for parents, and health practitioners in Minnesota so that they can stop FGM/C practices.”*

- Develop culturally-specific social media campaigns to prevent sexual violence which allow women and youth to share their stories and experiences. This will contribute to safe individuals, families, and communities.

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*“How do you operate if you believe that you should never say No to your husband? How will that be interpreted in the community if they discover that you said ‘no’ to your husband? We live in a very close system and everybody knows everybody so if you say ‘no’ it becomes a bigger problem for you, the family and the tribe. You are better off satisfying him and move on with your life.” – Focus Group Participant*

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## Minnesota Department of Health – Sexual Violence Prevention Program

### Findings and Recommendations

#### What we learned about the process

- It is important to provide a structured process that also allows ample room for creativity, freedom, and exploration, instead of being proscriptive. This includes being open to the use of different prevention models and frameworks.
- Different cultural groups will prioritize story telling as a way to facilitate discussions. This is an important tool for prevention, but must be done in a trauma responsive manner.
- More than four months is needed for to allow partners to:
  - plan listening sessions throughout the state and outside of immediate networks;
  - prepare for translation and interpretation considerations;
  - adapt materials to be culturally and communicatively appropriate; and
  - complete the project in a trauma responsive manner.
- A focus on relationship and trust-building with organizations is critical.
- Offering a culminating roundtable conversation with all organizations present is important for the process and for shared learning.
- More goal-setting with each organization is necessary for both the project and for future prevention work within the organizations.
- Ensuring organizations have adequate time to share their preliminary findings back to stakeholders is important for authentic community engagement.
- A more deliberate follow-up action plan from MDH SVPP is needed to be built into the process to strengthen relationships to ensure ongoing collaboration.

#### MDH Sexual Violence Prevention Program key recommendations

- Listen to community-specific organizations and support their leadership in prevention. Communities are experts on what does and does not work for them.
- Value, support, and fund culturally-specific prevention efforts.
- Ensure funding structures do not restrict and disallow prevention work.
- Disaggregate data to show disparities as well as ethnic and cultural differences.
- Equally value qualitative data and storytelling/narrative as much as quantitative data.
- Break down silos; sexual violence will not end unless people work across systems.
- Make sexual violence prevention a community-wide effort, across all age groups and identities. Community members need to work together to build community responsibility and accountability for ending sexual violence.

- Grantees need flexibility and the opportunity for innovation and creativity, and funders need to be less prescriptive and more in tune to the needs and wisdom of communities.
- Identify/develop prevention models that resonate with each community.

## Questions for all people engaged in preventing sexual violence:

### To practitioners:

How are you incorporating a health equity/anti-oppression lens in your work? What can you do to engage with organizations serving those most affected by sexual violence? Who is attending your meetings and what meetings are you attending? How can you ensure that there is reciprocity in your organization's relationships with marginalized communities? How are you learning about, making space for, and raising up community-specific models and frameworks for prevention?

### To funders:

Do you regularly review your grant requirements? How could your grant requirements be less restrictive or allow for greater creativity and flexibility? How do your grant requirements restrict or include prevention? What changes can be made to your grant requirements so that those with limited resources are encouraged to and able to apply? What preparations are you making to ensure everyone can be competitive with their applications? What are you doing to equip and strengthen capacity so marginalized communities can submit competitive applications?

### To policy makers:

Who is at the table? How can we ensure that everyone present is heard and respected? How do you minimize the negative effects of policies that you create or vote for? What can you do to ensure that policies with unintended negative consequences are reviewed and revised?

## Conclusions

The primary purpose of these partnerships is to strengthen the sexual violence prevention capacity of organizations, both that of our partners as well as that of the MDH SVPP, and nationally. The relationships formed and the honest sharing among all participants was invaluable. MDH SVPP staff are grateful and honored to have been a part of the critical conversations that emerged during this project.

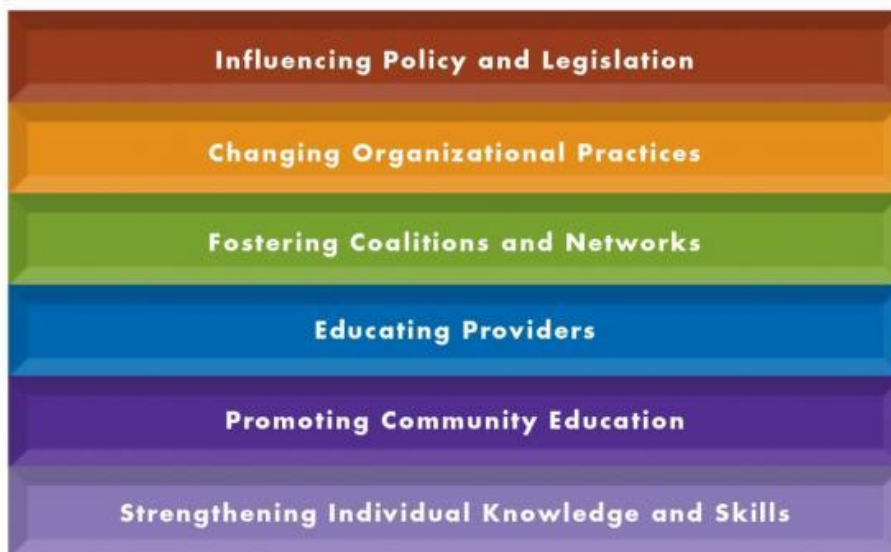
Our major takeaway from this project is to continue to reach out, make ample time to listen and respect community perspectives, and to apply a health equity lens to all of our sexual violence prevention work. MDH SVPP gained vital learning from this project and from each of the participants. Working WITH communities is essential if we are to prevent sexual violence. To quote the late Paul Wellstone, a U.S. Senator from Minnesota, "We all do better when we all do better."

## Appendix A

### The Spectrum of Prevention

The Spectrum of Prevention, developed by the Prevention Institute, is a tool to guide prevention work through different types of activities.<sup>5</sup> Prevention must occur at many levels to prevent harms, and the Spectrum of Prevention guides individuals in selecting strategies. All levels are important and when used together have a larger impact than any single activity.

#### THE SPECTRUM OF PREVENTION



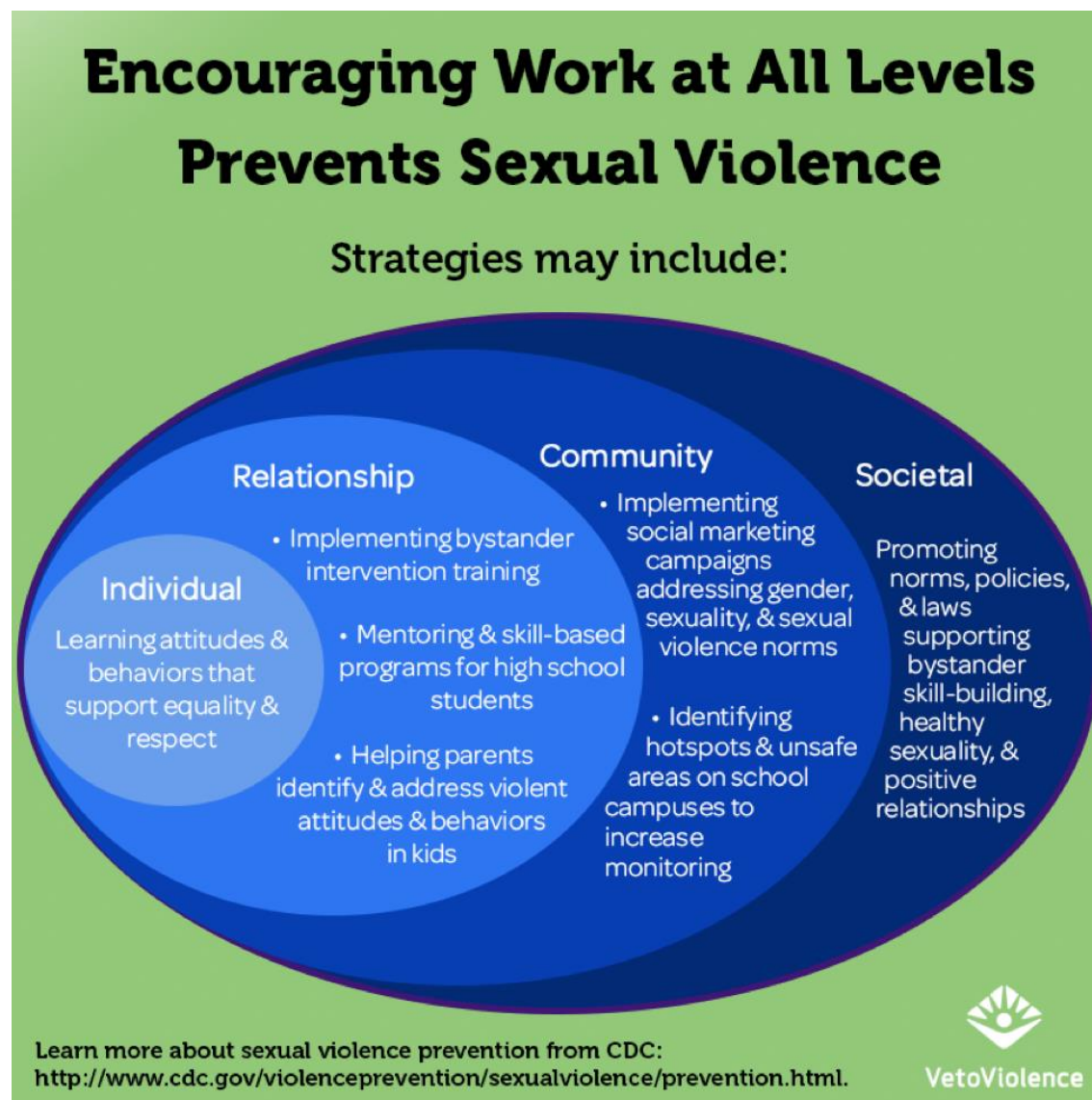
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<sup>5</sup> Cohen, L. & Swift, S. (1999). The spectrum of prevention: developing a comprehensive approach to injury prevention. *Injury Prevention*, 5, 203-207. Retrieved September 19, 2018, from <https://www.preventioninstitute.org/tools/spectrum-prevention-0>

## Appendix B

### The Social Ecological Model

The Social Ecological Model is one way to frame prevention across many levels, from individuals to wider society norms and legislation.<sup>6</sup> The diagram below shows strategy to prevent sexual violence at each level of the model.



<sup>6</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2009). The social-ecological model: Understanding the factors that influence violence and how to best prevent it. Available: <https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/violence-prevention-basics-social-ecological-model#sv>

## Appendix C

### The Three Siblings Story

A prevention parable tells the story of three siblings who were taking a walk along a river. As they turned a corner, they saw people drowning in the river. One sibling rushed into the water and started bringing people to shore. The second sibling jumped into the river and coached the individuals on how to keep afloat. The third sibling ran upstream to see why so many people were falling into the river in the first place.

If we connect this story to sexual violence, the first sibling is the emergency response, like crisis lines, and the second sibling is intervention and treatment for victim/survivors. The third sibling is identifying the causes and conditions that lead to sexual violence in the first place to prevent harm.

While preventing sexual violence has typically focused on supporting individuals in crisis and through healing, preventing sexual violence before any harm occurs is equally important. All three siblings must work together to prevent sexual violence.