

NYSCADV

NEW YORK STATE COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

PROMOTING PRIMARY PREVENTION EFFORTS IN NEW YORK STATE

(Legislation Pending)

NYSCADV urges the New York State Legislature to improve current approaches to address domestic violence by supporting primary prevention efforts in the state.

WHAT DOES PREVENTION REALLY MEAN?

Over the past three decades domestic violence advocates have successfully created programs and policies that **effectively respond to domestic violence after it has happened**. Numerous best practices now exist including sheltering and supporting victims and their families, safety planning, support groups, and legal advocacy. Advocates work closely with police, judges, attorneys and health care providers to ensure that victims receive the care and services they need. Coordinated community responses include strengthened policies in schools, workplaces, courts, community based organizations, and the agencies that work with victims.

While providing supportive services to victims of domestic violence and holding offenders accountable for their abusive actions are essential components of the state's response to domestic violence, these strategies have not reduced the rates of domestic violence occurring in our state. **In order to stem the tide of violence, we must promote broad social change.** Changing the attitudes and beliefs in our communities that allow this violence to thrive is called primary prevention.

WHAT IS PRIMARY PREVENTION?

Primary prevention¹ goes beyond raising awareness of domestic violence and works to promote behaviors that will stop violence before it ever happens. Primary prevention includes comprehensive strategies that focus on stopping potential perpetrators before they commit their first act. **People often confuse public awareness campaigns and risk reduction with prevention.** Examples of risk reduction efforts include recognizing warning signs, self-defense courses, tips for personal safety, and offender registries. Risk reduction strategies will not stop perpetration, and wrongly place responsibility on the victim to change their own behavior, rather than on the potential perpetrator to not commit the violent act. On the other hand, evidence based primary prevention strategies exist that will change conditions in the culture and stop the violence before it starts.

Primary prevention changes:

- **knowledge**, by providing clear information
- **attitudes**, by providing information and appealing personal impact, and making space for open and honest communication during the learning process
- **beliefs and behaviors**, by demonstrating and practicing new skills, as change takes time

¹ Primary prevention activities take place before domestic violence has occurred and are designed to prevent first time victimization or perpetration. Primary prevention activities can work in conjunction with intervention strategies that are already in place.

Primary prevention strategies include:

- Working with children and adults to set expectations for healthy communication
- Working with schools, campuses, caregivers, workplaces, and other community settings to change attitudes and behaviors
- Saturating the community with healthy relationship messaging and promoting safe and responsible bystander behaviors or “upstander” and “ally” behaviors
- Encouraging policies and cultivating leaders that set an expectation for healthy relationships and communities

PRIMARY PREVENTION EFFORTS IN NEW YORK STATE

Preventing domestic violence will require that all agencies and systems responsible for the public safety of our communities engage in efforts that challenge the attitudes and beliefs that allow domestic violence to thrive. Without that critical societal level change, no law will truly be effective enough to prevent domestic violence from happening in the first place.

Through our decades of work on the prevention of domestic violence, NYSCADV has found that meaningful and lasting change happens at the community level, and that our work must represent the broad geographic and cultural diversity of New York State. Our efforts **focus on supporting communities to create effective, locally relevant primary prevention programs.**

SUPPORT THESE EFFORTS BY PROVIDING FUNDING THAT SUSTAINS PRIMARY PREVENTION EFFORTS

The financial cost alone of responding to **a single homicide can be well over \$17.25 million²**. We are asking state lawmakers to **invest this amount (\$17.25 million) to support primary prevention efforts across our state.** It’s time to demonstrate New York’s commitment to preventing the far-reaching tragedies of domestic violence homicides. Effective laws and methods for responding to violence once it has occurred are not enough of a deterrence. In order to stem the tide of violence, we must promote the broad social change necessary to stop it before it happens.

² Delisi, Kosloski, Sween, et. al. 2010. Murder by Numbers: Monetary Costs Imposed by a Sample of Homicide Offenders. The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology. 21(4). P 501-503