

## What Communities Can Do To Make A Difference

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- ◆ **Engage the media, community members, and educators.** Focus on building community awareness of available services so that victims know where to turn to for help. At the same time, communicate prevention messages that help create social sanctions against violent and abusive behavior.
- ◆ **Ensure that services are available to those who seek help.** Equip service providers to handle the increase in requests for help generated by community education campaigns. Create new programs in communities that lack needed services.
- ◆ **Form community partnerships.** Enlist sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking advocates; educators; faith leaders; and other community leaders to work together to raise awareness about all forms of violence against women.
- ◆ **Create campaigns with a grassroots-organizing component.** Work to develop the leadership skills of community members so that leaders of community groups can become powerful messengers.
- ◆ **Target education and awareness campaigns to young people and men.** Develop public education campaigns that educate young adults about relationship violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Develop campaigns that target men, and urge men to lead efforts to end violence against women.
- ◆ **Complement community service campaigns with aggressive free media campaigns.** Use the free media (newspapers, wire services, television, radio, magazines, and the Internet and other nontraditional media outlets) to reach broader audiences.
- ◆ **Create partnerships with the media so that antiviolenace campaigns continue through changes in media ownership and leadership.** Work with the media to dispel myths about sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.
- ◆ **Seek corporate support for media campaigns.** Encourage corporations to become partners in addressing sexual assault and domestic violence by developing workplace policies that address these issues.
- ◆ **Target education and awareness campaigns to populations that might not be reached via a general outreach.** Move beyond traditional media outlets such as newspapers, television, radio, and the Internet to reach these audiences.
- ◆ **Evaluate public education efforts rigorously.** Conduct research to determine the impact and effectiveness of public service and public education campaigns, then refine messages and campaigns to increase their impact.

## Chapter 10

# Educating and Mobilizing the Public About Violence Against Women

**C**ommunity education campaigns can be powerful tools in building awareness and changing public attitudes about violence against women. Recent campaigns have encouraged drivers to wear seatbelts and avoid driving while intoxicated and have successfully promoted the need for mammograms, AIDS education and prevention, and colorectal cancer screening.

Women who have been victims of violent crimes can benefit tremendously when television stations and networks, radio stations, newspapers, magazines, Web sites, and other media promote the phone numbers of local, state, and national sexual assault and domestic violence hotlines. After public service announcements appear, directors of these hotlines regularly report increases in the number of telephone calls.

Today, local, state, and national campaigns inform victims of sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking about available services, communicate that violence against women is wrong, and promote behavioral change among the general public and in specific communities. These public education campaigns have the power to help the general public support family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers who are victimized and to create a more educated population from which to choose jurors when crimes are prosecuted.

The media can do much more to change public attitudes about violence against women. Members of the media can donate more time and space to campaigns that educate and mobilize the public about violence against women. For example, the

media can carry more public service announcements about services available to victims.

Corporations can help leverage coverage by asking the media outlets in and on which they advertise to donate time or space to select public service announcements. Some corporations have either convinced public service directors to run spots on violence against women or have developed and placed their own spots.

## Engaging the Free Media To Build Awareness

The news media—newspapers, wire services, television, radio, magazines, newsletters, and the Internet—are the primary sources of information for the vast majority of adults. If news stories carry messages that are neutral about or imply acceptance of physical and sexual violence and stalking or messages that blame the victim, community members may be disinclined to take action against such abuse. Stories that explore the causes of violence against women can give the public insight and direction and motivate people to take constructive action to help victims, challenge perpetrators, and do what they can to stop every type of abuse.

Victim advocates can plan innovative activities to generate news coverage that delivers positive messages. For example, community leaders in a small midland city began organizing awareness activities in the early 1990s and generated news coverage of their public hearings on domestic

violence. A South Asian community in a large American city has generated stories for South Asian television stations and newspapers and in mainstream newspapers about marches against domestic violence in their neighborhood, speeches by survivors, and protests at a batterer's home. The sexual assault coalition of one midwestern state generated newspaper stories because of its unique public awareness campaign targeting boys between ages 14 and 16. Local radio and television stations also reacted positively to the award-winning campaign and offered hours of free airtime for public service announcements. These are but a few examples of successful strategies used by advocates to increase attention to violence against women.

Advocates also can engage the media directly to generate coverage that educates Americans about sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking; encourages people to take action to prevent violence against women; and rallies support for local service providers. To do this, advocates should establish relationships with journalists, propose news stories, provide documented background information, and recommend qualified experts and spokespersons for interviews. Educating the media about the complex issues surrounding sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking will result in better news stories because educated journalists will cover the issues more comprehensively and effectively. Advocates should keep in mind that media outlets have frequent personnel changes; therefore, media education has to be an ongoing process.

Partnering with the free media can be important when planning for public service activities. An ongoing relationship with a local radio station, for example, can make it easier to place public service announcements, as well-known DJs can make effective spokespersons for awareness campaigns.

## Reaching Out to Diverse Audiences

Media campaigns, messages advocating prevention, and spokespersons may be ineffective in reaching communities with different languages, cultures, and interests. Advocates should develop public awareness campaigns that target populations that might not be reached via a general outreach. The most effective culturally specific campaigns use messengers who come from that community and tailor language, concepts, images, and messages to which the target audience can relate. Campaigns should use a range of delivery mediums such as foreign language radio stations and other nontraditional media outlets to reach the widest audience.

In several instances, advocates have worked with diverse communities to reach broader audiences. For example, a large urban Arab community in the United States developed culturally specific materials on domestic violence in response to the “honor killing” of a young woman. Several locally based programs have developed successful campaigns that reach out to men. Finally, a state sexual assault coalition recently completed evaluating its award-winning public awareness campaign, which included separate messages for boys and girls. The evaluation showed that the messages specifically developed to reach boys—who traditionally have not been targeted in awareness campaigns about sexual assault—were especially successful at changing social norms among young men.

## Targeting Teens

Ideas and opinions about violence against girls and women are formed at a young age. Communities can focus some outreach efforts on young girls and boys to influence the development of attitudes and behaviors that may last a lifetime. Parents should be involved in the development of any campaigns directed at children under the age of 18.



Many good examples of successful campaigns targeting teens exist. A state sexual assault coalition has reached out effectively to students ages 11–15 via its comprehensive annual awareness campaign (funded by a federal Violence Against Women Act grant). The campaign includes posters, partnership with a local radio station, a CD with songs by local artists, and a magazine about sexual assault that is targeted to girls. The coalition also has developed a curriculum on statutory rape for schools and arranged for prevention educators to visit local schools.

Other programs also have reached out to diverse teen audiences. One program meets with Native American girls ages 13–15 at local schools to teach the girls about teen dating violence. Another program in an African-American community runs a “Sister to Sister” project to help promote self-esteem and prevent violence against young women. The program also runs a “Brother to Brother” campaign and has developed a play about violence entitled “Enough Is Enough.”

Advocates also can partner with programs in the community that already target teens. Many organizations already work with teens on issues such as AIDS and HIV prevention, substance abuse prevention, violence prevention, conflict resolution, and sexuality education. Where effective programs exist, advocates should partner with these organizations to add information about sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.

School-based projects serve to train the next generation of college leaders on the issues of sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking. Many types of creative peer counseling groups and some of the most effective public education campaigns, including *Take Back the Night* marches, take place on college campuses. These programs will be even more effective when the incoming college students who lead these programs have already been taught about issues related to violence against women.

## Reacting to Negative Media Messages

Advocates for battered women and victims of sexual assault and stalking are increasingly accused of exaggerating the prevalence of violence and of being unfair to men. The news media often report on challenges to studies that demonstrate the pervasiveness of violence against women. Advocates can capitalize on the attention media give such challenges by countering with accurate information about violence against women. They can effectively respond to challenges by remaining vigilant, monitoring the media, accurately citing data in publications, developing strong proactive and reactive messages, coordinating with allies, and engaging the media.

Outlined below are specific actions that community allies and advocates for victims of sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking can take to educate and mobilize the public.

### Conduct Aggressive Community Education Campaigns

**1. Focus community education on building awareness of available services so that victims of sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking know where to turn for help.**

- ◆ Coordinate with service providers where the campaign will be targeted to develop messages and visual images that are both powerful and sensitive to that community.
- ◆ Carefully select the appropriate spokespeople to be sure the target audiences can relate to their messages.
- ◆ Involve survivors and a diverse representation of community members in campaign development.

**2. Develop campaigns that challenge victim blaming, and engage men in holding other men accountable for violence.**

- ◆ Work with schools, community members, and survivors to develop a campaign that changes

the belief that victims of violence are to blame for their victimization.

- ◆ Develop simple actions that people can take to send the message that violence against women is wrong.
- ◆ Develop messages targeted to perpetrators of violence against women and girls that encourage accountability and behavior change.
- ◆ Focus on the role of bystanders—including strategies men can use to prevent violence against women—to address or challenge perpetrator behavior, identify and assist victims, and make appropriate referrals.
- ◆ Integrate messages that communicate how racism, sexism, and homophobia can nurture and support sexual assault and domestic violence.
- ◆ Test campaign messages with the target audience before finalizing the messages.

### **3. Seek support from corporations, and enlist media outlets as partners in the campaign.**

- ◆ Ask for support from local corporations while developing the campaign, and ask them to use their leverage as advertisers to win media support for the campaign.
- ◆ Ask supportive corporations to use their own communication tools, such as Web sites, store banners, office bulletin boards, and paycheck stuffers, to reinforce campaign messages.
- ◆ Test your announcements with local newspapers and television and radio stations to be sure that the content and quality are appropriate to be run or aired.
- ◆ Enlist a media outlet to become a partner in the campaign and to commit to running its announcements regularly over a 6-month or 1-year period.

### **4. Secure funding to rigorously evaluate public education efforts.**

- ◆ Partner with a local college, university, or public opinion research firm to conduct research to determine the impact and effectiveness of public service and public education campaigns.

- ◆ Refine messages and campaigns as needed to increase their impact and expand their reach.

## **Engage the Free Media in Building Awareness**

### **5. Use the free media to reach broader audiences.**

- ◆ Develop creative and newsworthy events with visual appeal to launch and promote the campaign.
- ◆ Develop a set of messages that spokespeople will use when discussing the issue and campaign.
- ◆ Establish a group of spokespeople who are as diverse as the targeted community, have various types of experience and expertise, and will make themselves available for interviews.
- ◆ Book spokespeople on radio and television news and public affairs programs.
- ◆ Write opinion columns for local newspapers about the issues behind the campaign.
- ◆ Seek editorial and columnist support for the issue and for the campaign.
- ◆ Hold a news conference to announce the campaign.
- ◆ Encourage allies of the effort to end violence against women to use their Web sites to promote campaign messages and information.
- ◆ Provide Internet resources to organizations and agencies to further their efforts to help victims of sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.
- ◆ Identify stories about the long-term effects of violence against women and how it affects public health and every type of crime to gain media exposure.

### **6. Teach journalists about the complex issues that surround sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.**

- ◆ Provide background materials to local journalists who cover news, women's issues, crime and violence, health, education, and social issues.

- ◆ Send information about available services and prevention campaigns to local journalists on a regular basis.
- ◆ Have members of the media hold forums to teach fellow members how to report on cases that involve sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.

## Reach Out to Diverse Audiences

### 7. Create public awareness and education campaigns that appeal to young people.

- ◆ Hold focus group meetings to determine teen attitudes and behaviors, and use this information to develop materials that teenagers can relate to.
- ◆ Enlist the support of media outlets that target teen audiences when launching free media campaigns.
- ◆ Work with school administrators, teachers, parents, and students to conduct public education campaigns at schools. Include education about sexual harassment.
- ◆ Partner with school- or community-based organizations that already work successfully with youth on issues such as AIDS and HIV prevention, substance abuse prevention, conflict resolution, and other issues.
- ◆ Develop age-appropriate and culturally sensitive curriculums on sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking. Include prevention messages, conflict resolution and communication skills building, and information about who to ask for help and how to ask. Test curriculums and the breadth of their use and evaluate them for effectiveness, as resources allow. Include parents in the development of curriculums.
- ◆ Promote positive communication and respect in relationships. Conduct separate campaigns for boys and girls, whenever possible.
- ◆ Work with school administrators to establish peer support groups and other opportunities for teens to discuss dating and domestic violence.
- ◆ Work with teens and parents to develop messages and materials. Develop programs that

teach teens to work with their school newspaper and local television and radio stations to include news stories on sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.

- ◆ Meet with school administrators and school board members to educate them about the long-term societal impact of sexual assault, the state's sexual assault laws, and definitions of sexual assault.
- ◆ Engage celebrities and luminaries (including teenage victims of sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking) who appeal to teenagers to talk to students about violence against women and girls and feature these spokespeople in public service announcements.

### 8. Develop specific education and awareness campaigns for populations that might not be reached via general outreach.

- ◆ Develop culturally appropriate materials for special populations, and ensure that these materials reach everyone who might need them.
- ◆ Target neighborhood minority and alternative newspapers, diverse radio and television stations or programs, and other nontraditional media outlets in any media campaign.
- ◆ Create separate campaigns for sexual assault alone, especially for community members who have mental and physical disabilities or are elderly.
- ◆ Engage celebrities and luminaries from the above-mentioned communities to be spokespeople for the campaign.

### 9. Integrate messages about violence against women into other health education campaigns.

- ◆ Look for opportunities to include information about sexual assault in other health education campaigns that target behaviors or symptoms often associated with the aftereffects of sexual assault, including but not limited to teen pregnancy; unsafe sex; sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS; alcohol and other drug use; eating disorders; posttraumatic stress disorder; and dissociative disorder.

- ◆ Look for opportunities to include information about sexual assault and domestic violence in other health education campaigns that target behavior often associated with the aftereffects of abuse, including but not limited to abuse during pregnancy; chronic pain; sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV and AIDS; and alcohol and other drug use.
- ◆ Develop awareness campaigns that direct victims of stalking to the police and mental health services.

## React to Negative Media Messages

**10. Monitor the media for false or misleading information related to causes or excuses for sexual assault and domestic violence.**

- ◆ Clip local and regional newspapers.
- ◆ Monitor broadcast media and Web sites.

**11. Publish only current statistics and studies.**

- ◆ Include sources for statistics in campaign materials.
- ◆ Become familiar with the overall methodology of the research.

**12. Develop a plan to respond quickly to false or misleading information.**

- ◆ Write general talking points about remedies to sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.
- ◆ Identify spokespeople with diverse backgrounds to respond to challenges to studies that demonstrate the pervasiveness of violence against women.
- ◆ Identify spokespeople who are willing to share their personal experiences with violence in response to false or misleading information.
- ◆ Develop an e-mail, telephone, or fax network to communicate with spokespeople about opportunities to respond to false or misleading information.

**13. Write letters to the editor and opinion columns in response to false or misleading information about sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking.**

- ◆ Ask spokespeople to sign letters to the editor and opinion columns.
- ◆ Identify spokespeople who are willing to appear on talk shows or debate opponents.

*For more media recommendations, see Toolkit chapter “Engaging the Media, Advertising, and Entertainment Industries.”*

## Resources

### The Advertising Council

261 Madison Avenue, 11th Floor  
New York, NY 10016  
Phone: 212-922-1500  
Fax: 212-922-1676  
Web site: [www.adcouncil.org](http://www.adcouncil.org)

Each year the Advertising Council coordinates approximately 40 public education and advocacy campaigns that focus on preventive health, education, community well-being, environmental preservation, strengthening families, and enriching children’s lives. Advertising Council slogans (“Take a Bite Out of Crime,” “Friends Don’t Let Friends Drive Drunk”) and characters (Smokey the Bear, McGruff the Crime Dog) raise awareness, promote individual action, and save lives.

### Benton Foundation

950 18th Street NW.  
Washington, DC 20006  
Phone: 202-638-5770  
Fax: 202-638-5771  
Web site: [www.benton.org](http://www.benton.org)

Supporting the public interest use of communications media, the Benton Foundation provides leadership in the emerging communications environment and promotes the value of communications for solving social problems.

**Family Violence Prevention Fund**

383 Rhode Island Street, Suite 304  
San Francisco, CA 94103-5133  
Phone: 415-252-8900  
Fax: 415-252-8991  
Web site: [www.fvpf.org](http://www.fvpf.org)

The Family Violence Prevention Fund works to end domestic violence and help women and children whose lives are affected by abuse. The Web site offers free online catalogs, articles and information on abuse and violence, press releases and story archives, information on public policy efforts, and other resource materials.

**National Criminal Justice Reference Service**

P.O. Box 6000  
Rockville, MD 20849-6000  
Phone: 301-519-5500 or 1-800-851-3420  
Fax: 301-519-5212  
Web site: [www.ncjrs.org](http://www.ncjrs.org)

The National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS) is a federally sponsored information clearinghouse for people around the country and the world involved with research, policy, and practice related to criminal and juvenile justice and drug control. NCJRS disseminates publications, grant information, and other resources for the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, National Institute of Justice, and other partner agencies. Publications can be accessed from the Web site or copies can be requested by phone, fax, or e-mail.

**National Resource Center on Domestic Violence**

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
6400 Flank Drive, Suite 1300  
Harrisburg, PA 17112  
Phone: 1-800-537-2238  
TTY: 1-800-533-2508  
Fax: 717-545-9456  
Web site: [www.pcadv.org](http://www.pcadv.org)

The National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRC) is a valuable source for information, training, and technical assistance regarding domestic violence issues. NRC is also a clearinghouse for domestic violence resources and statistics that may be used to enhance policies and publications.

**National Sexual Violence Resource Center**

123 North Enola Drive  
Enola, PA 17025  
Phone: 1-877-739-3895  
TTY: 717-909-0715  
Fax: 717-909-0714  
Web site: [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) is a clearinghouse for resources and research about all forms of sexual violence. NSVRC works with its partner agency, the University of Pennsylvania, to provide new policies for establishing sexual violence interventions and prevention programs.

**Stalking Resource Center**

National Center for Victims of Crime  
2000 M Street NW., Suite 480  
Washington, DC 20036  
Phone: 202-467-8700  
Fax: 202-467-8701  
Web site: [www.ncvc.org](http://www.ncvc.org)

The National Center for Victims of Crime's (NCVC's) mission is to help victims of crime and their families rebuild their lives. The Stalking Resource Center provides resources, training, and technical assistance to criminal justice professionals and victim service providers to support locally coordinated, multidisciplinary antistalking approaches and responses.