

Prevention Starts Here

North Dakota's Plan for Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention



Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

— Margaret Mead



Be the change you wish to see in the world.

— Mahatma Gandhi



It's about moving upstream ...



One day, a fisherman was fishing from a river bank when he saw someone being swept downstream, struggling to keep his head above water. The fisherman jumped in, grabbed the person, and helped him to shore. The survivor thanked the fisherman and left, and the hero dried himself off and continued fishing. Soon he heard another cry for help and saw someone else being swept downstream. He immediately jumped into the river again and saved that person as well. This scenario continued all afternoon. As soon as the fisherman returned to fishing, he would hear another cry for help and would wade in to rescue another wet and drowning person. Finally, the fisherman said to himself, "I can't go on like this. I'd better go upstream and find out what is happening."

This public health analogy of moving upstream to prevent a problem exemplifies the work of the State Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention Team. We are looking for solutions in an effort to "move upstream" to prevent intimate partner violence and sexual violence in our state before it starts.

Mission:



Working together to create a community free of intimate partner violence and sexual violence in North Dakota.

Vision Statement:



All citizens have the right to live in a community free from intimate partner violence and sexual violence.


Sponsors:



North Dakota Council on Abused Women's Services/
Coalition Against Sexual Assault in North Dakota

North Dakota Department of Health
Division of Injury Prevention and Control



Dear Stakeholder: 

Intimate partner violence and sexual violence are significant public health concerns in North Dakota. In 2008, 4,258 new victims of intimate partner violence received services from crisis intervention centers in North Dakota. In the same year, 854 primary victims of sexual assault also sought out crisis services. In a response to these issues, the State Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention Team has put together a state plan for prevention.

This plan was developed through a partnership with the North Dakota Council on Abused Women's Services/Coalition Against Sexual Assault in North Dakota, the North Dakota Department of Health's Division of Injury Prevention and Control and the University of North Dakota's Center for Rural Health. These partners, together with stakeholders from multidisciplinary backgrounds across the state, came together to create a plan that is grounded in primary prevention.

This plan serves as a guide for state and local leaders as we continue to improve our efforts to prevent intimate partner violence and sexual violence. I hope you will join with partners across the state in addressing the important issue of preventing violence.

Sincerely,

Terry L. Dwelle, MD, MPHTM
State Health Officer
North Dakota Department of Health

Fellow North Dakotans: 

The North Dakota Council on Abused Women's Services/Coalition Against Sexual Assault, in partnership with the North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Injury Prevention and Control and the North Dakota Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence State Prevention Team, are pleased to present the Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention Plan.

Intimate partner violence and sexual violence affect every one of us. In a recent survey administered to North Dakotans, nearly 70 percent of respondents acknowledged that sexual violence was occurring in their community, and 61 percent agreed that it was possible to prevent it. Prevention is possible. Most North Dakotans agree.

We would like to thank the individuals and organizations who dedicated their time and expertise to developing the plan. But we are only just beginning. We invite you to become involved in helping us implement the plan. It will take all of us working together to accomplish our vision of one day ending intimate partner violence and sexual violence.

Janelle Moos
Executive Director
North Dakota Council on Abused Women's Services/
Coalition Against Sexual Assault in North Dakota


What Is the State Plan?

The State Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention Plan (State Plan) provides North Dakota with a comprehensive framework to prevent first-time incidents of intimate partner violence and sexual violence by targeting leadership, data and evidence-based programming. By targeting these three areas, it is our hope that we can begin to work together to create communities free of intimate partner violence and sexual violence.

What Is the State Prevention Team?

The first meeting of the Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence State Prevention Team was held in May 2006. The mission and goals of the State Prevention Team have evolved over time with the changes in the primary prevention programs at the national level. About 40 members are on the team. Members come from a multitude of professional backgrounds, including state government, advocacy agencies, batterer's treatment, social services and tribal entities. Team membership has evolved over the years, although a core group of individuals remain committed to the process.

The State Prevention Team came together to create the State Plan based upon the results of a statewide needs and resources assessment. Goals for the plan and State Prevention Team Committees were created in response to the needs and resources assessment.



Violence is not an insurmountable problem. It can be prevented using a thoughtful and systematic approach.

— Dr. Rodney Hammond
(Director, Division of Violence Prevention, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Problem Statement/ Background/Magnitude



- In 2009, 4,874 incidents of intimate partner violence were reported to crisis centers in North Dakota.
- At least 5,222 children were directly impacted by these incidents.
- In 2009, 830 primary victims of sexual assault were served by crisis centers in North Dakota.
- Intimate partner violence and sexual violence are preventable public health issues. Through the use of PRIMARY PREVENTION, we can stop these incidents before they start.
- Primary prevention activities are those directed at the general population, or a subset of the general population, designed to actively promote healthy, nonviolent relationships. In other words, primary prevention seeks to reduce the overall likelihood that anyone will become a victim or a perpetrator by creating conditions that make violence less likely to ever occur.

Conditions in North Dakota



- **A Rural State** — North Dakota's rural nature presents a number of unique challenges in the area of intimate partner violence and sexual violence. Rural victims face many barriers to receiving services when escaping violent situations.
- **Energy Development** — While much of the nation has been experiencing a severe economic downturn, North Dakota's economy has remained relatively steady partly due to booming development in the energy sector. This development has not come without a price, as the western half of the state struggles to keep up with large influxes of new residents and suffers from housing shortages. It is a known fact that intimate partner violence and sexual violence victims often are trapped by conditions such as the lack of access to housing.
- **American Indian Population** — North Dakota's four tribal nations include the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the Mandan Hidatsa and Arikara Nation and the Spirit Lake Nation. Our state also includes one Indian Service Agency at Trenton. In all, American Indians comprise 5 percent of the population in the state. Crime victimization rates in the American Indian community are significantly higher than in the general U.S. population. As a result of these high rates of violence, American Indian women are at a high risk of experiencing intimate partner violence and sexual violence.





Vision of Success:

Goals of the State Prevention Plan

Increased effectiveness and sustainability of the North Dakota Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence State Prevention Team

Why we selected this goal:

The effectiveness and sustainability of the State Prevention Team are critical to the long-term success of the project. This goal will provide the foundation for the project to move forward into implementation of the Prevention Plan. Research has shown that strong leadership is an integral component to the success and stability of any project.

Increased accuracy and availability of data in North Dakota regarding intimate partner violence and sexual violence for planning and evaluation

Why we selected this goal:

Through the process of conducting the statewide and local community needs assessments, the lack of reliable and valid data emerged as a dilemma. Particularly lacking is data regarding perpetration and perpetrators, what protective factors are important for preventing intimate partner violence and sexual violence, and data regarding specific groups including, but not limited to, American Indians and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning and Intersex community.

Increased use of evidence-supported and evidence-based strategies to prevent intimate partner violence and sexual violence in North Dakota

Why we selected this goal:

Communities in North Dakota are poised to implement intimate partner violence and sexual violence prevention programs. Local prevention teams have identified target populations and strategies and activities for both capacity building and the chosen population in their prevention plans. It is the vision of the State Prevention Team that as many communities as possible will use evidence-supported strategies in their communities.

Increased norms and behaviors that prevent intimate partner violence and sexual violence in North Dakota

Why we selected this goal:

Community beliefs about violence are at the core of the theoretical basis of what contributes to and perpetuates violence in our society. In order to counteract these social norms to create communities where violence is unacceptable, a variety of efforts need to be implemented at the state and local level.

Using the State Plan

The extensive needs and resource assessment conducted as part of the plan helped to identify a range of issues. The State Plan establishes a framework for specific goals related to intimate partner violence and sexual violence prevention. Due to the comprehensive nature of the plan, no assumptions are made that one agency or organization will be responsible for addressing the goals of the plan. Instead, the plan holds many opportunities for involvement from community groups, individuals, institutions and organizations. The impact of our plan and message will be much more significant when we collaborate.

Everyone has a role, and we invite you to identify where your contribution to a safe and violence-free North Dakota can be made.

As an individual, you can ...

- Become informed about the current pandemic of sexual violence and intimate partner violence.
- Stop tolerating language, actions and norms that support sexual violence and intimate partner violence.
- Learn to notice and find ways to take action safely when you see sexism or abuse.
- Support or volunteer at agencies in your community that work to provide awareness, advocacy and prevention education, and learn how you can take this critical information to other venues to maximize the impact of this plan.
- Reach out to local prevention partners who can help you infuse prevention into your current work.
- Join the efforts of your local or state prevention team.

As a member or leader of a community or organization, you can ...

- Call on your members and find ways for your organization to be involved with local prevention efforts, including representation on local and state prevention teams.
- Train your staff and membership about prevention of sexual violence and intimate partner violence.
- Attend local events and respond to calls for action from local, state and national programs.
- Encourage your staff to engage in healthy, respectful and peaceful relationships both on and off the job.
- Consider implementing policies that promote respectful relationships and work environments.

As you see yourself in the list above, we ask you to take the next step!



Thank You! 

We would like to thank all the past and current members of the State Prevention Team who assisted in the development, review and finalization of the State Prevention Plan. Their input, dedication and insight are greatly appreciated!



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The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

This is a summary of North Dakota's Plan for Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention. For a copy of the full plan please visit: www.ndhealth.gov/DoH/publications.asp or www.ndcaws.org/what_we_do/prevention.

