



# Moving Upstream

Virginia's Newsletter for the Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence

## Welcome To Our Inaugural Issue!

**Brad Perry, MA**, Sexual Violence Prevention Coordinator  
Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance

Welcome to the very first issue of "Moving Upstream"! It is my hope that the information in this newsletter will help you enhance the capacity for primary sexual violence prevention work in your community. If you are new to the concept of primary prevention, you might be particularly interested in this issue because it will focus on some of the most fundamental topics of this work. Future issues will build on these topics in order to convey a comprehensive representation of the pioneering and exciting world of primary sexual violence prevention. If you are currently working on a primary sexual violence prevention initiative in your community, this newsletter will serve as an indispensable resource. Every issue will feature at least one theoretical article by a sexual violence prevention specialist, a spotlight on promising practices in Virginia, information on events in Virginia relevant to primary sexual violence prevention, and a "Funder's Forum" section with guest information from the Virginia Department of Health's Center for Injury and Violence Prevention.

"Moving Upstream" is made possible by VDH and VSDVAA, and will be published 3-4 times annually. I hope you enjoy it!



## Dedicating Ourselves To Prevention

**Kristi VanAudenhove**, Co-Director  
Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance

Posted up on my bulletin board are some doodles from the very first training that I went to conducted by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) on the public health approach to the prevention of violence against intimate partners. I was struggling to grasp how logic models and PowerPoint presentations were going to help us find the magic key to eliminating sexual and domestic violence.

I drew a picture of a forest, and a mouse on the floor of the forest, with an owl flying ominously overhead. A mouse hole is just over a slight rise in the forest floor a few feet from the mouse. I then wrote a question on my pad and passed it to my neighbor:

*Is the mouse hole an intervention? Or is the presence of an adequate supply of mouse holes considered prevention?*

My neighbor wrote back:

*You must change the behavior; the mouse must not just want to be in the hole, it must actually go into the hole.*

I replied:

*How mouse-blaming!*

To which my neighbor responded:

*Now that I think about it, prevention must focus on the owl. The owl must choose not to catch the mouse.*

And I argued:

*The owl is by nature a carnivore - if owls did not eat an adequate number of mice, disease would kill more mice. Now you are owl-blaming! Are you one of those radical lesbian owl-baters?*

And she answered:

*Yes.*

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### Did you know?

- At least 87% of sexual assault victims in Virginia were children or adolescents at the time of the assault
- Most men who rape adult women use *instrumental* violence; they use only the amount of force needed to gain compliance thus not often leaving visible injury
- Partners and friends of sexual assault survivors - secondary survivors - go through similar stages of trauma as the survivor; the recovery processes of primary and secondary survivors are often linked and interactive



## Moving Upstream To Repair The Bridge

**Brad Perry, MA**, Sexual Violence Prevention Coordinator  
Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance

My job title is Sexual Violence Prevention Coordinator. When people ask me what I do, I tell them, "I work to end sexual violence." They immediately reply, "What does that mean? How can you end sexual violence? Isn't it just a fact of life? There's no way you could possibly hope to end it...right?" At this point I have to assess whether this person can handle at least an hour of discussion, or whether I should just change the subject. I usually go with the former option and try to get in as many points as I can before they get all freaked-out, become defensive, and/or fall asleep. This article is an attempt to answer these fundamental questions about the primary prevention of sexual violence in a manner that does not induce slumber or anxiety.

specion, you find that there is well-concealed, yet sizeable hole in this bridge that is causing people to fall in. What do you do? You do what makes the most sense - you work to repair the bridge. Primary prevention means "going upstream" and repairing the bridge before more people fall through the hole.

Too often we just focus on the tangible aftermath of a problem. We just keep pulling people out of the river – we set up systems to support people directly affected by sexual violence. While these systems of support are crucial, we also need to cultivate complementary systems that get to the core of the violence, stopping it from ever happening in the first place. We need to become proactive, go upstream to that bridge, study it, determine what resources we need to repair it, and start doing the long and hard work of primary prevention - the work of addressing underlying conditions. For sexual violence, it means examining and changing individual attitudes *that lead to patterns of relating that create norms that shape the institutions in our society that allow sexual violence to thrive*. Addressing these underlying factors is all the more difficult because they are intertwined with the identity of our society. Rigid gender roles, male entitlement, and glorification of disrespect play major roles in our society in the same way that the bridge is central to the culture of its nearby communities.

I'd like to expand on the concept of primary prevention through a more complex and extensive metaphor. Suppose you are standing next to a river, and you see someone drowning as she floats downstream. You jump into the river and pull her ashore. As soon as you've done that, you see another person in trouble, again floating downstream, and you rescue him as well. Every time you've saved one person, you see another, and another. After you've dragged another drowning body out of the river, you're thoroughly exhausted and you know you don't have the energy to save one more person, so instead you decide you must go upstream to find out what is causing these people to end up in the river. You want to address this problem at its source. You get upstream, and see a bridge. Upon careful in-

Repairing the bridge will be complex, drawing on a diverse range of skills and resources. If

*"I highly recommend focusing on one or a few schools, approaching someone within the school system to co-coordinate an initiative, and encouraging the school to institutionalize the initiative."*

*- Jenn Rubacky*

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## Promising Practice: Teen Peer Education & School Buy-in

**Jenn Rubacky**, Education Coordinator  
Citizens Against Sexual Assault, Harrisonburg

Working with teens in teen peer-education programs can be extremely fun, exciting, and rewarding. Unfortunately, creating and implementing the program proves to be a much greater challenge. The following is my experience as I rearranged and jump-started Citizens Against Sexual Assault's (CASA) peer-educator group.

When I began working as Education Coordinator (EC) for CASA in January of 2004, I was put in charge of our agency's peer-educators and was told about the evolution of the group. Originally, our agency's peer-educators had run a local teen hotline

called Teen-Line. Teen-Line eventually changed its direction, focusing on prevention presentations in the schools. At about this same time a new EC was hired, and she worked very hard to reorganize the group. But inevitably, some group members chose not to participate either because they had only wanted to be a part of Teen-Line, or because leadership was changing. It was not because the new EC was boring or un-personable, it was simply because many of the teens had been close to the former EC and no longer felt as connected to the group without her there – a common problem in ongoing teen peer education groups. The EC forged on with the remain-

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## Dedicating Ourselves To Prevention (cont. from 1)

Fortunately for us, the nature of the relationship between victims and perpetrators of sexual and domestic violence is not entirely analogous to the relationship between owls and mice. Victims do not multiply in the absence of perpetrators, and perpetrators do not have to commit violence in order to live. Nevertheless, we are all much too familiar with the argument that sexual and domestic violence is human nature—and that focusing our efforts on changing the perpetrators is a radical, perhaps “man-hating,” act.

For many of us who dedicate ourselves to the prevention of sexual and domestic violence—stopping this violence before it begins—nothing could be further from the truth. While we might agree that our culture supports the use of physical, sexual and emotional violence in myriad ways, we would also fervently argue that each child coming into the world has the opportunity to make the choice not to use violence. We believe that people want to be in

relationships that are loving and respectful, whether male, female or transgender. We believe that ALL individuals want to experience joy in their sexual and intimate relationships. We are working for a world in which that can be true.

On behalf of the staff at the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance, I hope that this new resource will help each of you in your prevention efforts. Dedicating ourselves to prevention is not a matter of choosing between “an adequate supply of mouse holes” or changing the behavior of the “owls.” Rather, it is about committing to the message of hope for a future that supports individuals, families and communities in safe and respectful relationships for everyone.

## Funder’s Forum: Reaching Men & Boys

**Bob Franklin, MS**, Male Outreach Coordinator for Sexual Violence Prevention Center for Injury & Violence Prevention, Virginia Department of Health

Preventing sexual violence is different from taking precautions to decrease your individual risk of sexual assault. Prevention needs to focus on the potential offenders. Research shows that most offenders of sexual assault are men, yet most men are not offenders. Prevention begins by involving men and boys in ending sexual violence and addressing male, social and behavioral norms in our society that support or excuse sexual violence. Some examples of prevention are:

- » Men educating themselves about how masculinity and sexual violence are linked.
- » Men can speak-up when other men say degrading things to or about women.
- » Teach boys about healthy relationships. Role model this behavior in the home, work, and media.
- » Do not support or encourage violent men or the images of men being violent against women, or images that degrade females (e.g., movies, music videos, and advertising).

The Center for Injury and Violence Prevention offers the following programs to involve men and boys in the prevention of sexual violence.

- » Trainings for human service providers on how to involve men and boys in prevention.
- » Sexual Violence Prevention Speaker’s Bureau offers presentations for youth, men, boys, and providers on issues of masculinity and sexual violence prevention.
- » Men of Strength campaign focuses on redefining masculine strength in how young men relate to women.
- » Customized consultation and training for agency staff.

For more information on any of these programs, visit [www.MenEndingViolence.com](http://www.MenEndingViolence.com), or contact Bob...

Phone: (804) 864-7739  
E-mail: [Robert.Franklin@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:Robert.Franklin@vdh.virginia.gov)



*“We believe that ALL individuals want to experience joy in their sexual and intimate relationships.”*

*- Kristi VanAudenhove*

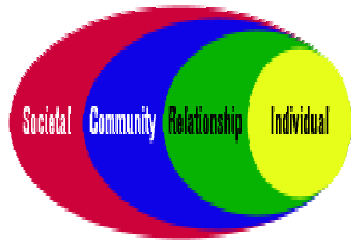


A Va. Men Of Strength Poster:  
*“My strength is not for hurting, so when I wanted to and she didn’t, we didn’t.”*



*“For sexual violence, [primary prevention] means examining and changing individual attitudes that lead to patterns of relating that create norms that shape the institutions in our society that allow sexual violence to thrive.”*

- Brad Perry



Social Ecological Framework

*“If our plan is to be effective we’ll need input from as many pertinent voices as possible.”*

- Brad Perry

### Moving Upstream To Repair The Bridge (cont. from 2)

the bridge represents the factors that perpetuate sexual violence at the aforementioned levels (e.g., individual, relationship, community, and societal) and the hole represents sexual violence, we must then promote bridge repair at each of those levels if we want to be truly effective. *This repair must be pervasive – it must involve dismantling, redesigning, and reconstructing the very structure and foundation of the bridge.*

Before jumping into the work of repairing the bridge, we should first sit down and craft a plan. If our plan is to be effective we’ll need input from as many pertinent voices as possible. For example, we might want to invite:

*Engineers, carpenters, and river safety/rescue professionals:* They can provide expert insight into the structure of the bridge, and the nature of the hole and the river. They can contribute knowledge as to how the hole formed, why it is so well-concealed, how it usually causes people to fall into the river, and how to repair it in a lasting manner.

*Members of the bridgies group:* They benefit from tolls collected but have yet to put a significant portion of these resources towards bridge repair – we need their input both because they have extensive experience with the bridge, and because they can tell us how to convince the rest of the bridge-owners group that the hole is a significant problem that needs their action and resources. We need them on-board as our allies in order to ultimately repair the bridge.

*Survivors of the river:* They know what it’s like to be helpless in the river, and they have firsthand knowledge of the pain caused by allowing the hole to exist.

*Leaders of communities near the bridge:* They can help make bridge repair a priority in their communities. Also, by getting community leaders invested in repairing the bridge, we can more easily gain access to the different segments of the public they represent. For example, if we have the principal of a local school invested in our mission, we can more easily interest students, faculty, and staff in launching “bridge repair” initiatives at that school.

Once we engage all of these folks – these stakeholders – we can start to solicit their input to formulate concrete action plans for bridge repair.

One final concept to keep in mind is that we must ensure our plan addresses the factors of bridge repair at all of the aforementioned levels (e.g., individual, relationship, community, and societal) – in more formal public health terminology, we need to make sure our plans cover the entire spectrum of our *social ecology*. For example, the bridge is owned by the people who live around it. The percentage of the bridge owned by a given individual directly relates to that person’s status – the greater the percentage, the greater the status. Those with the most status – known as “bridgies” – are given more say in community affairs, are sought-after mates, receive a greater proportion of the toll revenue, and have a far greater knowledge of the bridge structure itself. As such, bridgies have a strong interest in extolling the virtues of the bridge and promoting its use (which sometimes includes minimizing the danger of the hole) so as to keep their “superiority” intact. Thus, many people in the community use the bridge regularly without fully knowing the extent of its disrepair. If enough people were to become aware of the disrepair, the bridgies would be forced to fix it, and would lose income and much of their privilege in the communities.

Stepping out of our metaphor and back into our world, we can see how these different levels might manifest. Our society values competition over cooperation, greed over sharing, consolidated power over consensus, ends over means – policy and doctrine across our society illustrate this value system. We have norms throughout diverse pockets of our society telling us that the people who behave most in accord with this value system are entitled to have power/status over the rest of the public. For example, when individuals who have high status in a community are accused of rape, it is the norm for public reaction and jury verdicts to exempt them from fault regardless of the circumstances – think of how most people at a college campus react when a popular football player is accused of raping a female student. These values and norms impact relationship patterns between people. The college football player from the previous example is treated by many others with a great deal of deference

because he is living in sync with the community norms and our societal value system to an extraordinary degree. The manner in which he relates to others is characterized by this privilege – he devalues people who are inconsistent with the social value system from which he benefits, while also validating himself and those similar to him. Men who seem “wimpy” or unconventional are called “fags” or “pussies”, and perhaps threatened or beaten. Women who choose not to acknowledge his status and/or values are dismissed as “dykes” or “cunts” – if these women won’t comply with his desire to engage in a sexual act, he proceeds anyway. His individual knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs are thus intertwined with the forces at the societal, community, and relationship levels. His individual sense of entitlement is shaped and reinforced by the societal, community, and relationship factors that tell him and those around him that he is more valuable – it’s as if he has been entitled to be entitled.

The social ecology framework is helpful because it helps us to identify the broader forces impacting us. Moving back to the land of the “bridgies”, it is not enough to simply give presentations designed to change people’s individual attitudes and knowledge about the bridge/hole, because there are broader dynamics that keep us from taking action to repair it. Continuing with this metaphor, the next logical question to ask might be, “How can we work to affect relationship factors that allow the hole in the bridge to keep swallowing people?” The bridgies manage to keep other people unconcerned about the bridge’s problems by frequently reminding everyone of their status, regularly discounting any problems with the bridge, and constantly pressuring people to use the bridge, and blaming anyone who falls through and lives to tell about. Thus, we could develop initiatives designed to challenge these relationship patterns by finding bridgies who see the need to conduct repairs, and asking them to role-model a fairer way of relating with others. We could also educate the entire community on

how to relate to one another in a less “bridge-obsessed” manner.

Next, we would need to understand community norms that promote use of the bridge and discourage attempts to repair it. We might want to address the norm of the bridgies that makes them feel it’s O.K. to allow the bridge to exist in its current dangerous state; despite the fact they are in an advantageous position to repair it. We could also motivate the bridgies to examine and confront their aforementioned attitude of superiority that often prevents attempts to examine or repair the hole in the bridge. Likewise, we could launch a campaign promoting the value of people who are not bridgies.

Finally, we would need to change the social customs and institutions that legitimize and reinforce the status quo of the harmful bridge. Work on this level would advance equality in the community and might include: Changing any municipal laws that discriminate against non-bridgies; creating or boosting laws against leaving the bridge in a state of disrepair and ensuring the laws are able to be applied in an effective manner, working to change policies in houses of worship that grant privilege to the bridgies, and showing bridgies that the benefit of repairing the bridge is greater than the benefit of denying the problem.

While this metaphor has no doubt been stretched to its limits, I hope it helped clarify the range of considerations one needs to take into account when doing primary sexual violence prevention work. Focusing on the underlying causes of violence, engaging all stakeholders to promote wider “ownership” of the issue, and planning initiatives according to the social ecological framework are elements of effective and sustainable primary sexual violence initiatives. One day, these initiatives will reach a critical mass, and the change we envision will finally be realized.

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## **Promising Practice: Teen Peer Education & School Buy-in (continued from 2)**

ing 15 group members. The group had great success presenting in schools and helped the EC to write scripts for the presentations.

After another year or so, I became the EC and again the group changed. For my first group meeting I contacted all the existing group members, promised pizza and goodies and encouraged them to bring a friend. Needless to say, when only 4 group members came I was discouraged. For the second meeting, I promised the same food and goodies, contacted all the group members, and even advertised at the local schools for new members. This time a whopping 2 students came to the meeting. Again, I was disappointed. I decided I needed to make some serious changes to the program to make the group flourish again.

In order to reorganize the peer-educator group I first had to decide what my agency’s goals were for the group, and what was preventing us from reaching these goals. Our goal, simply, was to have teens educate other teens in our area about violence prevention. I then brainstormed the obstacles faced by the existing group.

First, I realized the group was too spread out. It was great having teens from many high schools collaborate, but when it came time to implement campaigns and activities in the individual schools the logistics made it very difficult. Some schools had 4 or 5 peer-educators while others only had 1 or 2. Either way, it was hard to drum-up a lot of support with only a few teens in a given school. Additionally, we had to adapt our programs to meet each school’s specific regulations and policies. Another obstacle was the time and location of our meetings. All of the meetings were in the evenings at our office in the city. This created difficulties because the teens came from all over the county and many of them were dependent on their parents for rides. Some of the teens had after-school activities, which made the evening schedules hectic for both the teens and their parents.

After identifying these barriers I decided the best way to address them was to set up the peer-educator group at *one* of the local high schools. I felt that instead of making a minimal impact on several schools I would try and make a strong impact on one school. I



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*The Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance is a diverse group of individuals and organizations that believe that ALL people have the right to live a life free of violence.*

**What we do:**

- *We bring people together to build networks and to learn from one another in order to make Virginia safer.*
- *We educate individuals, communities, professionals, and legislators on how to stop sexual and domestic violence from happening and how to help those who have been hurt.*
- *We ensure your community has the resources it needs to respond effectively to sexual and domestic violence.*
- *We advocate for people affected by sexual and domestic violence to make sure they get the help they need.*

**Promising Practice: Teen Peer Education... (cont. from 5)**

approached a guidance counselor at Spotswood High School, with whom I had developed a good working relationship during the previous year. I told her about my plight and asked if there was anyway I could get a peer-educator club started at the school. She was immediately thrilled by the idea for a couple of reasons. First, Rockingham County Schools had decided to make bullying prevention a priority in the upcoming school year. She thought a peer-educator club focusing on violence prevention would be great to have at a school trying to target bullying. Also, she had started a mentoring club several years earlier, which she felt needed to be updated.

Together we developed the Student Connections Club. I was pleased because the guidance counselor was able to take care of the school-oriented details of the club and I was given free reign to develop training and programs for the club. We asked teachers to nominate students who they felt were strong leaders and/or who they believed would benefit from the positive message of the club. We also made announcements and invited anyone who was interested in joining. We had a huge turnout from this approach. The nominated teens felt honored to be asked to participate, while the teen who joined on their own were excited about the club's mission. We were also able to get a very diverse group. In the past, the peer-educator club had been a very homogenous group of "over-achievers." Students in the new club represented a diverse cross-section of the school. For example, we had teens who

were deemed "at-risk," and also, for the first time, many male participants.

For the 2004-2005 school year we became a recognized school-sponsored club. This means on "club-day" each month we are given a time and room to meet. On club days teachers are not allowed to schedule reviews, tests, or assignments to be due. This makes it very easy for all the group members to meet. The teens do not have to travel, and they even get to leave class to attend our meeting. Since we are now 30 members strong, it has been extremely easy to plan campaigns and school-wide initiatives. The teens are also able to talk about and address issues that are specific to their school.

It has been really great collaborating so closely with Spotswood High School. I have a much closer relationship with all the peer-educators. Having all the teens in one location has made meeting with them dramatically easier. The guidance counselor is able to pull them out of class if I need to meet with anyone individually. Also, I have been able to continue to foster a very positive relationship with the school. To anyone seeking to update and re-energize their peer-educator club, I highly recommend focusing on one or a few schools, approaching someone within the school system to coordinate an initiative, and encouraging the school to institutionalize the initiative (e.g., becoming a school sponsored club). If anyone wants more details on this project, I can be reached at Citizens Against Sexual Assault in Harrisonburg at 540-432-6430.

**Upcoming Sexual Violence Prevention Trainings:**

**Sexual Exploitation of Minor Teens Training: May 24**

Authors of, *Unmasking Sexual Con Games: Helping Teens Avoid Emotional Grooming and Dating Violence* will present a day-long training on how to work with youth on the issue of sexual exploitation. Registration information will soon be posted at [www.varapelaws.org](http://www.varapelaws.org).

**Primary Prevention Track at the Annual VSDVAA Retreat: June 23**

Various workshops addressing the primary prevention of sexual and domestic violence. Special one-day registration rate for this day. Contact VSDVAA for more information.

**Virginia Conference on Primary Prevention of Sexual & Domestic Violence: October 5-7**

The big one! Save the date! Contact VSDVAA for more information.



**Be on the lookout for the next issue of *Moving Upstream* in June!**